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**Ego:** *Be willing to be wrong  
about being right.*

**Linked:** *Groups, areas  
and issues*

**Innovation:** *Embracing  
differences*



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# WITH DIVISION EVERYWHERE, IS UNITY POSSIBLE?

*By Jarrod Shappell*



## **Israel and Palestine. The Hutus and the Tutsis. The North and the South.**

Just a mention of these opposing groups conjures images of violence and division. And many of these conflicts are as old as the blue and green marble that they took place on. It seems as long as there have been humans, there have been divisive conflicts.

But these divisions are not just things of history. In the United States, the recent election has exposed the deep fissures among us. There are divisions between states, counties, generations, ethnicities, and classes. For some, the UNITED States of America seems more like an aspiration than a reality.

But again, the division is not just between Liberals and Conservatives or nations and tribes. As consultants, we experience division and the need for unity every day in our organizations:

Marketing and R&D. The CEO and her board of directors. The young go-getters and the establishment.

The same sense of division comes to mind doesn't it?

Imagine your most recent experience of a conflict in your organization. Did it happen in the form of an overt argument? If so, most likely, people were advocating their position, talking quickly and loudly, interrupting, and gesticulating aggressively. Or did it happen more passive-aggressively? Everyone nodding pleasantly in the room, but doing whatever they wanted when they left? How about the collusive conflict where your nemesis end-runs you to the boss, and suddenly that plumb assignment you'd earned is being taken away? Whichever form, I doubt it ended well. Nothing positive ever results from this kind of puffed up, reactive, manipulative, win-lose behavior. Yet we continue to respond to conflict this way, unwilling to abandon the need to win at the expense of others... We choose war rather than peace.

In *The Anatomy of Peace*, a fantastic book about attempted reconciliation between leaders of Israel and Palestine, the authors say, "In the way we regard our children, our spouses, neighbors, colleagues, and strangers, we choose to see others either as people like ourselves or as objects. They either count like we do or they don't. In the former case we regard them as we regard ourselves, we say our hearts are at peace toward them. In the latter case, since we systematically view them as inferior, we say our hearts are at war." If we continue to believe that we are on the superior side of the argument, we will only objectify, vilify, and perpetuate conflict.


**"Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." Ronald Reagan**

Perhaps the election has done us some good in this regard. There seems to be a growing awareness of the fissures among us. There seems to be a growing sense that we are not united and the work of unifying (not creating uniformity) will take a great deal of work. And many have come to see that work must begin within ourselves.

What if we were more concerned with how we handle a disagreement than whether or not we resolve it? What if we found ways to remain convinced of our point of view, but accepted that others could have a different view? What if we sought not to convert others to our way of thinking, but sought to deeply understand the positions of others? Could it be that if we did this, getting our way might become less important than getting things done?

Finding healthy unity that embraces difference is no easy hunt. We prefer to retreat into our tribal groups among people who think and act like us. We say we value different points of view but rarely seek them out. We feign listening but are really just forming our next rebuttal. All of that is unity's most insidious counterfeit – uniformity. We are seduced by the enjoyment of confusing sameness with unity.

We fear that adapting our viewpoints is compromising our values (spoiler alert: it's not). But true unity is hard, gritty, messy work. It takes guts to let go of the need to be right. It takes the deepest of principles to understand your "enemy's" views rather than vilify them. And only the greatest of organizations, communities, and leaders will take the leap of faith away from their staunchly held ideals in the belief, hope, and determination that there is room for both theirs, and others, ideals.

Over the next 12 weeks we are going to explore those questions and the ways in which we can unite our homes, teams, boardrooms, hearts, and perhaps, dare we hope, our country. 



# How Truly Embracing Differences Drives Innovation

*By Ron Carucci*

Riaz Patel is a two-time Emmy nominated TV Executive Producer at Axial Entertainment. He is a Pakistani-American immigrant. He is Muslim and he is gay. And he approaches life with a profoundly uncommon perspective when it comes to people and ideas who are different: a locked mind is a great thing to waste. I spoke with Riaz after seeing his interview on Blaze TV and being deeply inspired by his unpretentious and direct approach to disarming biases and misinformed views of others who appear to be in staunch opposition. Patel's profound lessons from reaching across self-imposed boundaries to those who appear drastically different have important applications beyond finding creative ways forward and unifying a broken country. Every day, leaders must find ways to bring together deeply fragmented organizations, neutralizing turf wars and petty rivalries in order to uncover innovative solutions to problems, and breakthroughs to unlock competitive advantage.

In this letter to disappointed voters, Riaz talks about an unprecedented trip he and his husband took to rural Alaska a week before the election. He'd heard about the plight of fisherman in Alaskan villages and their fear of future policies that could further erode their livelihoods. He says, "I needed to understand people so different than me. I wanted them to know me before we had a "winner." How else would we ever understand each other beyond the exaggerated "black and white" labels we'd both been painted with since this campaign started?"

