

Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting.

– Karl Wallenda, American aerialist and circus performer

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Not comfortable with change or uncertainty
- ☐ May not do well on fuzzy problems with no clear solution or outcome
- ☐ May prefer more data than others, and structure over uncertainty
- ☐ Prefers things tacked down and sure
- ☐ Less efficient and productive under ambiguity
- ☐ Too quick to close
- ☐ May have a strong need to finish everything
- ☐ May like to do things the same way time after time

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 1,5,12,14,16,28,30,32,36,39,40,46,47,50,51,52,53,58

SKILLED

- ☐ Can effectively cope with change
- ☐ Can shift gears comfortably
- ☐ Can decide and act without having the total picture
- ☐ Isn't upset when things are up in the air
- ☐ Doesn't have to finish things before moving on
- ☐ Can comfortably handle risk and uncertainty

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May move to conclusions without enough data
- ☐ May fill in gaps by adding things that aren't there
- ☐ May frustrate others by not getting specific enough
- ☐ May undervalue orderly problem solving
- ☐ May reject precedent and history
- ☐ May err toward the new and risky at the expense of proven solutions
- ☐ May over-complicate things

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 5,17,24,30,35,39,40,47,50,51,52,59,61,63

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Avoid criticism
- ☐ Avoid risk
- ☐ Disorganized
- ☐ Get overwhelmed
- ☐ Like structure and control
- ☐ Perfectionist

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LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Strategic Skills Factor (I). This competency is in the Creating the New and Different Cluster (C) with: 14, 28, 46, 58. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

According to studies, 90% of the problems of middle managers and above are ambiguous—it's neither clear what the problem is nor what the solution is. The higher you go, the more ambiguous things get. Most people with a brain, given unlimited time and 100% of the information, could make accurate and good decisions. Most people, given access to how this specific problem has been solved hundreds of times before, could repeat the right decision. The real rewards go to those who can comfortably make more good decisions than bad with less than all of the information, in less time, with few or no precedents on how it was solved before.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Incrementalism.** The essence of dealing comfortably with uncertainty is the tolerance of errors and mistakes, and absorbing the possible heat and criticism that follow. Acting on an ill-defined problem with no precedents to follow means shooting in the dark with as informed a decision as you can make at the time. People who are good at this are incrementalists. They make a series of smaller decisions, get instant feedback, correct the course, get a little more data, move forward a little more, until the bigger problem is under control. They don't try to get it right the first time. Many problem-solving studies show that the second or third try is when we really understand the underlying dynamics of problems. They also know that the more uncertain the situation is, the more likely it is they will make mistakes in the beginning. So you need to work on two practices. Start small so you can recover more quickly. Do little somethings as soon as you can and get used to heat.

- ☐ **2. Perfectionist?** Need or prefer or want to be 100% sure? Lots might prefer that. Perfectionism is tough to let go of because most people see it as a positive trait for themselves. Recognize your perfectionism for what it might be—collecting more information than others to improve your confidence in making a fault-free decision and thereby avoiding risk and criticism. Try to decrease your need for data and your need to be right all the time slightly every week until you reach a more reasonable balance between thinking it through and taking action. Try making some small decisions on little or no data. Anyone with a brain and 100% of the data can make good decisions. The real test is who can act the soonest with a reasonable amount, but not all, of the data. Some studies suggest successful general managers are about 65% correct. Trust your intuition. Let your brain do the calculations.
- ☐ **3. Stuck with what you know?** Do you feel best when you know everything that's going on around you and are in control? Most do. Few are motivated by uncertainty and chaos. But many are challenged by it. They enjoy solving problems no one has solved before. They enjoy cutting paths where no one has been before. You need to become more comfortable being a pioneer. Explore new ground. Learn new things. Practice in your life. Go to theme restaurants you know nothing about. Vacation at places without doing a lot of research. Go to ethnic festivals for groups you have little knowledge about.
- ☐ **4. Disorganized?** Under uncertainty, you have to put the keel in the water yourself. You need to set tight priorities. Focus on the mission-critical few. Don't get diverted by trivia. Get better organized and disciplined. There is a well-established set of best practices for getting work done efficiently and effectively. If you are not disciplined in how you design work for yourself and others and are late taking action because of it, buy books on TQM, ISO and Six Sigma. Go to one workshop on efficient and effective work design. *More help? – See #50 Priority Setting, #52 Process Management, and #63 Total Work Systems (e.g., TQM/ISO/Six Sigma).*
- ☐ **5. Problem definition.** Under uncertainty, it really helps to get as firm a handle as possible on the problem. Figure out what causes it. Keep asking why. See how many causes you can come up with and how many organizing buckets you can put them in. This increases the chance of a better solution because you can see more connections. The evidence from decision-making research makes it clear that thorough problem definition with appropriate questions to answer leads to better decisions. Focusing on solutions or information first often slows things down since we have no conceptual buckets in which to organize our thinking. Learn to ask more questions. In one study of problem solving, 7% of comments were questions and about half were solutions.

- **6. Visualize the problem.** Complex processes or problems with a lot of uncertainty are hard to understand. They tend to be a hopeless maze unless they are put in a visual format. One technique is a pictorial chart called a storyboard where a process or vision or strategy is illustrated by its components being depicted as pictures. A variation of this is to do the old pro and con, +’s and -’s of a problem and process, then flow chart those according to what’s working and not working. Another is the fishbone diagram used in Total Quality Management. It is a method of breaking down the causes of a problem into categories. Buy a flow charting and/or project planning software program to help you visualize problems quickly.
- **7. Develop a philosophical stance toward failure/criticism.** After all, most innovations fail, most proposals fail, most change efforts fail, anything worth doing takes repeated effort. To increase learning from your mistakes, design feedback loops to be as immediate as possible. The faster and the more frequent the cycles, the more opportunities to learn—if we do one smaller thing a day for three days instead of one bigger thing in three, we triple our learning opportunities. There will be many mistakes and failures; after all, since you’re not sure, it’s very likely no one else knows what to do either. They just have a right to comment on your errors. The best tack when confronted with a mistake is to say “What can we learn from this?” *More help? – See #45 Personal Learning.*
- **8. Stress.** Some get stressed with increased ambiguity and uncertainty. We lose our anchor. We are not at our best when we are anxious, frustrated, upset or when we lose our cool. What brings out your emotional response? Write down why you get anxious—when you don’t know what to do; don’t want to make a mistake; afraid of the unknown consequences; don’t have the confidence to act. When you get emotional, drop the problem for awhile. Go do something else. Come back to it when you are under better control. Let your brain work on it while you do something safer. *More help? – See #11 Composure and #107 Lack of Composure.*
- **9. Change is letting go of one trapeze in the air to catch the next one.** For a small amount of time, you have hold of nothing but thin air. The second gets you to a new platform and a new place. If you hang on to the first one, afraid you will fall, you will always return to the same old platform; safe but not new or different. Change is letting go. Stay informed about business/technological change and ask what it means for your work. Visualize a different and better outcome. Talk about it. Invite ideas. Interview those who have successfully pulled off changes. Experiment. The more you do this, the more comfortable you’ll feel. To better understand dealing with change, read *The Future of Leadership* by White, Hodgson and Crainer.

- **10. Finishing.** Do you prefer to finish what you have started? Do you have a high need to complete tasks? Wrap them up in nice clean packages? Working well with ambiguity and under uncertainty means moving from incomplete task to incomplete task. Some may be abandoned, some may never be finished. They'll probably only ever get 80% done and you'll constantly have to edit your actions and decisions. Change your internal reward process toward feeling good about fixing mistakes and moving things forward incrementally, more than finishing any given project.

*He that leaveth nothing to chance will do few
things ill, but he will do very few things.*

– George Savile

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If you're the boss and your people fight you openly when they think you're wrong, that's healthy. If your people fight each other openly in your presence for what they believe in, that's healthy.

But keep all conflict eyeball to eyeball.

– Robert Townsend, American business writer

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Avoids conflict in situations and with people
- ☐ May accommodate, want everyone to get along
- ☐ May get upset as a reaction to conflict, takes it personally
- ☐ Can't operate under conflict long enough to get a good deal
- ☐ Gives in and says yes too soon
- ☐ Gets into conflict by accident; doesn't see it coming
- ☐ Will let things fester rather than dealing with them directly
- ☐ Will try to wait long enough for it to go away
- ☐ May be excessively competitive and have to win every dispute

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 2,3,4,8,9,11,13,16,31,33,34,36,37,41,50,51,52,57

SKILLED

- ☐ Steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities
- ☐ Reads situations quickly
- ☐ Good at focused listening
- ☐ Can hammer out tough agreements and settle disputes equitably
- ☐ Can find common ground and get cooperation with minimum noise

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May be seen as overly aggressive and assertive
- ☐ May get in the middle of everyone else's problems
- ☐ May drive for a solution before others are ready
- ☐ May have a chilling effect on open debate
- ☐ May spend too much time with obstinate people and unsolvable problems

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 2,3,31,33,34,36,37,40,41,51,52,56,60,64

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Avoid conflict
- ☐ Can't negotiate
- ☐ Get too emotional
- ☐ Slow to catch on
- ☐ Take things personally
- ☐ Too sensitive

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Courage Factor (III). This competency is in the Dealing with Trouble Cluster (H) with: 9, 13, 34, 57. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

One survey found that managers were spending 18% of their time dealing with direct face-to-face conflict. Most organizations are decentralized and compartmentalized which sets up natural conflict, group to group. Whenever you form two groups, conflict follows. Gender and race inroads have probably brought with them increased conflict. Competition has heated up, making speed and agility more important but also created more conflict and less relaxed reflection. There is data-based conflict—my numbers are better than your numbers. There is opinion conflict—my opinion has greater value than yours. There is power conflict—this is mine. And there is unnecessary conflict due to how people position themselves and protect their turf. Dealing with and resolving all these kinds of conflict is more important and frequent than it used to be.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Cooperative relations.** The opposite of conflict is cooperation. Developing cooperative relationships involves demonstrating real and perceived equity, the other side feeling understood and respected, and taking a problem oriented point of view. To do this more: increase the realities and perceptions of fairness—don't try to win every battle and take all the spoils; focus on the common-ground issues and interests of both sides—find wins on both sides, give in on little points; avoid starting with entrenched positions—show respect for them and their positions; and reduce any remaining conflicts to the smallest size possible.
- ☐ **2. Causing unnecessary conflict.** Language, words and timing set the tone and can cause unnecessary conflict that has to be managed before you can get anything done. Do you use insensitive language? Do you raise your voice often? Do you use terms and phrases that challenge others? Do you use demeaning

terms? Do you use negative humor? Do you offer conclusions, solutions, statements, dictates or answers early in the transaction? Give reasons first, solutions last. When you give solutions first, people often directly challenge the solutions instead of defining the problem. Pick words that are other-person neutral. Pick words that don't challenge or sound one-sided. Pick tentative and probabilistic words that give others a chance to maneuver and save face. Pick words that are about the problem and not the person. Avoid direct blaming remarks; describe the problem and its impact.

