



Turn Conflict Into High Performance with Polarity Thinking Handout to print for class

Key points about polarities

1. Both poles are necessary.
2. They are interdependent opposites that need each other over time for sustainable success
3. If you over focus on one pole to the neglect of the other, you will anticipate or experience the downside of that pole. The reverse is also true.
4. To get “relief” from the downside of either pole, you must focus on the upside of the opposite pole.
5. The oscillation is ongoing...the natural tension between poles is unavoidable, unsolvable, indestructible and can be engaged to reach a goal. It’s the same for all polarities.

Identifying polarities

- 1. Is the difficulty ongoing, like breathing?**
 - yes = probably a polarity to leverage
 - no = probably a problem to solve
- 2. Are there two alternatives that are interdependent, meaning you can only focus on one pole for so long before you are required to focus on the other pole, like inhaling and exhaling?**
 - yes = probably a polarity to leverage
 - no = probably a problem to solve
- 3. Is it necessary, over time, for you to have both identified upsides?**
 - yes = probably a polarity to leverage
 - no = probably a problem to solve
- 4. Will focusing on one upside to the neglect of the other eventually undermine your efforts to move toward your higher purpose?**
 - yes = probably a polarity to leverage
 - no = probably a problem to solve



Problem or polarity? Some contrasts

Problem to Solve (either/or)	Polarity to Manage (both/and)
<p>They are finite. There is an end point. They are solvable.</p>	<p>They are ongoing. There is no end point. They are not solvable. They must be managed together.</p>
<p>Independent Alternatives</p>	<p>Interdependent Alternatives</p>
<p>They can stand alone. There is no need to include an alternative for the solution to work.</p>	<p>Neither can stand alone. The alternatives need each other to optimize the situation over time.</p>
<p>Often contain mutually exclusive opposites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should we promote Bill? • What should we include in our customer survey? • When was the war of 1812? • Should we remove one level of management? 	<p>Always contain mutually inclusive opposites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and Team • Cost and Quality • Competition and Collaboration • Work and Home