Such 'black and white thinking' doesn't just happen in the world of politics. It's also extremely common in

the business world. Supply Chain thinks Sales people are prima donnas who make unrealistic promises to customers that they struggle to deliver. Sales People think Marketing people are out of touch with the market, and have no understanding of the pressure they are under to drive revenue. Marketing thinks R&D just manipulates consumer insights to justify the irrelevant pet projects they want to bring to market. For leaders sitting atop these intractable fissures, it's maddening trying to mobilize an organization beyond passive-aggressive self-interest to a common good. Patel's bold, unapologetic approach offers wonderful insights for such leaders. Here are four ways you can apply them in your organization today.

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1. **Confront the ill will you think is there.** Patel sat in diners and coffee shops with local Alaskan fisherman and small business owners and talked about very difficult subjects. His disarming question opened up channels of understanding that would have never been discovered. He asked, "I have a fear that people in your town fear me as a Muslim. Am I right?" Patel believes that negative biases are often formed by misinformed soundbites, rumors, and ranting opinions masquerading as data. He says, "We live in a post-fact world. We think because we read something, we know something. We forget that everything on our social media feed has been curated for us. We're only hearing what validates our existing beliefs. And we don't realize that many of our beliefs have been forced." So what did Patel find in Alaska? "I met lovely people. We had very intense conversations. But they didn't see me as a terrorist any more than I saw them as racist. I don't think my being Muslim, or gay, bothered them in the slightest. Some of them had never met a Muslim before." As a leader, when you hear one part of the organization objectifying another part of the organization, justifying their contempt, force them to address one another directly.

2. **Bust out of echo chambers and invite dissent.** If you are surrounded by excessive agreement, you are in trouble. Says Patel, "I never hire people who agree with me. I can't stand them. I want people who can batter ideas around to make them better." The election season is an ugly reminder of what happens when we only embrace one side of a story. Patel worked to break out of the echo chamber to learn more about those whose beliefs were different. "I found conservative call in radio shows all over the country and I listened to them. I listened to the voices, the vocabulary, the pain, of those who live, work, and think differently than me. When I sat down with people in Alaska, I didn't sit down with hate, and neither did they. I didn't find the locked minds I typically find with my liberal peers. We didn't sit down with our "sources." We simply sat down with an openness to learn. When we think there are people who aren't worthy of our engagement, we don't see them. The left discounted the worthiness of the right, so never considered the merits of their voting power." What data sources are informing the views of various parts of your organization? How are you intentionally inviting "dueling fact bases" into the room to force those with different views to truly hear each other? How frequently do you have people come into your office and tell you that they disagree with you? If you are surrounded with people who largely agree with you, it's likely you are stifling innovative ideas from surfacing.



3. **Deal with ego; be willing to be wrong about being right.** Leaders who spend more time arguing the merits of their views at the expense of learning about those whose views differ aren't "passionate." They're arrogant. Patel says, "When the need to be right obscures the need to learn, that's about your ego. If you have a need to be right, it has nothing to do with the content of your conversation. We're all insecure. We all want to feel validated and we will go to any lengths to get it. People look for a quantifiable ways to be right. We like simple answers that confirm we should have our way." When leaders get stuck in false binaries, arguing the merits between just two views, the opportunity for innovation has been lost. There is no challenge or opportunity in the world for which there are only two options. Once things have devolved to pitting two perspectives against each other, one has to be right, and one has to be wrong. The most creative views have been neutered.

4. **Repel generalizations and embrace nuance.** With the pace of information making our heads spin, it's simply impossible to absorb it all. So we capitulate to broad generalizations that eliminate nuance. Says Patel, "All Muslims are not terrorists and all Republicans are not racist. The seductive comfort of oversimplified generalizations makes us feel like we're informed. We've come to believe we have the entire world on our smart phones and we can simply scroll through the world to learn about it." Cognitive dissonance happens when we face disconfirming data. We accept the chaotic gradations of complex issues. You have to stay in messy conversations long enough to discover nuances. Patel says, "There are as many different Muslims as there are Republicans. But we don't like that. We like all Muslims to be the same. We find false comfort in thinking all conservatives think the same. About 40 minutes into my conversations in Alaska, I could tell when someone's guard dropped. Inside I could feel myself thinking, 'Hello, nice to meet you. We'd been talking for 40 minutes but I knew we'd really just met.'" In organizations, many leaders succumb to hyperbolic generalizations to persuade others. Arguments like "I've heard from my whole team that..." or "Our customers don't want..." Or "The North America region always gets their way..." You dilute your credibility, not strengthen it. It takes intellectual discipline to surrender simplistically reduced arguments and engage the nuances of contradictory views.