- **3. Practice Aikido**, the ancient art of absorbing the energy of your opponent and using it to manage him/her. Let the other side vent frustration, blow off steam, but don't react. Listen. Nod. Ask clarifying questions. Ask open-ended questions like, "What one change could you make so we could achieve our objectives better?" "What could I do that would help the most?" Restate their position periodically to signal you have understood. But don't react. Keep them talking until they run out of venom. When the other side takes a rigid position, don't reject it. Ask why—what are the principles behind the position, how do we know it's fair, what's the theory of the case. Play out what would happen if their position was accepted. Then explore the concern underlying the answer. Separate the people from the problem. When someone attacks you, rephrase it as an attack on the problem. In response to threats, say you'll only negotiate on merit and fairness. If the other side won't play fair, surface their game—"It looks like you're playing good cop, bad cop. Why don't you settle your differences and tell me one thing?" In response to unreasonable proposals, attacks, or a non-answer to a question, you can always say nothing. People will usually respond by saying more, coming off their position a bit, or at least revealing their true interests. Many times, with unlimited venting and your understanding, the actual conflict shrinks.
- **4. Downsizing the conflict.** Almost all conflicts have common points that get lost in the heat of the battle. After a conflict has been presented and understood, start by saying that it might be helpful to see if we agree on anything. Write them on the flip chart. Then write down the areas left open. Focus on common goals, priorities and problems. Keep the open conflicts as small as possible and concrete. The more abstract it gets, "we don't trust your unit," the more unmanageable it gets. To this respond, "Tell me your specific concern—why exactly don't you trust us, can you give me an example?" Usually after calm discussion, they don't trust your unit on this specific issue under these specific conditions. That's easier to deal with. Allow others to save face by conceding small points that are not central to the issue, don't try to hit a home run every time. If you can't agree on a solution, agree on a procedure to move forward. Collect more data. Appeal to a higher power. Get a third party arbitrator. Something. This creates some positive motion and breaks stalemates.

- **5. Too emotional?** Sometimes our emotional reactions lead others to think we have problems with conflict. In conflict situations, what emotional reactions do you have (such as impatience or non-verbals like flushing or drumming your pen or fingers)? Learn to recognize those as soon as they start and substitute something more neutral. Most emotional responses to conflict come from personalizing the issue. Separate people issues from the problem at hand and deal with people issues separately and later if they persist. Always return to facts and the problem before the group; stay away from personal clashes. Attack the problem by looking at common interests and underlying concerns, not people and their positions. Try on their views for size, the emotion as well as the content. Ask yourself if you understand their feelings. Ask what they would do if they were in your shoes. See if you can restate each other's position and advocate it for a minute to get inside each other's place. If you get emotional, pause and collect yourself. You are not your best when you get emotional. Then return to the problem. *More help? – See #11 Composure and #107 Lack of Composure.*
- **6. Bargaining and trading.** Since you can't absolutely win all conflicts unless you keep pulling rank, you have to learn to horse-trade and bargain. What do they need that I have? What could I do for them outside this conflict that could allow them to give up something I need now in return? How can we turn this into a win for both of us? *More help? – See #37 Negotiating.*
- **7. Clear problem-focused communication.** Follow the rule of equity: Explain your thinking and ask them to explain theirs. Be able to state their position as clearly as they do whether you agree or not; give it legitimacy. Separate facts from opinions and assumptions. Generate a variety of possibilities first rather than stake out positions. Keep your speaking to 30-60 seconds bursts. Try to get them to do the same. Don't give the other side the impression you're lecturing or criticizing them. Explain objectively why you hold a view; make the other side do the same. Asks lots of questions, make fewer statements. To identify interests behind positions, ask why they hold them or why they wouldn't want to do something. Always restate their position to their satisfaction before offering a response. *More help? – See #27 Informing.*
- **8. Arbitration.** When there is a true impasse, suggest a third equal-power party to resolve the remaining conflicts. Use a third party to write up each side's interests and keep suggesting solutions until you can agree. Or if time is an issue, pass it on to a higher authority. Present both sides calmly and objectively, and let the chips fall where they may.
- **9. Selective conflict.** Do specific people, issues, styles, or groups set you off and make you handle the conflict poorly? Write down the last 20 times when you handled conflict poorly. What's common in the situations? Are there three to five common themes? Are the same people involved? Different people but the same

style? Certain kinds of issues? Once you have isolated the cause, mentally rehearse a better way of handling it when it comes up next time.

- **10. Larger scale organizational conflict.** Organizations are a complex maze of constituencies, issues and rivalries peopled by strong egos, sensitives, and empire protectors. Political mistakes come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The most common is saying things you shouldn't. Next are actions that are politically out of line and not right for the context. Worst are politically unacceptable moves, initiatives, tactics and strategies. Last are unnecessary conflicts, tensions, misunderstandings and rivalries created because you took after a specific person or group. Work to understand the politics of the organization. Who are the movers and shakers in the organization? Who are the major gatekeepers who control the flow of resources, information and decisions? Who are the guides and the helpers? Get to know them better. Do lunch. Who are the major resisters and stoppers? Try to avoid or go around them or make peace with them. In the special case of dealing with top management, sensitivities are high, egos are big, sensitivity traps are set and tensions can be severe. There is a lot of room for making statements or acting in ways that would be seen as exhibiting your poor political judgment and causing conflict. *More help? – See #38 Organizational Agility, #48 Political Savvy and #119 Political Missteps.*

*Faced with apathy, I will take action. Faced
with conflict, I will seek common ground.*

– Bill Clinton

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27 INFORMING

Factor II: Operating Skills

Cluster F: Getting Work Done Through Others

II – F

*The smarter the journalists are, the better off society is.
[For] to a degree, people read the press to inform themselves—and
the better the teacher, the better the student body.*

– Warren Buffett

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Not a consistent communicator
- ☐ Tells too little or too much
- ☐ Tells too late; timing is off
- ☐ May be unclear, may inform some better than others
- ☐ May not think through who needs to know by when
- ☐ Doesn't seek or listen to the data needs of others
- ☐ May inform but lack follow-through
- ☐ May either hoard information or not see informing as important
- ☐ May only have one mode—written or oral or e-mail

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 1,3,13,18,20,31,33,34,35,44,60

SKILLED

- ☐ Provides the information people need to know to do their jobs and to feel good about being a member of the team, unit, and/or the organization
- ☐ Provides individuals information so that they can make accurate decisions
- ☐ Is timely with information

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May provide too much information
- ☐ May upset people by giving them information they can't handle or preliminary information that turns out not to be true

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 2,8,11,12,22,29,33,38,41,47,48,50,52,64

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Don't think it's needed
- ☐ Inform some better than others

continued

- ☐ Little informing
- ☐ Sporadic informing
- ☐ Too busy
- ☐ Too late in informing
- ☐ Unclear informing
- ☐ Use the wrong informing method

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Operating Skills Factor (II). This competency is in the Getting Work Done Through Others Cluster (F) with: 18, 19, 20, 35. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Although it seems a simple skill, *Informing* ranks 52nd out of 67 (low) competencies in terms of skill proficiency in our research on The LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT®. Informing also has a very high return on investment. Things go better. People are more motivated. Are you too busy? A minimal communicator? Only inform to meet your needs? You don't package information or think through who needs to know what by when? This can lead to some bad consequences for others and you. Maybe that's why they rate Informing as 21st of 67 (high) in importance! It's a simple and important skill that many do not do well or enough of.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Share your thinking.** Do you think if they were any good they would figure it out themselves? You didn't need much information when you were in their jobs. To help those around you grow and learn from what you know, you have to sometimes think out loud. You have to share your thinking from the initial presentation of the issue through to conclusion. Most of us are on thinking autopilot. We don't think about thinking. When someone else has to or wants to understand how we came up with the decision we have, it's sometimes difficult to unravel it in your mind. You have to go step-by-step and recreate your thinking. Sometimes it helps if other people ask the questions. They can probably guide you through how you came up with an answer or a decision better than you can. Once in a while, you should document a decision or two. What was the issue? What were the pros and cons you considered? How did you weight things? Then you can use those examples to demonstrate to others how you make decisions. *More help? – See #17 Decision Quality.*

