Breathing Out and Breathing In
Levering Polarities for Improvement

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This material is based on work by Barry Johnson and Polarity Management Associates

See It!

Get Oxygen
Clean out Carbon Dioxide

Too much Carbon Dioxide
Too little Oxygen

Inhale
Exhale
Leveraging Polarity Energy Systems

See It

Map It

Include Key Stakeholders

Tap It - #1 Assess Present Realities

Tap It - #2 Action Steps

Tap It - #3 Early Warnings

Continue Tapping - #1, 2, 3

Map it!

Greater Purpose Statement (GPS) - why balance this polarity?

Values = positive results from focusing on the left pole

Fears = negative results from over-focusing on the left pole to the neglect of the right pole

Values = positive results from focusing on the right pole

Fears = negative results from over-focusing on the right pole to the neglect of the left pole

Deeper Fear from lack of balance
Some Common Organisational Polarities

Quality AND Cost
Patient AND Population
Responsibility AND Freedom
Central AND Local
Knowledge AND Experience
Control AND Empowerment
Continuity AND Change
Consistent AND Flexible
Logic AND Creativity
Individual AND Team
Planning AND Implementation

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

Map It

1. Choose polarity which is real to you
2. Define higher purpose, greater fear
3. Map this polarity
4. Start where your energy is
5. You have 10 minutes
**Worked Example 1**

**Organisation is a consistent high performer over time**

- Workforce is actively engaged and energized in opportunities for change and development
- Investment in future capacity and capabilities for the emergent environment
- Teams have authority and capability to respond to trends and expectations

**Values = positive results from focusing on the left pole**

- Lack of attention to core delivery and maintenance processes
- Resources wasted in schemes and development which do not deliver
- Duplication and poor alignment as teams stay open to multiple possibilities

**Organisation is no longer fit for purpose**

- Workforce focused on here and now performance
- Proactive, lean organization
- Routine processes are standardized with high compliance for current environment

**Values = positive results from focusing on the right pole**

- Lack of flexibility bores and alienates workforce
- Over-emphasis on cost management
- Organisation left behind by the market

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**Tap It - #1 Assess Present Realities**

**Greater Purpose Statement (GPS) - why balance**

**Values = positive results from focusing on the left pole**

- Almost Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Almost Never

**Values = positive results from focusing on the right pole**

- Almost Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Almost Never

**NB**

the Polarity Assessment for Organizations
Tap It – Action Steps and Warning Signs

1. Go to a new map

1. What 3 action steps do you need to stay in the upside of both poles?

1. What are 3 early warnings that you are falling into the downside of each pole?

1. You have 10 Minutes
**Worked Example 2**

### Strategic Planning
- Workforce is actively engaged and energized in opportunities for change and development
- Investment in future capacity and capabilities for the emergent environment
- Teams have authority and capability to respond to trends and expectations
- Workforce focused on here and now performance
- Preemptive, lean organization
- Routine processes are standardized with high compliance for current environment

### Operational Delivery
- Lack of attention to core delivery and maintenance processes
- Resources wasted in schemes and development which do not deliver
- Duplication and poor alignment as teams stay open to multiple possibilities
- Real time monitoring of compliance and complaints; internal and external
- Schemes fail to deliver against planned ROI
- Thrust of flexibility, focus and adaptation
- Over-emphasis on cost management
- Organisation left behind by the market
- Transparent benchmarking and feedback

### Early Warnings
- Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole:
  - A. Real time monitoring of compliance and complaints; internal and external
  - B. Schemes fail to deliver against planned ROI

### Action Steps
- How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole?

### Early Warnings
- Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this right pole:
  - A. Thrust of flexibility, focus and adaptation
  - B. Duplication and poor alignment as teams stay open to multiple possibilities

### Action Steps
- How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole?

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**See It, Map It, Tap It**

### Higher Purpose
- Values = positive results of focusing on the left pole
- Values = positive results of focusing on the right pole

### Early Warnings
- Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole:
  - A. Thrust of flexibility, focus and adaptation
  - B. Duplication and poor alignment as teams stay open to multiple possibilities

### Action Steps
- How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole?

### Early Warnings
- Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this right pole:
  - A. Over-emphasis on cost management
  - B. Organisation left behind by the market

### Action Steps
- How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole?
Using Polarity Thinking

- Leveraging the natural dynamics of the polarity
- Develop Both / And thinking; and support others to adopt
- Avoid mistakes of offering ‘solutions’ which will become ‘downsides’
- Be aware of own preferences, and therefore ‘blindspots’
- Pay attention to the resistance – there is wisdom in it

A systematic approach

- See It
- Map It
- Tap It...
- ...understand, benchmark and improve