Riaz Patel had the courage to take personal responsibility for the limits of his own views. He stepped outside all he knew to learn about what he *thought he knew*. Leaders desperate to bring greater cohesion to their organizations should heed his lessons. Organizational cohesion is not the result of sameness. Uniformity is unity's counterfeit. True alignment results from courageous and humble acceptance of differences. And differences are the raw material of innovation. 

The background of the page is a light blue gradient with several clear, spherical bubbles of varying sizes. Some bubbles are in sharp focus, while others are blurred in the background, creating a sense of depth. The bubbles are scattered across the page, with a higher concentration on the left side.

# Bursting the Bubble- *Intentionally Encountering Difference*

*By Josh Epperson*

Do you ever buy anything off Amazon? If your family is anything like ours, Amazon packages arrive weekly, sometimes multiple times throughout the week. When it comes to online sales, Amazon is king. In 2015, Amazon generated about 60% of total online sales. Highly personalized marketing is one of the many secrets to their success. The algorithms that make product recommendations for you made up 35% of Amazon's consumer purchases. When it comes to shopping, Amazon believes we want more of what we want.



I've been thinking about these personalized algorithmic recommendations because I recently signed up for a personal shopper on Stitch Fix. The sign up process includes creating a personal style profile based on your preferences. There is one question though that is less about your preferences, and more about how willing you are to deviate from those. It's the best question, and may be the reason I no longer wear cargo shorts. The question is "How adventurous should your Fixes be?" Here's what you get to choose from:

- **EXTREMELY:** *Bring it on – I am into trying out new brands and trends*
- **MODERATELY:** *I would like some items to expand my style boundaries*
- **NEVER:** *Keep my clothing based on my current style*

In other words, how much do you want your stylist to deviate from what is familiar and comfortable? How willing are you to embrace what's new and different? This is more than a question of style. This is a question for the whole of life.

At what point does the search for what I want, what I need, or what I believe become so narrow that I miss out on the foreign, yet critical information that is beyond me and my insulating algorithms? As a shopper, a civilian, and a leader, we must all ask, "How impenetrable is my bubble?"

As leaders, we're often confronted with circumstances that demand we leave our cozy bubbles. Consider when the scope and scale of your role increases. Perhaps you're a great operator, but managing people just isn't your thing. But now, in your new role, you have seven direct reports. Will you double down on your operations expertise or will you get out of your bubble and get input from respected people managers and approach it differently than how you've done it in the past? Or, perhaps you are the founder of a midsize organization, and your company's growth is predicated on surfacing completely new opportunities. Will the answer be, "Do more of what we've done, just do it faster and better. It's what we built this company on!" Or will you consider adjacent opportunities that reside beyond the bubble of your expertise or the company's historic success?



When defining the next iteration of your leadership or surfacing the necessary transformation for your business, how adventurous will you be? If your response is, "Never," you'll remain indefinitely stuck. However, if you're willing to move toward, "Moderately," or, "Extremely," you're well on your way.

### ***Understand the barriers that insulate your leadership and business.***


Do others look to you for advice and counsel on the future state of the business? Are you removed from its day-to-day operations? Are you considered a favored class by other leaders? Does your expertise distance you from those 'not in the know'? If you answered, "Yes," to any of these questions your bubble is significant. The more you answered, "Yes," the tougher it will be to burst. The barriers between you and others were likely created unintentionally, but it is only intentional dialogue that will eliminate them.

### ***Name the walls you've erected.***

Some barriers are givens, others we create. What are they and how have they served you? Do you hoard information? It's often used as a wall to ensure you're valuable. Do you lean on historic success? It's usually a way to sidestep not knowing what to do in the future. Do you keep your reporting relationships as objective as possible? Often it's explained as an approach to ensure rational and logical, versus emotional, leadership. However, it's frequently used to keep your emotional distance. Do you intentionally seek out the perspectives of those who think like you? You're insecure about your opinions, and are hungry for validation. If you have to create value with someone who is different than you or in an unprecedented way, you must learn to move beyond your walls. The quicker you can own how they have insulated your leadership from what's required of it, the better.

### ***Don't expect difference to come knocking.***

Go seek out difference. If you've spent any portion of time building walls around you and your world, expect the bulk of people in your life to look elsewhere when it comes to sharing their thoughts and opinions with you. Change up your routines and relationships. Seek out and embrace the nay-sayer or voice of dissent. Do something different; try something new. It will feel unfamiliar and awkward, but it will move you in the right direction. Use the reflections above (about your walls and what's required to bring them down) as conversational fodder to break into worlds you have intentionally kept at bay. Don't expect them to come to you. Get out of your chair. Get out from behind your email. Pick up the phone. Walk down the hall. Go share a meal. And let them teach you about what you've been hiding from.

Two words of advice. ALIGN and STRETCH (yourself, not your jeans). Align the degree of diversity (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, experiences, knowledge, values) required for a successful outcome with your deviation from what is familiar and comfortable. Stretch yourself and the people you lead to progress one click on the adventurous continuum. From Never to Moderate. From Moderate to Extremely. Our future, and perhaps your wardrobe, depend on it. 