- ☐ **2. Don't inform enough.** Are you a minimalist? Do you tell people only what they need to know to do their little piece of the puzzle? People are motivated by being aware of the bigger picture. They want to know what to do to do their jobs and more. How does what they are doing fit into the larger picture? What are the other people working on and why? Many people think that's unnecessary information and that it would take too much time to do. They're wrong. The sense of doing something worthwhile is the number two motivator at work! It results in a high return on motivation and productivity. (Try to increase the amount of more-than-your-job information you share.) Focus on the impact on others by figuring out who information affects. Put five minutes on your meeting agenda. Ask people what they want to know and assuming it's not confidential information, tell them. Pick a topic each month to tell your people about.
- ☐ **3. A loner.** Do you keep to yourself? Work alone or try to? Do you hold back information? Do you parcel out information on your schedule? Do you share information to get an advantage or to win favor? Do people around you know what you're doing and why? Are you aware of things others would benefit from but you don't take the time to communicate? In most organizations, these things and things like it will get you in trouble. Organizations function on the flow of information. Being on your own and preferring peace and privacy are OK as long as you communicate things to bosses, peers and teammates that they need to know and would feel better if they knew. Don't be the source of surprises.
- ☐ **4. Cryptic informer.** Some people just aren't good at informing. Their communication styles are not effective. The most effective communicators, according to behavioral research studies: Speak often, but briefly (15-30 seconds); ask more questions than others; make fewer solution statements early in a discussion; headline their points in a sentence or two; summarize frequently, and make more frequent "here's where we are" statements; invite everyone to share their views; typically interject their views after others have had a chance to speak, unless they are passing on decisions. Compare these practices to yours. Work on those that are not up to standard.
- ☐ **5. Inconsistent informing.** Have an information checklist detailing what information should go to whom; pass on summaries or copies of important communications. Determine the information checklist by: keeping tabs on unpleasant surprises people report to you; ask direct reports what they'd like to know to do their jobs better; and check with boss, peers and customers to see if you pass along too little, enough, or too much of the right kinds of information. It's important to know what to pass, to whom to pass, and when to pass, to become an effective informer.

- ☐ **6. Poor informing.** Eliminate disruptive habits such as using the same words too often, hesitating, having frequent filler words like "you know" and "uh," speaking too rapidly or forcefully, using strongly judgmental words, or going into too much detail that leaves listeners bored or wondering what the point is. Are you a complexifier? Simplify and emphasize. Vary the volume and length of time spoken to emphasize key points and maintain the interest of others. Outline complex arguments/processes on paper or overheads or charts to make them easy to follow. Use visual aids. Use common action words, simple examples or visual catch phrases to cement information transfer. *More help? – See #49 Presentation Skills and #67 Written Communications.*
- ☐ **7. Selective informing.** The most common selective pattern is informing up and out but not down or sideways. When these people get their 360° feedback reports, there is a discrepancy among groups on informing. Some groups rate it high and others lower. That means there is not a skills block. You can inform. There is an attitude filter. I will inform some but not others. Why? What do you gain with one group that you lose with another? Is it personal? Are you gaining by sharing? At the expense of others? Why are you avoiding one group? Do you fear debate?
- ☐ **8. Whistle-blowing.** A tough call. Do you know something others should but when they find out, there will be noise and trouble? Saying what needs to be said to the right person in a timely way takes courage. Everybody sees things, observes things, knows things or learns about things that others should know. Many times it's not positive information. Something is about to go wrong. Something is being covered up. Someone is holding back an important piece of information. Someone or something is going off in the wrong direction. It's good news and bad news. If you inform, the organization may gain. But a person or some people may lose. Generally, your best bet is to find the right person and inform. *More help? – See #34 Managerial Courage.*
- ☐ **9. Dealing with the heat of informing.** Informing is not always benign and friendly. It many times generates heat. Defensiveness. Blame. Attacks. Threats. Many times they want to shoot the messenger. Separate the passion from the message. Avoid direct blaming remarks. Deal with people issues directly but separately and maybe off line. If attacked for delivering bad news, you can always say nothing or ask a clarifying question. People will usually respond by saying more, coming off their position a bit, or at least revealing their interests. *More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.*
- ☐ **10. Audience sensitivity.** Unfortunately, one method or style of informing does not play equally well across audiences. Many times you will have to adjust the tone, pace, style and even the message and how you couch it for different audiences. If you are delivering the same message to multiple people or

audiences, always ask yourself how are they different? Some differences among people or audiences include level of sophistication, friendly vs. unfriendly, time sensitivity, whether they prefer it in writing or not and whether a logical or emotional argument will play better. Write or tell? Writing is usually best for the extremes—complex descriptions complete with background and five or six progressive arguments, or on the other side, straightforward, unambiguous things people need to know. You should generally tell when it requires discussion or you are alerting them to a problem. Make a read on each person and each audience and adjust accordingly. *More help? – See #15 Customer Focus and #45 Personal Learning.*

□ **11. Over informing can sometimes be worse than not informing enough.**

One study showed the average employee gets 2.3 million words over three months. Distinguish need-to-know from nice-to-know. Think twice before hitting cc:. Bombarded by overstimulation, the brain stops processing information to prevent psychological burnout. In that respect, too much is worse than too little.

I have found that being honest is the best technique I can use.

*Right up front, tell people what you're trying to accomplish
and what you're willing to sacrifice to accomplish it.*

– Lee Iacocca, Chairman, Chrysler Corporation

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There is no such thing as a minor lapse in integrity.

– Tom Peters

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Is not widely trusted
- ☐ May hedge or not take a stand
- ☐ May treat others differently or indifferently at times
- ☐ May not walk his/her talk and be seen as inconsistent
- ☐ May have trouble keeping confidences and talks out of school
- ☐ Makes promises he/she doesn't or can't keep
- ☐ May lack follow-through and causes problems for others
- ☐ Blames others for own mistakes
- ☐ Seen as just out for him/herself

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 3,22,23,27,33,34,44,57

SKILLED

- ☐ Is widely trusted
- ☐ Is seen as a direct, truthful individual
- ☐ Can present the unvarnished truth in an appropriate and helpful manner
- ☐ Keeps confidences
- ☐ Admits mistakes
- ☐ Doesn't misrepresent him/herself for personal gain

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May be too direct at times, which may catch people off guard and make them uncomfortable
- ☐ May push openness and honesty to the point of being disruptive
- ☐ May be so "only the facts" driven as to omit drawing reasonable conclusions, rendering opinions, or fixing blame, even when it's reasonable

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 2,5,14,22,26,31,33,38,40,42,46,48,52,54,56,64

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Avoid conflict
- ☐ Don't "walk your talk"
- ☐ Hedging; holding back
- ☐ Overly ambitious
- ☐ Problems with keeping confidences
- ☐ Spread too thin; can't say no
- ☐ Too anxious to make the sale
- ☐ Treat others differently
- ☐ Won't take a stand

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Acting with Honor and Character Cluster (R) with: 22. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Integrity and trust are on almost every success profile we see. It is a basic threshold requirement to be a part of the team. Without it, almost nothing else matters. To think that people question our integrity or don't totally trust us is very difficult to accept. The more common causes are personal disorganization, inconsistencies and habits that get us into trouble. Many of us simply haven't thought through the impact of our actions and have little idea how we come across. It can also be a lack of integrity in the bigger sense; people just don't buy what you say.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Are you a hedger?** Do you hold back and qualify everything? Don't speak up when you should? Do you not know how to say what needs to be said so you go bland and qualify everything to death? Do you hesitate or slow down when you are sharing something that is difficult for you? Does your voice go up in volume? Freudian slips? Stumble over words? Even though it's not your intention, do people think you are not disclosing what you really know? Practice coming up with two or three clear statements you are prepared to defend. Test them with people you trust. Keep them on the facts and on the problems. Be specific and don't blame. Don't qualify or make your statements conditional. Just say it. *More help? – See #34 Managerial Courage.*

- ☐ **2. Overselling? Trying too hard to make the sale?** Does your enthusiasm to make the sale or get your point across cause you to commit to too many things in the heat of the transaction? Do you stretch the truth? Do you embellish? The customer you get by unrealistic commitments is the customer you will lose forever when he/she finds out you can't deliver. Can't say no to customers? Do you want to help so much that you put yourself in impossible situations? Afraid that people will think you're not helpful? Being helpful is not helpful when you don't deliver. If you goof on the time required, go back and tell him/her the problem; either renegotiate or ask what else you should move down his/her list of requests. Don't promise something unless you can deliver. If you don't know for sure, say, "I'll let you know when I do." Either promise or don't—don't say "I'll try." If you don't know, just say so and follow up when you do know. Try to reduce your sales pitches to the actual merits of the case.
- ☐ **3. Loose lips?** Some people get into trust issues because they share information others intended to be kept confidential. Be clear on what keeping a confidence means. Some rules are:
- Keep personal information confidential.
 - Don't agree too quickly to keep performance/ethical/legal matters confidential. Warn others up front, "Before you tell me, I can't promise confidentiality on matters that affect unit performance, ethics or legal matters."
 - Ask up front, "Is this to be kept confidential?"
 - If someone is complaining about a coworker's ethics, tell him/her you can do nothing since you know nothing directly. Have him/her confront the person or produce evidence before continuing the discussion.
 - There is usually no guarantee of confidentiality on matters affecting performance, legal and ethical jeopardy.
 - There is usually no guarantee of confidentiality on matters affecting personal safety. Even doctors and psychiatrists pass on warnings of harm to authorities even though they obtained the information in confidence.
 - It doesn't take many slip-ups in an organization before people say you can't be trusted with confidential information.
- ☐ **4. Buying favor?** Do people think you disclose information and use your friendships for personal advantage? Being seen as taking advantage of friendships or using information for personal advantage is hard to deal with. There is a fine line between this and the normal way things get done in organizations: Friends tell each other things, deals get struck, people access their networks, and sharing information is part of the process. Some rules of thumb so as to not cross the line are:

- Make sure it is a business request for information, not a personal one.
- Make sure it improves performance or efficiency or adds value; any benefit to you is then a by-product.
- Make sure you would tell this or ask this of someone you didn't know well in your organization.

