

Leadership Worksheet – Rethinking The “Misfit”

Reframing Value in Cognitive Difference

This reflective tool helps you as a manager move beyond surface-level judgments and explore how under-recognised cognitive styles might offer hidden value in your complex and dynamic environment.

Step 1: Identify a Team Member

Think of someone on your team you’ve internally labelled — even subtly — as a “misfit,” “difficult,” “off-brand,” or “not quite fitting in.”

- Name or initials (for personal reference only): _____
- Role or team: _____

Step 2: Reflection Prompts

1. Why do you consider this person a misfit?
 - What words have you used (aloud or internally) to describe them?
 - Is the concern about their behaviour, communication, pace, approach to problems or something else?
2. What observable behaviours are you noticing?
 - Be specific: How do they act in meetings? In writing? Under pressure?
 - Do they interrupt, go off-topic, delay decisions, challenge ideas, go quiet, or seem too intense?
3. What makes those behaviours inappropriate, disruptive or below expectations?
 - Are they misaligned with your team’s norms or culture?
 - Do they create friction, slow processes, confuse others, or seem emotionally misattuned?
4. Could there be another explanation for these behaviours?
 - Could their thinking style be more reflective, contextual, or pattern-based than what your process currently rewards?
 - Could their signals be filtered or missed because they don’t “perform” insight in conventional ways?



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5. In what ways might this person add value, especially in unexpected or overlooked domains?
 - Have they spotted risks others missed? Asked sharp questions? Offered novel ideas?
 - Do they contribute in writing, after meetings, or in high-pressure situations?
 - What kinds of problems or environments seem to suit them better?

6. What conditions might help this person thrive and contribute more fully?
 - Could different formats (asynchronous input, visual tools, slower-paced sessions) support their strengths?
 - What adjustments could you make to create psychological safety for their way of thinking?

Bonus Insight:

Consider mapping this person onto a polarity, e.g. “speed and depth” or “certainty and ambiguity.” Are they bringing balance to a team that leans heavily in one direction?



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