# The Fragmented Organization— Bridging Organization Boundaries

*By Eric Hansen*



The ultimate objective of organization design is to create an integrated, unified system that consistently produces results greater than the sum of its parts. However, by definition, the act of organizing is actually divisive – at least initially. While greater focus, cohesion, accessibility, and functionality of resources result from deliberately grouping and locating work and resources, newly formed boundaries between divisions must also be carefully designed because so much of an organization’s potential to create value happens at the interface of the divisional seams. For example, the potential for world-class customer service is found at the intersection of sales, customer service, and supply chain. Product innovation sits at the intersection of R&D, marketing, sales, and business intelligence. Where these seams come together, work must be tightly linked and managed to ensure the value-creating potential is not diminished or destroyed by the boundaries.

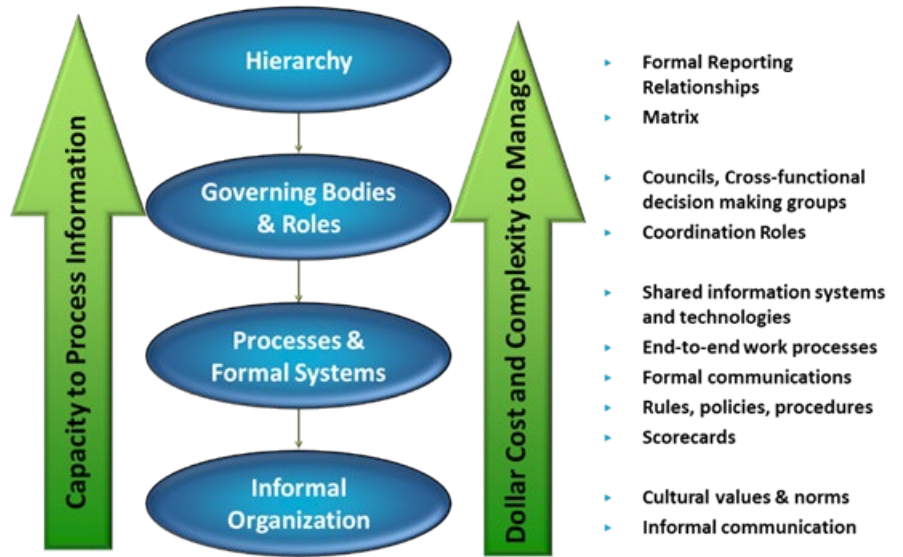
Like fault-lines within the earth’s crust, the seams between organizational groupings hold tremendous pressure and latent energy. And, too often within our clients’ organizations, we discover that the seams have become active fault lines with high levels of tension due to dueling divisional purposes, competing priorities, misalignment of methods and measures, and inconsistent and incomplete communications. We see high levels of insularity and the unwillingness or inability to see others’ perspectives, accommodate differences of approach, or act for the common good. Coordinated execution is hampered and chronic patterns of conflict persist, resulting in diminished capacity and poor performance.

**Exceptional leaders recognize both the productive and destructive potential of organizational boundaries.**

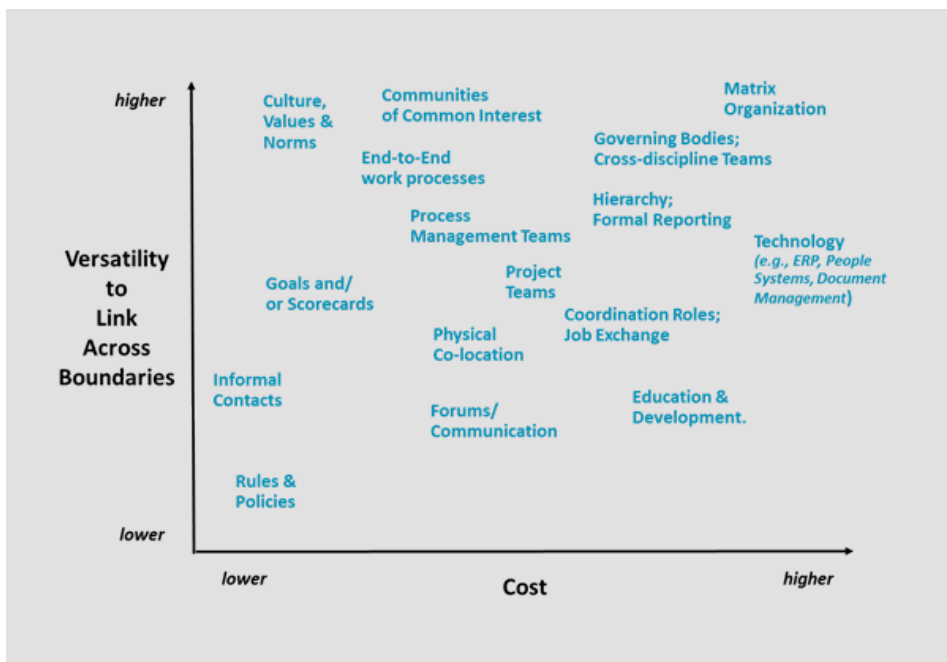
So how do you stitch the seams and avoid a San Andreas quake in your organization? Design your linking mechanisms with the same rigor you design the rest of your organization. Linking mechanisms bridge the boundaries between groups that must coordinate their work in order to deliver the value proposition of the business model.