☐ **5. Taking responsibility.** Trouble admitting mistakes? Look for others to blame? Do people get blindsided because you don't warn them? People who excel at dealing with their own mistakes usually do the following:

- Admit the mistake early and inform everyone affected what could occur because of it.
- Publicly acknowledge the mistake if necessary; take personal responsibility.
- Demonstrate what they have learned so the mistake does not happen again.
- Move on; don't dwell on it. In a report from Forum Corp, those who admit doubt, errors and mistakes are seen as more competent, just as people who solicit negative feedback are. "Never show weakness" is bad advice. People who show humility are seen as trustworthy because they are truthful.

☐ **6. Trying to avoid conflict?** Do you say what you need to say to get through the meeting or transaction? Do you say things just to go along and not cause trouble? Do you say what you need to say to avoid disagreement or an argument? All these behaviors will eventually backfire when people find out you said something different in another setting or to another person or they notice that you didn't actually follow through and do what you said. *More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.*

☐ **7. A loner.** Do you keep to yourself? Work alone or try to? Do you hold back information? Do you parcel out information on your schedule? Do you keep everything to yourself? Do people around you know what you're doing and why? Even though it may not be your intention, could people think you are holding things back? Do they think you are aware of things others would benefit from but you don't take the time or make the effort to communicate? In most organizations, these things and things like it will get you in trouble. Organizations function on the flow of information. Being on your own and preferring peace and privacy are OK as long as you communicate things to bosses, peers and teammates that they need to know and would feel better if they knew. Make the effort to find out from each group you interact with what it is that they want and need to know and try to comply. *More help? – See #27 Informing.*

- **8. Whistle-blowing.** A tough call. Do you hesitate blowing the whistle? Do you know something others should but when they find out, there will be noise and trouble? Saying what needs to be said to the right person in a timely way takes courage, being direct and straightforward. Everybody sees things, observes things, knows things or learns about things that others should know. Many times it's not positive information. Something is about to go wrong. Something is being covered up. Someone is holding back an important piece of information. Someone or something is going off in the wrong direction. It's good news and bad news. If you inform, the organization may gain. But a person or some people may lose. Generally, your best bet is to find the right person and inform. *More help? – See #34 Managerial Courage.*
- **9. Disorganized.** Do you follow up on simple commitments? Do you return phone calls in a timely manner? Do you forward material that you promised? Do you pass on information you promised to get? Do you carry through on tasks you promised someone you would take care of? Failing to do things like this damages relationships. If you don't follow through well, focus on the receiver. What does this person need to know to implement this change? If you tend to forget, write things down. If you are going to miss a deadline, let people know and give them a second date you will be sure to make. Always out of time? Do you intend to get to things but never have the time? Do you always estimate shorter times to get things done that then take longer? If you run out of time, set up a specific time each day to follow through on commitments. There is a well-established science and a set of best practices in time management. There are a number of books you can buy in any business book store, and there are a number of good courses you can attend. Delegating also helps use your time more effectively. *More help? – See #62 Time Management.*
- **10. Perhaps you really aren't very trustworthy.** You hedge, sabotage others, play for advantage, set up others, don't intend to follow up. You justify it by saying that things are tough, that you're just doing your job, getting results. After all, the end justifies the means. You use others to get your agenda accomplished. First, you need to examine whether this view of the world is really right and if that is the way you really want to be. Second, you need to find out if your career with this organization is salvageable. Have you burned too many bridges? The best way to do this is to admit you have regularly betrayed trusts and not followed through on your commitments. Talk with your boss or mentor to see if you can redeem yourself. If yes, meet with everyone you think you've alienated and see how they respond. Tell them what you're going to do differently. Ask them what you should stop doing. Ask them if the situation can be repaired. *More help? – See #105 Betrayal of Trust.*

- ☐ **11. Are you too ambitious and out mainly for yourself?** Then use "we" instead of "I." Use "the team," "us," "together," more. Say "Let us." "Let's get together." "We can do it." "We're all in this together." Signal that you are thinking and acting "team." To the extent that you legitimately can, spread the credit throughout the team. Always try to share the credit and spread the rewards around. Do you promote the careers of others as well as your own? Do you help other people get ahead with the same vigor as you promote yourself? Be more of a mentor and coach to people with the right stuff who need help to grow and prosper. People will trust you more if they view the relationship as a long-term one rather than something you're just doing because you have to for a few years. *More help? – See #19 Developing Direct Reports and Others and #110 Failure to Build a Team.*
- ☐ **12. Do something about how you're seen.** Write down all the reasons people have for believing you aren't very trustworthy. ("People say I change my mind too much.") Beside this write down what you actually do or don't do to cause this impression. ("I jump to conclusions"; "I'm easily influenced when people complain about something.") Beside this write down the name of someone who does these well. What do they do that you don't? What do you do that they don't? What do you overdo or underdo that may be getting you in trouble? Finally, write down some counter strategies. ("I'll stop and ask questions, not give an immediate answer"; "I'll examine the situation and get back to them in a timely manner.")

*I never did give anybody hell. I just told
the truth and they thought it was hell.*

– Harry S. Truman

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You can observe a lot by just watching.

– Yogi Berra

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Doesn't listen well
- ☐ Cuts people off and finishes their sentences if they hesitate
- ☐ Interrupts to make a pronouncement or render a solution or decision
- ☐ Doesn't learn much from interactions with others
- ☐ Appears not to listen or is too busy constructing his/her own response
- ☐ Many times misses the point others are trying to make
- ☐ May appear arrogant, impatient or uninterested
- ☐ May listen to some groups/people and not to others
- ☐ Inaccurate in restating the case of others

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 3,7,11,12,18,21,23,31,36,41,44,60

SKILLED

- ☐ Practices attentive and active listening
- ☐ Has the patience to hear people out
- ☐ Can accurately restate the opinions of others even when he/she disagrees

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May spend too much time listening
- ☐ May avoid necessary action
- ☐ Others may confuse listening with agreement

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 1,9,12,13,16,17,27,34,37,38,50,57

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Arrogant
- ☐ Defensive
- ☐ Don't care
- ☐ Don't value others
- ☐ Impatient

continued

- ☐ Insensitive
- ☐ Selective listening
- ☐ Too busy

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Being Open and Receptive Cluster (S) with: 11, 26, 41, 44. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Listening means knowing what others have said and meant to say and leaving people comfortable that they have had their say. Most people know the techniques of good listening: Don't interrupt, be able to paraphrase, listen for underlying meaning, be accepting of other views. The problem is we all listen well only when we want to or have to. What most need to learn is how to listen when you don't want to. Remember, listening doesn't mean you accept what they have said or even that you have accepted them. It just means listening.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. There are three kinds of listening problems:**
 - The first is you don't know how to listen. That's the least likely problem.
 - The second is that you know how to listen but you just don't do it with anyone. That's a little more likely.
 - The third is that you listen intently to some, neutrally to others and not at all to yet others. That's the most likely problem. To test this out, do you listen to anyone? Boss? Chairperson? Mother? Children? Priest/minister/rabbi/clergy? Police officer? Best friend? Mentor? Spouse? Professional colleague outside of work? Has anyone ever complimented you or thanked you for listening? If the answer to any of those questions is yes, you have a selective listening problem. You know how to listen, you just turn it off and on.
- ☐ **2. How do people know you are listening?** First, remember the basics. You have your mouth closed. When your mouth is open, your ears automatically close. You have eye contact. You take notes. You don't frown or fidget. How do people know you've understood? You paraphrase what they have said to their satisfaction. How do people know if you have accepted or rejected what you have understood they have said? You tell them. Hopefully in a tactful way if you reject what they have had to say. Give your reasons.

- **3. Listening chillers?** Don't interrupt before they have finished. Don't suggest words when they hesitate or pause. Don't finish their sentences for them. Don't wave off any further input by saying, "Yes I know that," "Yes, I know where you're going," "Yes, I have heard that before." If time is really important, you can say, "Let me see if I know where this is going..." or "I wonder if we could summarize to save both of us some time?" Finally, early in a transaction answers, solutions, conclusions, statements, and dictates shut many people down. You've told them your mind's already made up. Listen first, solve second.
- **4. Questions.** Good listeners ask lots of questions to get to a good understanding. Probing questions. Clarifying questions. Confirming—is this what you are saying—questions. Ask one more question than you do now and add to that until people signal you that they think you are truly listening.
- **5. Selective listening.** Who do you listen to? Who don't you listen to? What factors account for the difference? Level? Age? Skills? Smarts? Like you/not like you? Gender? Direction (listen up but not down)? Setting? Situation? Your needs? Time available? Race? People I need/don't need? People who have something to offer/those who don't? Challenge yourself to practice listening to those you don't usually listen to. Listen for content. Separate the content from the person. Try to ferret out some value from everyone.
- **6. Listening to those who waste a lot of time.** With those you don't have time to listen to, switch to being a teacher. Try to help them craft their communications to you in a more acceptable way. Interrupt to summarize. Tell them to be shorter next time. Come with more/less data. Structure the conversation by helping them come up with categories and structures to stop their rambling. Good listeners don't signal to the "bad" people that they are not listening or are not interested. Don't signal to anyone what bucket they're in. Put your mind in neutral, nod, ask questions, be helpful.
- **7. Listening under duress.** What if you're being criticized or attacked personally? What if people are wrong in what they are saying? The rules remain the same. You need to work on keeping yourself in a calm state when getting negative feedback. You need to shift your thinking. When getting the feedback, your only task is to accurately understand what the person is trying to tell you. It is not, at that point, to accept or refute. That comes later. Practice verbal Aikido, the ancient art of absorbing the energy of your opponent, and using it to manage him/her. Let the other side vent but don't react directly. Listen. Nod. Ask clarifying questions. But don't hit back. Don't judge. Keep him/her talking until he/she runs out of venom. Separate the person from the feedback. *More help? – See Tip #4 in #108 Defensiveness* for help on responding to negative attacks that aren't true. *More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.*

- ☐ **8. Work on your listening non-verbals.** Most people who are not in fact listening, have one or more non-verbals that signal that to others. It could be the washboard brow, blank stare, body agitation, finger or pencil drumming, interrupting, your impatient "I'm busy" look. Most around you know your signs. Do you? Ask someone you trust what it is you do when they think you are not listening. Work on eliminating those chilling non-verbals.
- ☐ **9. Listening to people you don't like.** What do people see in them who do like them or can at least get along with them? What are their strengths? Do you have any common interests? Talk less and ask more questions to give them a second chance. Don't judge their motives and intentions—do that later.
- ☐ **10. Listening to people you like but...**
- They are disorganized. Interrupt to summarize and keep the discussion focused. While interrupting is generally not a good tactic, it's necessary here.
 - They just want to chat. Ask questions to focus them; don't respond to chatty remarks.
 - They want to unload a problem. Assume when people tell you something they are looking for understanding; indicate that by being able to summarize what they said. Don't offer any advice.
 - They are chronic complainers. Ask them to write down problems and solutions and then let's discuss it. This turns down the volume while hopefully moving them off complaining.
 - They like to complain about others. Ask if they've talked to the person. Encourage them to do so. If that doesn't work, summarize what they have said without agreeing or disagreeing.

