

18. Leadership Compass Exercise

Can understanding the way you approach work and how it differs from other approaches help you practice effective leadership?

Topics: Self-awareness, work styles, teamwork

Summary: The Leadership Compass provides participants a tool for understanding how they approach work and how it can differ from others'. One key to effective leadership is to be flexible in your work style and receptive to others whose styles differ from your own.

Outcomes:

Participants take away a deeper understanding and appreciation for each other's work styles and approaches.

Participants take away a deeper understanding of the need for a variety of work styles to make our organization function.

Participants take away a device and language to help work together better as a team and an organization.

Participants take away a deeper sense of team and teamwork.

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials: Posters of the directions of the Leadership Compass

Handouts 1–4

Newsprint or large sheets of paper

Markers

Procedure:

Warm Up:

Before starting, set up the room so that each corner represents a cardinal point (i.e., north, south, etc.). Small groups will gather in their specified corners. Introduce the Leadership Compass. Like a directional compass, the Leadership Compass has four directions, or ways in which people approach work. Many of us work in all of the directions at different times. Many of us have a resting place where we tend to be most comfortable. It is important for participants to know their preferred leadership style and to be able to communicate and work with people with other styles.



The Activity:

1. Give the participants an opportunity to read Handouts 1–4, which contain descriptions of the four leadership styles. (10 minutes)
2. Ask participants to think about the one that most applies to them. If someone has difficulty determining which style to choose, have them ask themselves these questions:
 - What seems most comfortable?
 - What is your tendency when under pressure?
 - What is your first inclination when you get a new project?
 - What feedback have you been given about yourself?
3. After participants have decided where they fit best, have them form small groups in the corners of the room based on their preferred approach.
4. Based on their work experiences, ask each group to answer the following questions on chart paper. Have the groups report out.
What is really great about being your direction?
What is really hard about being your direction?
5. Ask each direction to plan a vacation. Give them very few instructions except that they have 10 minutes to plan a vacation as a group. Give them chart paper to record the trip they are planning. Have each group present their vacation. Notice the differences in style.

Wrap Up:

1. Have each group answer the following question on chart paper:
What are 10 tips that others can follow to work best with your direction?
2. Have participants choose a theme song for their direction. They will be asked to sing it as a group. (For example: West – Taking Care of Business, East – My Way)
3. Here are a few additional questions and topics you can ask the groups to address:
What is your direction's greatest strength?
What is your direction's greatest weakness?
What is your direction's pet peeve?
What pace does your direction keep?
What animal best represents your direction?
What would be your direction's mascot?

Sources:

The Personality Compass by Diane Turner and Thelma Greco, 1998.
The Medicine Way: A Shamanic Path to Self-Mastery. Kenneth Meadows. Element, 1991.
The Medicine Wheel: Earth Astrology. Sun Bear and Waburn. Simon and Schuster, 1980.

HANDOUT 1

North: The “Get It Done” Person

Approach to Work

Assertive, Active, Decisive

Likes to be in control and determine the course of events

Quick to act, expresses urgency for others to act quickly also

Enjoys challenging people and situations

Thinks in terms of the “bottom line”

Likes a quick pace and the fast track

Courageous, Ambitious, and Confident

Perseveres – Not stopped by “NO”

Goal-centered, ambitious

Hardworking leader who is comfortable being in front

Value Words – “Do it now!” “I’ll do it.”

Best Ways to Work with a North

Present your case quickly, clearly, and with enthusiasm and confidence

Let them know they will be involved – their payoff and their role

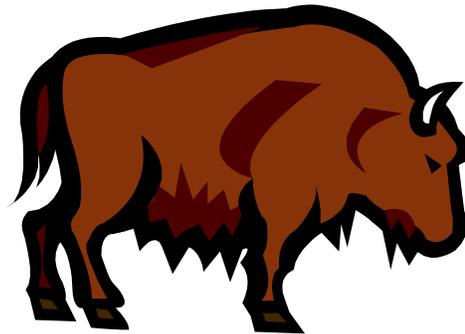
Focus on the “challenge” of the task.

Provide them with plenty of autonomy

Establish timelines and stick with them

Give them positive, public recognition

Use them to complete tasks that require motivation, persuasion, and initiative



HANDOUT 2

South: The Nurturer

Approach to Work

Friendly, Likeable team player

Allows others to feel important

Supportive, nurturing and caring towards colleagues

Willing to trust others' statements at face value

Peace-loving, sympathetic, and helpful

Feelings-based, trusts own emotions and intuition as truth

Able to focus on the present moment

Process-centered

Generous, non-competitive and likes to build on the ideas of others

Value Words: "Right" and "Fair"

Best Ways to Work with a South

Remember process, attention to what is happening with the relationship between you

Justify your decisions around values and ethics

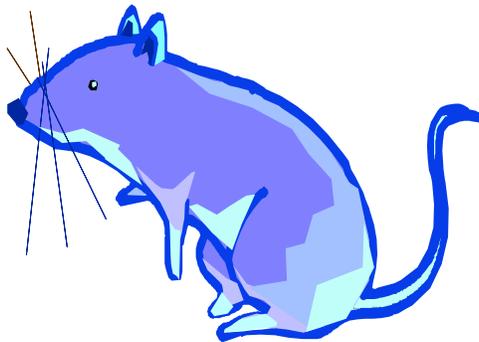
Appeal your relationship with this person and his or her other relationships

Listen hard and allow the expression of feelings and intuition in logical arguments

Be aware that this person may have a hard time saying "NO" and may be easily steamrolled

Provide plenty of positive reassurance and likeability

Let the personal know you like them and appreciate them



HANDOUT 3

East: The Visionary

Approach to Work

Innovative, Creative and sees the big picture
Very idea oriented, focuses on future thought
Risk-taker, adventurous, spontaneous
Has insight into mission and purpose
Looks for overarching themes and ideas
Appreciates a lot of information
Strong spiritual awareness, free spirited, unconventional
Likes to experiment and explore
Value words: “Option” “Possibility”

Best Ways to Work with an East

Show appreciation and enthusiasm for ideas
Listen and be patient during idea generation
Avoid criticizing or judging ideas
Allow and support divergent thinking
Provide a variety of tasks
Provide help and supervision to support detail and project follow through



HANDOUT 4

West: The Analyst

Approach to Work

Seen as practical, dependable, and thorough

Provide planning and resources to others

Moves carefully, deliberately, and follows procedures and guidelines

Use data to make logical and analytical decisions

Weighs all sides of an issue, balanced

Introspective, self-analytical, focused, reserved

Careful, thoroughly examines people's needs in situations

Works well with existing resources – gets the most out of what has been done in the past

Skilled at finding the fatal flaw in an idea or a project

Value Words: "Objective," "Organized"

Best Ways to Work with a West

Allow plenty of time for decision-making

Provide data – objective facts and figures that a West can trust

Don't be put off by critical "NO" statements

Minimize the expression of emotion and use logic when possible

Appeal to tradition, a sense of history, and correct procedures



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The Personality Compass by Diane Turner and Thelma Greco, 1998.

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