

Leadership Worksheet – How to Use the Polarity Map Template

Polarity thinking helps you navigate tensions that **can't be solved** with either/or decisions because both sides matter. Use this template to get clarity and open up smarter conversations with your team.

Step-by-Step: How to Fill in a Polarity Map

1. Identify the Polarity You're Navigating

Choose a tension in your work or organisation that feels like it's "both/and," not "either/or."

Ask: What are two interdependent values or approaches that both matter here?

Examples:

- Innovation ↔ Efficiency
- Centralized Control ↔ Local Autonomy
- Transparency ↔ Confidentiality

2. Define the Greater Purpose

At the top of your map, write a shared greater purpose. This is the overarching goal that this polarity exists to support, it's what would happen if you could get the best of both poles.

Ask: Why does this tension matter? What are we ultimately trying to serve?

Example: "Delivering high-impact, scalable innovation while staying aligned as one team."

3. Name the Two Poles (A and B)

In the top left and top right boxes, label each pole neutrally. Avoid framing one as "better" or "worse."

Pole A: One essential value or action (e.g., "Structure")

Pole B: The other value or action (e.g., "Flexibility")



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4. Describe the Upsides (Positive Results)

In the upper quadrants, list the benefits of each pole when it's functioning well.

Ask: What's possible when we lean into this wisely and in balance?

5. Uncover the Downsides (Overuse Risks)

In the lower quadrants, note what can happen when one pole is overused or relied on in isolation.

Ask: What are the unintended consequences of going too far in this direction?

6. Name the Deepest Fear

Beneath the downsides, name the core fear or worry that might drive over-attachment to both poles.

Ask: What are we afraid will happen if we go into the overuses of both poles?

7. Spot the Early Warning Signs

Identify indicators that you're tipping too far into one pole. These are subtle signals, before major issues arise.

Ask: What tells us we're drifting off balance?

Use It With Your Team

Use this tool in a team meeting to start a productive dialogue. Let everyone contribute insights and refine the map together.

Remember: This Is Just the First Take

This map gives you a starting point, but fully working with a polarity involves deeper mapping, dynamic monitoring, and practices that shift over time. Also, you'll find that sometimes the polarities at play aren't clear and need uncovering. That's where expert support and training makes the difference.

👉 Want help turning your tension into a strength? Let's talk.



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