No man has ever listened himself out of a job.

– Calvin Coolidge

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*Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is
the only animal that is struck with the difference between
what things are and what they ought to be.*

– William Hazlitt

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Not very flexible
- ☐ Can't shift gears readily
- ☐ One-trick pony (although may be very good at that one trick)
- ☐ Believes strongly in personal consistency and following a few principles
- ☐ Tries to get everything done one way
- ☐ Doesn't take a balanced approach
- ☐ May be seen as rigidly following and overdoing his/her one best way
- ☐ May rely too much on personal strengths
- ☐ Has trouble shifting modes of behavior in the same meeting or situation

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 2,11,12,16,32,45,57

SKILLED

- ☐ Can act in ways that seem contradictory
- ☐ Is very flexible and adaptable when facing tough calls
- ☐ Can combine seeming opposites like being compassionately tough, stand up for self without trampling others, set strong but flexible standards
- ☐ Can act differently depending upon the situation
- ☐ Is seen as balanced despite the conflicting demands of the situation

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May be seen as two-faced or wishy-washy
- ☐ May change too easily from one style or mode to another
- ☐ May misread what skills are called for
- ☐ May confuse people who observe him/her across different settings
- ☐ May be misinterpreted

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 5,9,12,17,29,30,34,37,38,47,50,51,52,53,58

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Abdicate or freeze when situations change quickly
- ☐ Don't read people
- ☐ Don't read situations
- ☐ Not very flexible
- ☐ One "me" fits all
- ☐ Rigid about values and beliefs
- ☐ Run over others
- ☐ Too much of a good thing

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Demonstrating Personal Flexibility Cluster (T) with: 45, 54, 55. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Dealing with paradox involves attitudinal and behavioral flexibility—going from a planning discussion to customer complaints to administrative snafus and shifting gears accordingly. People who excel at this are versatile in situations and with others—they can lead and let others lead, know how to apply "tough love," or remain adaptable in the face of crises. They are able to think and act in seemingly contrary ways at the same time or when moving from one task to another. They are flexible and meet the needs of the moment. This requires having some flexibility in approach, tone and style, and then matching those to the demands of the situation.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Gear shifting and making transitions.** As the song says, "I want to be me." Not many of us have that luxury. Each situation we deal with is a little bit, somewhat, or a lot different. In order to be truly effective across situations and people, we are called upon to act differently. In control at 9 a.m., following at 10 a.m., quiet at 11 a.m. and dominating at noon. It's all in a day's work. Respectful with the boss, critiquing with peers, caring for directs, and responding to customers. No trickery. No blowing with the wind. No Machiavellianism. Just adjusting flexibly to the demands of each situation. Work on first reading the situation and the people. Monitor your gear-shifting behavior for a week at work and at home. What switches give you the most trouble? The least? Why? Off-work, practice gear-shifting transitions. Go from a civic meeting to a water fight with your kids, for example. On the way between activities, if only for a few seconds, think about the transition you're making and the frame of mind needed to make it work well.

- **2. Contrary behaviors.** Tough love is the best example. Deliver a tough message on layoffs but do it in a compassionate way. Dig into the details while trying to establish three basic conceptual drivers in the data. Take strong stands but listen and leave room for others to maneuver. Have a strong personal belief about an issue but loyally implement an organization plan which opposes your view. Being playful but firm. Being loose with parts of the budget but unyielding in others. Many situations in today's complex world call for mixed responses and behaviors. Doing two opposing things at once isn't comfortable for everyone. Many pride themselves on being just one person, believing and following one set of beliefs. Acting paradoxically doesn't really violate that. It just means within your normal range of behaviors and style, you use two of your extremes—as quiet as you can be in the first half of the meeting and as loud as you ever are in the last half—at once.
- **3. Overused skills.** A lot of us overdo some of our strengths. We push for results too hard. We analyze data too long. We try to be too nice. For those overdone behaviors, it's difficult for us to do the opposite. Find out what you overdo by getting feedback, either a 360° feedback instrument or by polling your closest associates. Find out how adaptable people think you are under pressure and how well you handle the fragmentation of a typical day. Try to balance your behavior against whatever you overdo. Don't replace what you do—add to it:
- If you get brusque under pressure, take three deep breaths and consciously slow down or use some humor.
 - If you get frustrated easily, learn some pause strategies such as visualizing yourself in a more calming setting, asking a question, or asking yourself, "How should I act this instant?"
 - If you're too tough, ask yourself how you'd like to be treated in this situation. Stop and ask how the other person is doing or responding.
 - If you overmanage, work on setting standards, outcomes and delegating; let your team set the process.
 - If you freeze under too much fragmentation, pause, walk around the building and ask yourself how you'd like to behave right now and what is most important. Then come back and start doing the task a piece at a time.
 - If you get rigid, set a goal of understanding other people's views well enough that you can present them back to them without inaccuracy.
 - If you habitually go into an action frenzy or grind to a halt, ask yourself what would be more effective right now.
 - If you run over others, tell them what you're thinking about doing and ask them what they think should be done.

- ☐ **4. Walking someone else's talk.** A common paradox is having to support someone else's program or idea when you don't really think that way or agree with it. You have to be a member of the loyal opposition. Most of the time, you may be delivering someone else's view of the future. Top management and a consultant created the mission, vision and strategy off somewhere in the woods. You may or may not have been asked for any input. You may even have some doubts about it yourself. Do not offer conditional statements to your audience. Don't let it be known to others that you are not fully on board. Your role is to manage this vision and mission, not your personal one. *More help? – See #22 Ethics and Values.* If you have strong contrary views, be sure to demand a voice next time around.
- ☐ **5. Transitions.** Which transitions are the toughest for you? Write down the five toughest for you. What do you have a hard time switching to and from? Use this knowledge to assist you in making a list of discontinuities (tough transitions) you face such as:
- Confronting people vs. Being approachable and accepting
 - Leading vs. Following
 - Going from firing someone to a business-as-usual staff meeting.

Write down how each of these discontinuities makes you feel and what you may do that gets you in trouble. For example, you may not shift gears well after a confrontation or you may have trouble taking charge again after passively sitting in a meeting all day. Create a plan to attack each of the tough transitions.

- ☐ **6. Go for more variety at work.** Take a risk, then play it safe. Set tasks for yourself that force you to shift gears, such as being a spokesperson for your organization when tough questions are expected, making peace with an enemy, or managing people who are novices at a task. If you already have these tasks as part of your job, use them to observe yourself and try new behaviors.
- ☐ **7. Models.** Interview people who are good at shifting gears, such as fix-it managers (tear down and build back up), shutdown managers (fire people yet support them and help them find other employment; motivating those who stay), or excellent parents. Talk to an actor or actress to see how he/she can play opposing roles back-to-back. Talk to people who have recently joined your organization from places quite different than yours. Talk to a therapist who hears a different problem or trauma every hour. See if you can figure out some rules for making comfortable transitions.
- ☐ **8. Be a novice.** Volunteer to teach others something you don't know well the next time a new procedure, policy or technology appears. This will force you to shift from experienced expert to novice.

- **9. Control your instant responses to shifts.** Many of us respond to the fragmentation and discontinuities of work as if they were threats instead of the way life is. Sometimes our emotions and fears are triggered by switching from active to passive or soft to tough. This initial anxious response lasts 45-60 seconds and we need to buy some time before we say or do something inappropriate. Research shows that generally somewhere between the second and third thing you think to say or do is the best option. Practice holding back your first response long enough to think of a second and a third. Manage your shifts, don't be a prisoner of them. *More help? – See #11 Composure.*
- **10. Use mental rehearsal to think about different ways you could carry out a transaction.** Try to see yourself acting in opposing ways to get the same thing done—when to be tough, when to let them decide, when to deflect the issue because it's not ready to decide. What cues would you look for to select an approach that matches? Practice trying to get the same thing done with two different groups with two different approaches. Did they both work?