Each divisional grouping within the organization must have clearly established ways to reinforce alignment of shared purpose and priorities with key partners, enable coordination of work, facilitate the flow of reliable

information, and dynamically address emerging conflicts. This is best accomplished by defining and implementing mechanisms fit for the need. Linkages assume a variety of forms that vary in their capacity to process information and manage complexity. They also vary markedly in how much they cost both in hard dollar terms and investment of organizational effort to implement and manage. You must carefully match the mechanism to the need, ensuring that you do not over or under invest to achieve the intended outcome.



The least costly mechanisms rely on cultural norms to transfer information and coordinate across divisions using the naturally occurring networks of relationships that exist among employees. This is a powerful force when guided by a well-established set of values. As you move toward the need for increased capacity to manage complexity and information flow, other mechanisms are better suited, such as:




**Scorecards** and setting common goals are straightforward ways to create common focus for disparate groups, and are especially effective when tied to the performance management process.

**Coordinating Roles** are generally taken by well-respected and experienced employees in addition to their normal duties. Their relationships and ability to maneuver effectively within the organizational dynamics make them adept ambassadors, translators, and facilitators of results.

**Process Management Teams** introduce general management functions into the linking process, assigning responsibility to coordinate work that potentially crosses multiple boundaries to a leader who may not hierarchically supervise all team members. They are responsible for ensuring the process is established, standards are followed, and when necessary, those involved in the process stand by the decisions that are made even when they may be counter to their function’s direction.

**Matrix Structures** involve linking through hierarchy. It is the most expensive and, for many, the most challenging to manage of all the linking mechanisms. However, the complexity of modern, global organizations have made matrix structures more prevalent in today’s business environment and many employees are becoming more comfortable and adept at navigating the demands of dual reporting relationships.

<b>Seams to be linked</b>	Identify the different groups, areas, or issues that need to be linked based on your Organization model. This includes areas within your model and areas outside your model (in other parts of the organization).
<b>The work being linked</b>	List the work that is being done at that seam. Consider the processes, meetings, technologies, and outputs of the identified seam.
<b>Its criticality</b>	Define the value created at this seam (efficiencies, alignment, etc.)
<b>The mechanism</b>	Identify potential options, then define the preferred mechanism for this seam and its details (e.g., if it is KPIs, describe what roles would share the KPIs, what they would be, etc.).

Exceptional leaders recognize both the productive and destructive potential of organizational boundaries. They have become students of the organization and understand the value that is created and destroyed at the divisional margins. They focus their best efforts on managing the whole – diligently working to create a seamless, cohesive and high- functioning organization. So, whether you are long-tenured or just assuming a new leadership role, you are well advised to carefully assess and regularly monitor conditions at the seams. In those places where you sense rumblings and fissures forming you should immediately address them by following a scripted, deliberate process, working in collaboration with all other impacted parties to ensure that you create an integrated, unified system that consistently produces the results you intend. 





# Does Difference Have to Mean Conflict?

*By Mindy Millward*

As a consultant to CEOs and other business leaders responsible for significant results, I find myself continually providing advice and counsel on how to make good decisions. I work with them on how they engage others while still remaining true to their mandate as the ones who ultimately “own” the decision. I help them process what can appear as conflict, disagreement, or even defiance, so they can come through to the other side with a better solution in hand. I have tools, and templates, and wise tidbits galore to help leaders reach agreement with those in their organizations.

But somehow all of that sage advice flies out of my head when I struggle to reach (what I believe to be) agreement with two teenage sons.

All of a sudden what are logical conclusions and seemingly simple conversations, turn into something entirely different as I feel challenged, questioned, and my authority disregarded. These moments certainly increase the empathy I have for my clients.

Most can agree that good decision-making involves the views or input of many. Furthermore, the most effective decisions often involve true difference (of perspective, knowledge, experience) appearing with candor in dialogue so that a common ground can be found that transcends those differences.

But the truth is, difference often feels personal, gets protracted, and gets in the way of productive decision-making. We blame the external factors around us – if not directly the person who has presented a different point of view, than their background, lack of facts, seat they sit in, or something else that emphasizes the difference between us, and therefore reassures us about the validity of our own thoughts.

