



Leading Through the Lens of Polarity Thinking



Center for
Creative
Leadership®

Polarity



- **Two mutually interdependent variables that co-exist over time**
- **Ongoing, no endpoint**
- **Unsolvable**
- **Two points of view are represented and both are correct**

Polarity

11 Important Organizational Polarities

From Polarity Partnerships

Decentralized Initiatives	AND	Centralized Coordination
Recognize the Individual	AND	Recognize the Team
Reduce Cost	AND	Improve Quality
Competing with Others	AND	Collaborating with Others
Stability	AND	Change
Celebrate our Differences	AND	Celebrate our Commonalities
Care for My Part of the Organization	AND	Care for the Whole Organization
Show Respect for Every Person	AND	Show Respect Based on Performance
Getting the Job Done (Task)	AND	Building Relationships
Taking Care of the Organization	AND	Taking Care of the Customer
Work	AND	Home

Polarity

12 Leadership Polarities From Polarity Partnerships

Conditional Respect	AND	Unconditional Respect
Task	AND	Relationship
Candor	AND	Diplomacy
Responsibility	AND	Freedom
Confidence	AND	Humility
Analysis	AND	Encouragement
Control	AND	Empowerment
Focused	AND	Expansive
Structure	AND	Flexibility
Logic	AND	Creativity
Individual	AND	Work Group
Planning	AND	Implementation

“I believe that the central leadership attribute is the ability to manage polarity.”

Peter Koestenbaum

Polarity

Key Points about How Polarities “Work”

- **Both sides of the polarity are important**
- **Most of us have a preference for one side or the other.**
- **The more strongly you are attached to one side, the harder it is to see the downside.**
- **Polarities are interdependent pairs that need each other **over time** in order to sustain both sides.**

Exploring a Personal Polarity

Because what I *really* value is...

D

At those times, I wish I were more...

B

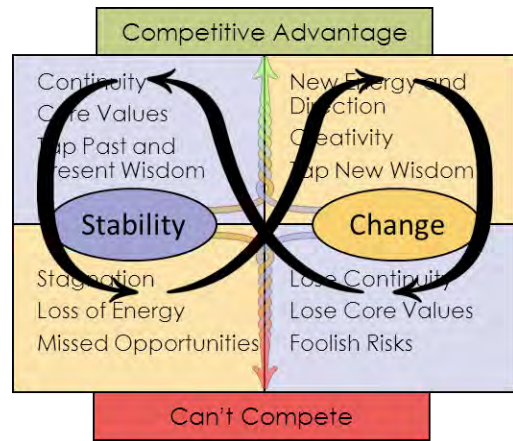
Sometimes I think I am too...

A

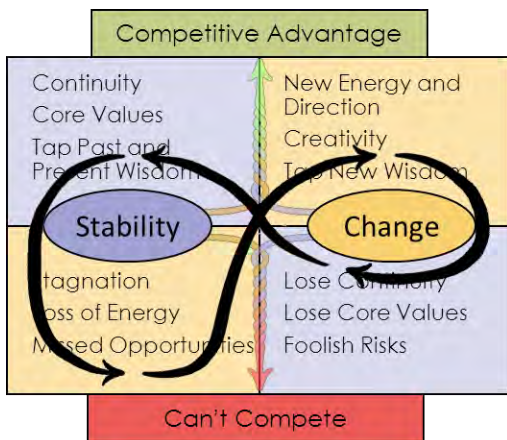
But if I do too much of that, I worry...

C

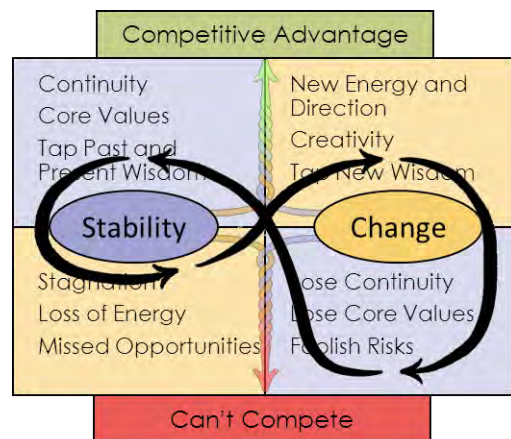
Well Leveraged Polarity



Overemphasis on Stability



Overemphasis on Change



POLARITY MAP™

Greater Purpose Statement (GPS) Why leverage this polarity?

ACTION STEPS

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole?
What? Who? By
When? Measures?

Values = Positive results of focus on the left pole

Values = Positive results of focus on the right pole

ACTION STEPS

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole?
What? Who? By
When? Measures?

EARLY WARNINGS

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole.

AND

EARLY WARNINGS

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this right pole.

Fears = Negative results of over-focused on the left pole to the neglect of the right pole

Fears = Negative results of over-focused on the right pole to the neglect of the left pole

Deeper Fear from lack of optimization



Center for
Creative
Leadership®

CCL - Americas

www.ccl.org

+1 800 780 1031 (U.S. or Canada)

+1 336 545 2810 (Worldwide)

info@ccl.org

CCL - Asia Pacific

www.ccl.org/apac

+65 6854 6000

ccl.apac@ccl.org

CCL - Europe, Middle East, Africa

www.ccl.org/emea

+32 (0) 2 679 09 10

ccl.emea@ccl.org