*Every child is an artist. The problem is how
to remain an artist once he grows up.
– Pablo Picasso, on his deathbed*

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PATIENCE

Factor VI: Personal and Interpersonal Skills Cluster S: Being Open and Receptive

VI – S

*Patience and tenacity of purpose are worth
more than twice their weight of cleverness.*

– Thomas Henry Huxley

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UNSKILLED

- ☐ Acts before it's time to act
- ☐ Intolerant of the slow pace and cumbersome processes of others
- ☐ May be seen as a self-centered do it my way and at my speed type
- ☐ Doesn't take the time to listen or understand
- ☐ Thinks almost everything needs to be faster and shorter
- ☐ Disrupts those facilitating meetings with his/her need to finish sooner
- ☐ Frequently interrupts and finishes other people's sentences
- ☐ Makes his/her own process rules; doesn't wait for others
- ☐ May appear to others as arrogant, uninterested or a know-it-all
- ☐ May be action oriented and resist process and problem complexity
- ☐ May just jump to conclusions rather than thinking things through

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 3,11,33,38,48,52

SKILLED

- ☐ Is tolerant with people and processes
- ☐ Listens and checks before acting
- ☐ Tries to understand the people and the data before making judgments and acting
- ☐ Waits for others to catch up before acting
- ☐ Sensitive to due process and proper pacing
- ☐ Follows established process

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May wait too long to act
- ☐ May try to please everyone
- ☐ Others may confuse attentive listening with acceptance of their position
- ☐ May waste time when faced with issues too close to a 50/50 proposition
- ☐ May let things fester without acting

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 1,2,9,12,13,16,34,40,53,57

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Unrealistic standards
- ☐ Don't understand others well
- ☐ Action junkie
- ☐ Very intelligent
- ☐ Lack of composure
- ☐ Poor listener
- ☐ Poor tactical manager/disorganized
- ☐ Arrogant

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Being Open and Receptive Cluster (S) with: 11, 26, 33, 44. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Many people pride themselves on impatience, thinking of it as high standards and a results orientation. This would be true sometimes, especially when the results just aren't there or standards are slack. In many situations though, impatience is a cover for other problems and has serious long-term consequences. It leads to overmanaging, not developing others, stacking the unit with your solutions, monitoring too much, and people shying away from you because you lack tolerance.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. The simple courtesies.** Impatient people interrupt, finish other people's sentences when they hesitate, ask people to hurry, ask people to skip the next few transparencies and get to the last slide, urge people to finish and get to the point. All these behaviors of the impatient person intimidate, irritate, demotivate and frustrate others and lead to incomplete communications, damaged relationships, a feeling of injustice and leave others demeaned in the process. All for the sake of gaining a few minutes of your valuable time. Add five seconds to your average response/interrupt tolerance time until you stop doing these things most of the time. Learn to pause to give people a second chance. People often stumble on words with impatient people, hurrying to get through before their first or next interruption.
- ☐ **2. Non-verbals.** Impatient people signal their impatience through speech and actions, of course, but they also signal non-verbally. The washboard brow, body shifting, finger and pencil drumming, and glares. What do you do? Ask others you trust for your five most frequent impatience signals. Work to eliminate them.

- **3. Delay of gratification.** Impatient people want it now. They are not good waiters. Sometimes impatience flowers into loss of composure. When things don't go as fast as they want, it triggers an emotional response. *More help? – See #11 Composure and #107 Lack of Composure.*
- **4. Impatience triggers.** Some people probably bring out your impatience more than others. Who are they? What is it about them that makes you more impatient? Pace? Language? Thought process? Accent? These people may include people you don't like, who ramble, who whine and complain, or who are repetitive advocates for things you have already rejected. Mentally rehearse some calming tactics before meeting with people who trigger your impatience. Work on understanding their positions without judging them—you can always judge later. In all cases, focus them on the issues or problems to be discussed, return them to the point, interrupt to summarize and state your position. Try to gently train them to be more efficient with you next time without damaging them in the process.
- **5. Arrogance is a major blockage to patience.** People who have a towering strength or lots of success get less feedback and keep rolling along and over others until their careers get in trouble. If you are arrogant—you devalue the contributions of others—you should work doubly hard at reading and listening to others. You don't have to accept everything, just listen to understand before you react. You need to submerge your "what I want/think" demeanor and keep asking yourself, "What are they saying; how are they reacting?"
- **6. Work on your openness and approachability.** Impatient people don't get as much information as patient listeners do. They are more often surprised by events when others knew they were coming. People are hesitant to talk to impatient people. It's too painful. People don't pass on hunches, unbaked thoughts, maybes, and possibles to impatient people. You will be out of the information loop and miss important information you need to know to be effective. Suspend judgment on informal communications. Just take it in. Acknowledge that you understand. Ask a question or two. Follow up later.
- **7. Rein in your horse.** Impatient people provide answers, conclusions, and solutions too early in the process. Others haven't even understood the problem yet. Providing solutions too quickly will make your people dependent and irritated. If you don't teach them how you think and how you can come up with solutions so fast, they will never learn. Take the time to really define the problem—not impatiently throw out a solution. Brainstorm what questions need to be answered in order to resolve it. Give your people the task to think about for a day and come back with some solutions. Be a teacher instead of a dictator of solutions. Study yourself. Keep a journal of what triggered your behavior and what the observed consequences were. Learn to detect and control your triggers before they get you in trouble. *More help? – See #11 Composure.*

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- **8. Task impatience.** Impatient people check in a lot. How's it coming. Is it done yet? When will it be finished? Let me see what you've done so far. That is disruptive to due process and wastes time. When you give out a task or assign a project, establish agreed upon time checkpoints. You can also assign percentage checkpoints. Check in with me when you are about 25% finished so we can make midcourse corrections and 75% so we can make final corrections. Let them figure out how to do the task. Hold back from checking in at other than the agreed upon times and percentages. *More help? – See #18 Delegation.*
 - **9. Too dependent upon yourself.** Look at others' solutions more. Invite discussion and disagreement, welcome bad news, ask that people come up with the second and third solution. A useful trick is to assign issues and questions before you have given them any thought. Two weeks before you are due to decide, ask your people to examine that issue and report to you two days before you have to deal with it. That way, you really don't have any solutions yet. This really motivates people and makes you look less impatient.
 - **10. Read #19 Developing Direct Reports and Others** to find out how people actually develop. Your impatience makes it less likely you will develop any deep skills in others since development doesn't operate on brief time frames and close monitoring. As you'll see, challenging tasks, feedback along the way, and encouraging learning are the keys. Impatient people seldom develop others.

Patience is a most necessary qualification for business; many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request.

– Philip Chesterfield

SUGGESTED READINGS

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Results? Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results.

I know 50,000 things that won't work.

– Thomas Edison

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Gives up too soon or moves on to something that's going better
- ☐ Doesn't push hard enough to get things done
- ☐ Doesn't go back with different strategies for the third and fourth try
- ☐ May take rejection too personally
- ☐ May hesitate to push when met with conflict, disagreement or attacks
- ☐ May agree too early just to get it over with
- ☐ May compromise for less than the original goal or objective
- ☐ May simply not want to take charge and be out front

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 1,9,12,16,34,39,53

SKILLED

- ☐ Pursues everything with energy, drive, and a need to finish
- ☐ Seldom gives up before finishing, especially in the face of resistance or setbacks

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May stick to efforts beyond reason, in the face of overwhelming odds and evidence to the contrary
- ☐ May be seen as stubborn and unyielding
- ☐ May not set appropriate priorities
- ☐ May find it difficult to change course
- ☐ May confuse personal have-to-do's with what most needs to be done

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 2,14,26,33,41,45,46,50,51,54,60

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Don't push hard enough
- ☐ Give up too soon
- ☐ Impatient

continued

- ☐ Lost the passion
- ☐ Short span of attention
- ☐ Take things personally
- ☐ Uncomfortable with rejection
- ☐ Wilt in the face of resistance
- ☐ Won't take charge

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Energy and Drive Factor (IV). This competency is in the Focusing on the Bottom Line Cluster (J) with: 1, 53. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

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THE MAP

The need for perseverance comes about because you weren't effective the first time, the thing you are trying to get done is being resisted, or your customers and the audience aren't ready to do what you need; it's not on their agenda. Sticking to the course, especially in the face of pushback, is what perseverance is all about. Going back a second and third time or however many tries are needed. Perseverance is also about using a variety of ways to get things done. Persevering people try it different ways when the first way isn't effective. Why don't people persevere? You may fear the rejection; the persevering don't take it personally even when people try to make it so. You may have trouble taking a stand; the persevering do it as a matter of course to accomplish something worthwhile. You may not be convinced of the worth of what you're doing. You may not be doing it the right way. All in all, persevering people get the job done.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Give up after one or two tries?** If you have trouble going back the second or third time to get something done, then switch approaches. Sometimes people get stuck in a repeating groove that's not working. Do something different next time. If you visited the office of someone you have difficulties with, invite him/her to your office next time. Think about multiple ways to get the same outcome. For example, to push a decision through, you could meet with stakeholders first, go to a single key stakeholder, study and present the problem to a group, call a problem-solving session, or call in an outside expert. Be prepared to do them all when obstacles arise.
- ☐ **2. Meeting resistance.** Don't persevere because you prefer to avoid conflict? Hesitate in the face of resistance and adverse reaction? Conflict slows you down? Shakes your confidence in your decision? Do you backpedal? Give in too soon? Try to make everyone happy? When your initiative hits resistance, keep it on the

problem and the objectives. Depersonalize. If attacked, return to what you're trying to accomplish and invite people's criticisms and ideas. Listen. Correct if justified. Stick to your point. Push ahead again. Resistance is natural. Some of the time it's legitimate; most of the time it's just human nature. People push back until they understand. They are just protecting territory. *More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.*

- ☐ **3. Procrastinate?** You don't go back a second time until forced to by deadlines? Less motivated when your first attempt falls flat or meets resistance? Don't get back to people when you said you would? You might not produce results consistently. Some of your work will be marginal because you only had time for one or two attempts before the project was due. Start earlier. Reduce the time between attempts. Always start 10% of each attempt immediately after it is apparent it will be needed so you can better gauge what it is going to take to finish it. Always assume it will take more time than you think it's going to take. *More help? – See #47 Planning.*
- ☐ **4. Take resistance personally?** If you tend to take rejection or inattention or non-responsiveness personally, focus on why this isn't personal. Develop a philosophical stance toward rejection and failure. After all, most innovations fail, most proposals fail, the majority of efforts to change people fail and most attempts to change organizations fail. Anything really worth doing takes repeated effort, and everything could always be done better. Remember resistance is normal, not abnormal. Even resistance that looks and sounds personal may not be. Keep reminding yourself what you are there to do. Keep making the business case. How can everyone win? Don't get dragged down by personal concerns. Keep it objective. Listen. Absorb the heat. Look for quality feedback and respond appropriately. Always return to the facts and your agenda. The closer you get to success, the more the heat of the naysayers may increase. Work even harder, listen, answer all questions and objections—focus on the work, not yourself. Don't expect everyone to cheer your successes. Some will be jealous. *More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.*
- ☐ **5. Trouble taking tough stands?** You may have to go back because you didn't make a strong enough case the first time. Do your homework. Be prepared. Don't make it sound like a trial balloon. Use more definite, direct language. Don't be vague or tentative. Don't throw things out without the air cover of the business case and the safety net of how everybody can gain. Prepare by rehearsing for tough questions, attacks, and countering views. Plan as if you're only going to have one shot. Match your style, tone, pace and volume with the feeling that you are right and that this thing must get done. Lead with strength.
- ☐ **6. Fight the right battles.** Maybe you're pushing on everything and getting tired and frustrated about your low batting average. Some persevere too much. Some persevere on the wrong things. Are you sure this is critical? What's mission-critical

versus nice to get done versus not really in the mainstream? Be sure your priorities are right. *More help?* – See #50 *Priority Setting*.