So what do we do if we know good decisions require different viewpoints, but are inherently defensive of such difference? In order for our leaders (and myself) to be in the right space to appreciate and engage with difference, we work with them on a few core ideas:

**It's just data.** Detachment is not what we are looking for. We should all work to understand that everything we observe occurring, around us and in the interactions with us as leaders, is a piece of data for us to use to move to productive resolution. Hearing disagreement or difference of thought and opinion tells you more about the world around you often than you knew before. Let yourself explore your partner's or team's motivators, thought process, and assumptions. Take from it a greater understanding of them, and in that explore the possibility of the different thought or solution they have gifted you with.

**Perhaps it's data about you.** If you feel an extreme emotional reaction to what you are hearing or being challenged with, explore that. What are the triggers for you that bring a rush of anger or frustration? Do you feel as if your credibility is being threatened? Your authority being challenged? Your power being undermined? Those are all signs that greater understanding of your own needs and motivation are needed to reframe and see the issue for what it really is.

**It isn't about being right, it is about making the right decision.** Ultimately the win-lose tally should start with the organization results in mind – not yours and your partner's. Reset the bar for how you will measure "good" and encourage a conversation that reaches alignment around how you will measure the impact of your decision. Define that first, and then the answer second.

**Make sure you give decision-making its own time and space.** All too often we enter into a "quick conversation" because we believe the answer is self-evident and what we are really looking for as leaders is compliance, not dialogue and/or alignment. Putting together the right atmosphere for difference at work is as important as doing it at home (more so – your team can walk away, your children have less options). Don't short circuit the exploration of opinion, emotion and connection, or commitment to an issue. Give yourself and your team time to ground itself on what really matters before you jump to the heart of a set of core differences. If you do it on accident, look for the cues and restart the process with new grounding and appreciation.

Whether you are deciding where to invest millions or where to spend the weekend. Whether you are in the board room or in the living room. Disagreement is inevitable. With these four pointers we hope that you can resist the urge to be defensive and embrace the need for difference when making the best decision for all. 🚩



# The Divided Self: The Double Bind

*By Whitney Harper*



When living in Cairo, Egypt I had the opportunity to visit the architectural wonders of many previous rulers and stand in awe of how their legacies have weathered the storms of political, environmental, and religious changes. There is one temple that is unique in comparison to all the others – the memorial temple to Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahri. The structure dominates the Valley of the Kings due to its location nestled into the cliff face that rises sharply behind it. It rises toward the clouds with dramatic ramps, which induce a procession as you rise from the valley floor to each of the three colonnaded terraces. It's awe-inspiring. The architecture, though stunning, isn't the most unique feature. It is the fact that it was built by a female pharaoh.

Hatshepsut was a very effective ruler, increasing massive infrastructure projects and extending trade routes for Egypt. How she went about securing her power and amassing accomplishments involved an impressive mix of masculine and feminine affiliated traits.

Her rise to power came through her nurturing role as the stepmother to the infant pharaoh, Thutmose III. And yet, once she took full power as pharaoh, she commanded that images of her depict a masculine figure with facial hair and large muscles. This tension between the expectation and ability to 'take care' and the desire to 'take charge' is what leads to the modern "double bind" for many women today.

In the workplace, when women exhibit more feminine characteristics they are viewed as soft, agreeable, and maternal. This can be wonderful in certain circumstances, especially when the circumstances require fire prevention versus firefighting. But being seen as only a caretaker can limit how a woman is viewed as a leader and if she is promotion-worthy. On the flip side, women that exhibit traditionally masculine characteristics of being assertive, delegating, and commanding are viewed as too aggressive and difficult to work with. This is the double bind. How are women to behave in a professional setting without being penalized by stereotypes?



Consider the table below. It outlines the common behaviors by leaders that are stereotypically feminine and masculine:

## HOW LEADER BEHAVIORS CONNECT TO FEMININE AND MASCULINE STEREOTYPES

### FEMININE BEHAVIORS – TAKING CARE

<p><b>SUPPORTING</b> <i>Encouraging, assisting, and providing resources for others</i></p>
<p><b>REWARDING</b> <i>Providing praise, recognition, and financial remuneration when appropriate</i></p>
<p><b>MENTORING</b> <i>Facilitating the skill development and career advancement of subordinates</i></p>
<p><b>NETWORKING</b> <i>Developing and maintaining relationships with others who may provide information or support resources</i></p>
<p><b>CONSULTING</b> <i>Checking with others before making plans or decisions that affect them</i></p>
<p><b>TEAM-BUILDING</b> <i>Encouraging positive identification with the organization unit, cooperation and constructive conflict resolution</i></p>
<p><b>INSPIRING</b> <i>Motivating others toward greater enthusiasm for, and commitment to, work objects by appealing to emotion, value, or personal example</i></p>

### MASCULINE BEHAVIORS – TAKING CHARGE

<p><b>PROBLEM-SOLVING</b> <i>Identifying, analyzing, and acting decisively to remove impediments to work performance</i></p>
<p><b>INFLUENCING UPWARD</b> <i>Affecting others in positions of higher rank</i></p>
<p><b>DELEGATING</b> <i>Authorizing others to have substantial responsibility and discretion</i></p>

When you review the list above, which behaviors do you tend to lean on most heavily? Are they skewed more towards stereotypical masculine or feminine traits? Taking stock of your behaviors starts to build self-awareness as to how you are perceived, which will help you to be more agile when navigating the double bind.

Self-awareness as a leader is a trait that has been praised since ancient times, as demonstrated by Hatshepsut. In his classic book *The Prince*, Machiavelli asked a provocative question that gets to the essence of self-awareness: “Is it better to be loved or feared?” The ability to choose to be loved or feared is predicated first on the ability of the leader to control how their actions are perceived. Today, if a woman chooses to govern from a place of love versus fear, acting in more of a ‘taking care’ or ‘taking charge’ role, the question isn’t whether she will be loved or feared, but if she will be respected.


Maintaining this paradox is an incredibly powerful skill, one that when harnessed correctly can lead an army to victory, such as Joan of Arc, or start a movement, thank you Sheryl Sandberg. Today, more than ever, the world needs women who know how to navigate this double bind. So how can you do it? Two simple steps can start you down this path:

### **FIRST, STOP:**

- *Repeating stereotypes about yourself. Quiet your inner critic if you are reinforcing negative perceptions such as not being strong with financials, or uncomfortable with confrontations.*
- *Critiquing women who don’t act in typical gender behaviors.*

### **SECOND, START:**

- *Self-monitoring to determine when it is most effective to behave in a ‘take care’ or a ‘take charge’ style of leadership. For example, being supportive when an employee comes to you 1:1 with some personal concerns; problem-solving when there is a crisis and an upset customer is threatening to cancel their contract. Choosing to be supportive or problem-solving may be appropriate in both scenarios and as a leader it is important to have the ability to pivot between the two and know which will have the desired impact.*
- *Reducing ambiguity. Stereotypes have greater influence when criteria are unclear. An example to illustrate this point is defining criteria for a promotion when there aren’t clear requirements.*

Building awareness of the impact of the double bind on female leaders is the first step to limiting its effect and potential detriment. If this issue has been around for eons, you may be asking yourself: why does it still exist and why haven’t I heard of Hatshepsut? Her legacy is still being researched as her stepson eradicated most of the evidence of her rule, such as destroying physical images of her. But a massive temple that guards the entrance to the Valley of the Kings proved to be too significant of an architectural construct to destroy. It bears a helpful reminder to be conscious of how you expend your resources and carefully craft your legacy. To effectively rise to power and create impact, leaders need both ‘take care’ and ‘take charge’ skills. Celebrating female leaders who have navigated the double bind creates a road map for future leaders who are free to craft a legacy that will stand the test of time, such as Hatshepsut’s memorial temple. 



# Open Your Mind

## Five Ways to Say You are Open Minded, Value Differences, and Actually Mean It

By Ron Carucci

Who among us would ever say, “Sure, I say I’m open minded, but I don’t really mean it. I do everything I can to look like I am open to ideas and viewpoints that are different than mine, but deep down I really believe I am right and those that think differently are just wrong.”

Leaders fail to realize they actually do say this regularly...with their behavior. In fact, we all do. The recent transition to a new presidency has revealed how painfully divided we are as a nation, and it has revealed how horrifically intolerant we are towards those who differ. If we want a truly united country, and if we want truly united organizations, then we’re going to have to get much better at genuinely embracing difference.

We often confuse unity for uniformity. The Latin origin of the word unite is unus, meaning one. It means to join together, to fuse, and to connect. By contrast, the word uniform has its Latin derivative uniformis, meaning constant, unvarying, stable, and unchanging. By its definition, uniformity is divisive – sameness excludes. But uniformity is seductively comforting. We like to be around people who see the world as we do. We naively think that uniformity, the absence of dissonance means, unity. But that’s actually the definition of a cult. The inability of an organization, or a nation, to unite around its differences is a severe liability. Because when the strength of that organization, or nation, is tested by external forces, internal warfare begins and everyone involved is unlikely to fare well.

Whether you lead a team or are a member of one, run an entire organization, or are a neighbor in a community, here are five ways to honestly assess whether your actions and words match your self proclaimed open mindedness.