- **7. Disorganized?** Don't always get to everything on time? Forget deadlines? Lose requests for decisions? Forget to follow up on a request for more information? Lose interest in anything not right in front of you? Move from task to task until you find one that's working? Short attention span? You can't operate helter-skelter and persevere. Perseverance takes focus and continuity of effort. Get better organized and disciplined. Keep a task progress log. Keep a top 10 things I have to do list. Stick with tasks longer than you now do.
- **8. Working against the maze.** Organizations can be complex mazes with many turns and dead ends. Even worse, organizations are staffed with people which makes it more complex. Egos. Gatekeepers. Resisters. The best path to get something done may not be direct. The formal organization works only some of the time. Most of the time, the informal organization runs the show. To persevere efficiently, you have to know how to work the maze. You have to be patient with process. Things sometimes take time. People need to be ready to move. Maybe the best way to approach someone is through someone else. Maybe you have to work on your timing. When is the best time to approach someone for a decision or an action? Learn the informal organization. Identify the key players, especially the gatekeepers and the traffic controllers. Ask others the best way to get things done in this organization. Watch others. What path do they follow? *More help?* – See #38 *Organizational Agility* and #52 *Process Management*.
- **9. Finishing.** While it's true that sometimes you get 80% of what you are pushing for with the first 20% of the effort, it unfortunately then takes another 80% of the time to finish the last 20%. It's not over until the gravity-challenged lady sings. In a fast-paced world, it's sometimes tough to pull the cart all the way to the finish line when the race is over. Not all tasks have to be completely finished. For some, 80% would be acceptable. For those who need all the i's dotted and the t's crossed, it will take perseverance. The devil is in the details. When you get caught in this situation, create a checklist with the 20% that remains to be done. Plan to do a little on it each day. Cross things off and celebrate each time you get to take something off the list. Remember, it's going to challenge your motivation and attention. Try to delegate finishing to someone who would see the 20% as a fresh challenge. Get a consultant to finish it. Task trade with someone else's 20% so you both would have something fresh to do.

- **10. Burned out.** Lost your passion? Run out of gas? Heart's not in it anymore? Not 100% committed? Maybe you don't persevere because deep down you don't care anymore—you're sick of doing this job or working for this organization or pushing against a particular person or group. Ask what is it that you want. Find your passion again. Prepare yourself for another job. To make the best of your current job, make a list of what you like and don't like to do. Concentrate on doing more liked activities each day. Work to delegate or task trade the things that are no longer motivating to you. Do your least preferred activities first to get them out of the way; focus not on the activity, but on your sense of accomplishment. Change your work activity to mirror your interests as much as you can. Volunteer for task forces and projects that would be motivating for you. *More help? —*See #6 Career Ambition.*

*Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not.
Genius will not. The slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the
problems of the human race.*

— Calvin Coolidge

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PERSPECTIVE

Factor I: Strategic Skills Cluster C: Creating the New and Different

I - C

History repeats itself, but only in outline and in the large.... There is no certainty that the future will repeat the past. Every year is an adventure.
– Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History*

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Is narrow and parochial
- ☐ Has narrow views of issues and challenges
- ☐ Uses only one or a few lenses to view problems and opportunities
- ☐ Doesn't have far-ranging interests, not well-read
- ☐ Background may be narrow
- ☐ Isn't good at running "what if" scenarios
- ☐ Lacks interest in maybes and the future and how world events do and will affect his/her organization
- ☐ Won't be a good strategist or visionary
- ☐ A here-and-now person who is often surprised by unexpected change
- ☐ May be a single function/profession/technical area/skill person

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 2,5,15,21,28,32,38,48,58,61

SKILLED

- ☐ Looks toward the broadest possible view of an issue/challenge
- ☐ Has broad-ranging personal and business interests and pursuits
- ☐ Can easily pose future scenarios
- ☐ Can think globally
- ☐ Can discuss multiple aspects and impacts of issues and project them into the future

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ Might have some trouble concentrating on the here and now
- ☐ May leave others behind when he/she speculates on the broad view of an issue
- ☐ May not set practical priorities
- ☐ May always be reaching for too much and/or the ideal
- ☐ May see connections that aren't there

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 5,16,17,24,35,38,47,50,51,52,53,58,59,63,65

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Avoid risks
- ☐ Disadvantaged background
- ☐ Narrow interests
- ☐ Narrow upbringing
- ☐ Restricted experience base
- ☐ Tactically oriented
- ☐ Too comfortable
- ☐ Uncomfortable thinking/talking about future states

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Strategic Skills Factor (I). This competency is in the Creating the New and Different Cluster (C) with: 2, 14, 28, 58. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Ideas, perspectives and strategies don't come from raw intelligence or creativity. They come from a prepared mind, one broadened by lots of varied but disconnected experiences, exposures and interests. The broadest people usually win because they have a greater repertoire to draw from and more chances to make unusual connections to new ideas, cultures, events, etc. In the Sears studies of effectiveness across 35 years, one of the best predictors of success was range of interests.

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SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Read *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* by Peter Drucker,** any of the *Megatrends* books by John Naisbitt, *The Popcorn Report* by Faith Popcorn, or *THE FUTURIST*, the journal of the World Future Society. For example, Drucker raises issues such as what does it mean that the birth rate is collapsing in the developed world? By 2030 it is estimated that half of Japan's population will be 65 or older. Much the same is true in the rest of the developed world. Will the retirement age go up? Will we treat workers more like volunteers as they opt out of larger organizations? Leisure spending may go down since more time off is not likely. Education and health care will grow. Immigration? Even in the wake of terror attacks, we may have to import immigrants to maintain workforces. The average career of an employee will far outlive their employers (most corporations last about 30 years). Second and third "careers" will be standard. The means of production has largely become knowledge. Outsourcing is up—knowledge is increasingly specialized, expensive, and difficult to maintain. Is this a harbinger of more outsourcing and alliances? What are the trends at play and how do they affect your organization going forward?

- ☐ **2. Study a few well-known inventions of the past, like the automobile** (*The Machine That Changed the World* by James Womack and associates at MIT is an excellent source). See how they use the past to predict the future. See how several unrelated inventions came together to form a bigger one. There is a series on cable called *Modern Marvels*. Watch a few shows. Buy the series. How could you use the past of your organization—from 1960 to 1970; from 1970 to 1980, etc.—to predict the future?
- ☐ **3. Read the *Wall Street Journal* and *BusinessWeek*** and write down three to five interesting things that have a parallel or an effect on your organization. Learn to connect what's out there to what's in here.
- ☐ **4. During World War II, the military discovered the most creative groups** were those where the members had little or nothing in common, and knew little about the issue. Their freewheeling approach yielded fresher solutions. They were not trapped by the past. Take a current challenge to the most disparate group you can find (a historian, a college student, a theologian, a salesperson, a plumber, etc.) and see what insights they have into it. Find some problems outside of your area and see what you can add.
- ☐ **5. Pick three unrelated things to study and dabble in that you have not yet paid much attention to**—opera, romance novels, technical journals out of your area, MTV, learn a new language, take a magic course, study archeology. Connections can come from anywhere—your brain doesn't care where it gets perspectives. Try to think about how the principles of one tie into the other.
- ☐ **6. Read international publications like the *Economist*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Commentary***, autobiographies of people like Kissinger; pick a country and study it; read a book on the fall of the Soviet Union or read "we present all sides" journals like the *Atlantic Monthly* to get the broadest possible view of issues. There are common underlying principles in everything. You need to expose yourself more broadly in order to find and apply those principles to what you're doing today.
- ☐ **7. Go on adventures.** Travel to places you have not been before. Never vacation at the same place again. Eat at different theme restaurants. Go to events and meetings of groups you have never really met. Go to ethnic festivals and sample the cultures. Go to athletic events you've never attended before. Each week, you and your family should go on a perspectives adventure.
- ☐ **8. Pick something you've never done, but which would broaden your perspective off-work.** Serve with a community group, volunteer to be a Big Sister/Brother, travel to an unvisited country, follow a group of ten-year-olds around for a few days.

- **9. At work, pick three tasks you've never done and go do them.** If you don't know much about customers, work in a store or handle customer complaints; if you don't know what engineering does, go find out; task trade with someone. Seek the broadest possible exposure inside the organization. Do lunch with counterparts of the organization and tell each other what you do.
- **10. Task forces.** Task forces/projects are a great opportunity. If the project is important, is multifunctional and has a real outcome which will be taken seriously (not a study group), it is one of the most common developmental events listed by successful executives. Such projects require learning other functions, businesses or nationalities well enough that in a tight time frame you can appreciate how they think and why their area/position is important. In so doing, you get out of your own experience and start to see connections to a broader world—how international trade works; or more at home, how the pieces of your organization fit together. You can build perspective.