1. **Inventory who's in your echo chamber.** Echo chambers are alluring things. They can feign “diversity” in masterful ways. I recently sat around the table with a “diverse” leadership team. The leader was an African American man. The team had three woman, two of whom were Caucasian, and one who was Asian American. One of the women was openly gay. There were three men, two were Hispanic and one was Caucasian. People politely joked about the latter being the “token white guy.” And after watching them for a couple of days, I confronted the elephant in the room: “There isn’t an ounce of true diversity at this table.” And they all knew it. It wasn’t that there weren’t fundamental differences among the team – there were. It was the degree to which they worked so hard to hide them that gave it away. At the first sign of even mild dissent, their catch phrase was, “Well, I guess we agree to disagree.” The organization they led had major problems and I expected heated exchanges over how to address them. To the contrary, it was a very pleasant day and a half of “taking issues offline”, waiting for more data, and agreeing to disagree...without making any decisions. Who do you spend regular time with at work or outside work, with whom you have heated disagreements and then have coffee or a beer? If you don’t have people around you who comfortably and routinely exchange differing views without fear of retribution or estrangement, you’re in trouble. It means there is critical information you aren’t getting about decisions you are making, relationships you are participating in, and priorities you are pursuing.

2. **Own your hypocrisy.** Holding steadfast to convictions is a beautiful and upstanding thing to do. But doing so at the expense of other principles isn’t. You can’t staunchly advocate for more investments in employee development but then never spend any time coaching your own direct reports. You can’t march up and down public streets advocating for those you believe to be marginalized in some way, but then marginalize anyone who disagrees with you. You can’t announce that you are passionate about empowering those you lead, but then only delegate the decisions and work you find the most distasteful. And you can’t invite others’ feedback on your leadership then do nothing with it when you get it. The moment you declare something you believe, like being open minded to differing views, you will get scrutinized for how well you live up to your own standards. You need to view your actions through the eyes of those who might not see things as you do to be sure your actions and words match.


3. **Spend real time with your “they”.** When we disagree with people, we objectify them. We concoct “versions” of them that conform with, and justify, our disdain for them. We “other” them. In one client organization, the heads of Supply Chain and Sales were known enemies. When you asked them about each other, they would talk of respecting the other, having a good “working professional relationship”. A look deeper revealed that the Supply Chain head believed that the Sales head was driven by greed, driving “bad” sales that made forecasting nearly impossible. The Sales head believed the Supply Chain head to be lazy and risk-averse, working hard to avoid progressive change. As they discovered how wrong their mutual assumptions were, they were able to work more collaboratively and productively. But it took a lot of work to get them there. On a piece of paper, jot down the names of those in your organization with whom you regularly work and with whom you have fundamental disagreements. How have those disagreements impaired trust? Or your ability to collaborate or lead? These are the people (and we all have them) to whom you nod politely in meetings, but deep inside you’re convinced are wrong and you’re right. What if you actually spent time vetting your assumptions and engaging the ways in

which you are different? Might you share more common ground than you imagine? I dare you to pick one person from your list and invite them to lunch, and find out which assumptions you hold about them to be profoundly inaccurate.

4. **Confront your deepest fears.** Research shows our aversion to others who are different stems from deep seated fears. It also shows that the more exposure we have to those with differences, the more that fear diminishes. We associate difference with conflict, disagreement, winning-losing, and the risk of social status or reputation. Though often irrational, our fears lead to self-protection and resistance to expand how we think. We fear that accepting (different than agreeing with) the views or ideas of those we disagree with means compromising our own ideas, or condoning beliefs and choices that contradict our moral or ethical principles. Dig deep to understand what you most fear when considering the acceptance of views that differ from yours. Does your resistance lie with the idea itself? The person with the idea or their motives? The intensity with which they are trying to persuade you? If you can isolate what you fear, you can test the rationality of that fear against the value to be gained by building common ground with a colleague.

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for uniformity."

5. **Get the respect thing right.** Superficial politeness and cowardly avoidance isn't genuine respect. The real test of respecting people who differ from you in some way is how you act when they aren't present. Our political landscape has mastered mockery, sarcasm, extreme hyperbole, sharp insults, condescending dismissal, and mass ridicule as the norm for coping with differences. I encountered one leader, whose sophomoric insults about a woman on his team shared with a few close colleagues backfired when she walked into his office in the middle of one of his mocking stories about her. He was mortified because he got caught. Despite the many times he'd told her what a valuable member of his team she was, he struggled to see the disrespect in telling a "harmless story about an embarrassing moment". And he was actually an intelligent, socially skilled manager. The humiliated look on her face as she slowly realized the story was about her jolted him into a new understanding of true respect. But that lesson came at painful cost.

To be sure, embracing differences at a genuinely open level is very hard. Our fundamental identities come to light when they reflect off those who don't see the world as we do. To look honestly at what reflects back can be unnerving when it doesn't match who we've thought ourselves to be. People who differ from us reveal who we are. When we avoid them, we stop discovering who we are. If you want to become the best version of yourself, you need to be in relationships with those who aren't like you. Not just polite exchanges of pleasantries. Commit to perusing refining experiences of relationships with those who are different from you, where you help each other become more of who you can be individually, and together, differences and all. 



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