Life is easier than you think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.

– Kathleen Norris

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<http://www.summary.com>. Soundview Executive Book Summaries are 5,000-word, eight-page distillations of specially selected business books. Soundview subscribers receive two or three eight-page summaries of the best business books each month (30 per year); access to well over 200 summaries on Soundview's backlist; and access to editors in Soundview's research department for help in finding specific business book references.

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*Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than
absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.*

– Martin Luther King

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Doesn't read groups well
- ☐ Doesn't understand how groups operate or what purposes groups serve
- ☐ Can't predict what groups will do
- ☐ Stereotypes or pre-judges groups
- ☐ May only understand groups similar to him or her in purpose and characteristics
- ☐ Sees people as individuals only
- ☐ Doesn't understand how group membership affects people's views and behavior
- ☐ Prefers working one-on-one; can't reach or motivate groups
- ☐ May be a loner and not really a member of any voluntary groups

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 8,15,21,23,32,33,36,38,39,42,46,51,56

SKILLED

- ☐ Understands why groups do what they do
- ☐ Picks up the sense of the group in terms of positions, intentions, and needs; what they value and how to motivate them
- ☐ Can predict what groups will do across different situations

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May spend too much time trying to analyze what a group might or might not do
- ☐ May generalize from his/her group appraisal to individuals, letting personal impressions of a group cover individuals as well
- ☐ May discount variety of opinion
- ☐ May have trouble dealing with individuals when he/she is in conflict with the group the individual belongs to
- ☐ May spend too much energy understanding and analyzing group actions

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 1,2,12,13,16,17,21,34,37,40,50,52,53,57,59

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ A loner; not a joiner; hasn't experienced groups
- ☐ Dismiss the importance of groups
- ☐ Don't acknowledge groups
- ☐ Don't like people to form groups
- ☐ Don't understand how groups operate
- ☐ Judgmental about other groups
- ☐ Problems dealing with other functions/professions
- ☐ See groups as stereotypes

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Managing Diverse Relationships Cluster (P) with: 4, 15, 21, 23, 42. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

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THE MAP

By knowing what group or groups a person belongs to, you can get a better handle on what the person believes, why, and what he or she might do in a given situation. Group members hold some but not all beliefs, assumptions about the world, habits and practices in common. Members of groups look alike because like-minded people form and join groups and because groups educate and orient new members into the norms and standards of the group.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Why do people belong to voluntary or advocacy groups?** If it is a voluntary/interest group, people usually belong for three reasons: The group fulfills social needs; provides a sense of belonging, gives emotional support and identification; and helps people achieve their goals by sharing information and helping each other. Groups are stronger than individuals and are natural to the human species. Being a loner is not. Belonging to voluntary groups is exceptionally important to most as they define our sense of what's worthwhile to a great degree. People go in and out of informal voluntary groups as their needs and interests change. Find out all you can about what groups people you need to deal with and manage belong to. It can help you deal with them and help them perform better.
- ☐ **2. Why do informal groups form?** Voluntary groups generally form because of a common interest, challenge, threat, or goal individual members can't deal with by themselves. Unions were a reaction to oppressive management. Civil Rights groups were a reaction to a lack of equal opportunities. The AMA was formed to set standards for the medical profession and protect it from charlatans and snake

oil salespersons. A group of minorities might form inside your organization because they think they are being held to a double standard and not being given enough opportunities. Especially inside your organization, watch what groups and cliques form on their own. Try to work backward and determine why they formed. What groups do you belong to? Why did you join?

- **3. Categorical groups.** Some groups are forced by an involuntary category. There are gender and racial groups. There are country of origin groups. There is Mensa, limited by a high tested IQ. There is a national Bald Person's Club. Any individual may or may not choose to join and partake in the activities of the group. Other people, however, have a tendency to stereotype people into their categorical groups, whether the person buys into that or not. While some aspects of categorical groups might help you read people better, it is important not to lump people into categories. First find out if they buy into the interests and practices of their category before you begin to use that in your assessment of them.
- **4. Other groups in organizations are not interest groups; they are nominal functional/professional ones.** They are formed to define and maintain the boundaries between one group—accountants, and the other—marketers. Formal groups maintain entry standards and have membership criteria. They support the development of specialized skills and help individual members succeed, guard the group against attack from the outside, and lobby for beneficial legislation. Membership in these groups is defined by your job, your organization's method of organizing itself and your profession. If your job changes, if you move from division A to division B, you will change nominal groups as soon as you cross the border.
- **5. Learn to be a cultural anthropologist.** In assessing groups, ask yourself what makes their blood boil? What do they believe? What are they trying to accomplish together? What do they smile at? What norms and customs do they have? What practices and behaviors do they share? Do they not like it if you stand too close? If you get right down to business? Do they like first names or are they more formal? If a Japanese manager presents his card, do you know what to do? Why do they have their cards printed in two languages and executives from the U.S. don't? Do you know what jokes are OK to tell? What do they believe about you and your group or groups? Positive? Neutral? Negative? What's been the history of their group and yours? Is this a first contact or a long history? Don't blunder in; nothing will kill you quicker with a group than showing utter disregard—read disrespect—for it and its norms or having no idea of how they view your group. Ask people who deal with this group often for insights. If it's an important group to you and your business, read about it. *More help? – See #21 Managing Diversity.*

- **6. Be candid with yourself.** Is there a group or groups you don't like or are uncomfortable with? Do you judge individual members of that group without really knowing if your impressions and stereotype is true? Most of us do. Avoid putting groups in good and bad buckets. Many of us bucket groups as friendly or unfriendly. Once we do, we generally don't talk to the unfriendliest as much and may question their motives. Don't generalize about individuals. A person might belong to a group for many reasons, yet not typify stereotypes of the group. All accountants aren't detail-driven introverts, for example. To deal with this put yourself in their shoes. Why would you act that way? What do you think they're trying to achieve? Assume that however they act is rational; it must have paid off or they wouldn't be doing it. Describe behavior and motives as neutrally as you can. Listen and observe to understand, not judge. If you are going to interact with a group you have trouble with, be on your guard and best behavior.
- **7. Roles inside groups.** All groups share a common set of things that happen inside the group. Groups aren't undifferentiated masses. Many errors in dealing with groups involve failures in seeing groups as sets of roles. A commonly accepted typology of eight group roles was developed by Belbin. You should know about it because spotting the role played tells you whom to deal with as varying situations arise:
- **Leader.** Shapes the way in which group efforts are applied by focusing priorities and direction. Looked to when trouble comes.
 - **Process Manager.** Focuses on process needed to reach team objectives.
 - **Innovator.** Advances the new, challenges the old.
 - **Evaluator.** The analyst; sifts through problems for the group.
 - **Finisher.** Focuses on deadlines, commitments and urgency.
 - **Work organizer.** Turns plans into procedures and sequences.
 - **Internal negotiator.** Maintains relationships, builds team spirit.
 - **External negotiator.** Scans outside for resources, ideas, contacts for deal making.

Additionally there are gatekeepers who protect and manage entry, clowns who manage tension relief, synergizers who bring disparate things together, enforcers who make sure members tow the line and so forth. So in addition to knowing what group or groups a person belongs to, you need to know what role or roles they play inside the group. Usually one person plays one role. Unless the group is very small or very hierarchical, you're better off going to the person who's most concerned with your issue or asking who that might be. Use the group's power. You will have little luck motivating a group by asking for something that asks them to go against a core reason for being in the group. Your best bet is to appeal

to the person who plays the role you're interested in to exercise his/her power and influence. What role or roles do you usually play?

- **8. Working with groups.** To deal effectively with groups, establish reciprocity. Relationships don't last unless you provide something and so do they. Find out what they want and tell them what you want. Strike a bargain. If one group usually gets the benefit, the other group will eventually become uncooperative and balky. Learn their conceptual categories. People who went on to become successful executives often spoke of their first time dealing with another function. The most common tack for a marketing person dealing with finance for the first time was to show them something he/she was working on and ask them how they would analyze it. What questions would they ask? What are the key numbers and why? What were the four or five key factors they were looking at? Be able to speak their language. Speaking their language makes it easier for them to talk with you and shows respect. Tell them your conceptual categories. To deal with you they also need to know how you think and why. As in the tip above, tell them your perspective—the questions you ask, the factors you're interested in. If you can't explain your thinking, they won't know how to deal with you effectively.
- **9. Avoid early solution statements and extreme positions.** While the answer might be obvious to you, and might make perfect sense to someone in your field, it may either mean nothing or will be jarring to people in another function. Lay out your thinking, explain the alternatives, and keep them as maybes. Then invite them to apply their perspective to it. If you fire out solutions, you'll encourage them to reply in your terms. You'll never learn to understand them.
- **10. Getting groups to work together.** The keys are to find the common ground, downsize the differences that will get in the way and use the differences that add value to form an alliance. Even groups seemingly far apart will have some things in common. Announce that you would first like to see if there are any points on which the two sides could tentatively agree. List those on a board or flip chart. Then list the seemingly far aparts, the real differences. Take each difference and list it as adding value—we can do that and you can't, and you can do something we are not good at—or getting in the way. Use the differences that add value and throw a plan around minimizing the troublesome differences. Based on the common ground and the value adding differences, form a common mindset about how these groups can work together more effectively. *More help?* – See #12 Conflict Management.

...Members of a powerful group are raised to believe (however illogically) that whatever affects it will also affect them. On the other hand, members of less powerful groups are raised to believe (however illogically) that each individual can escape the group's fate. Thus, cohesion is encouraged on the one hand, and disunity is fostered on the other.

– Gloria Steinem

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Where there is no vision, the people perish.

– Proverbs 29:18

UNSKILLED

- ☐ Can't communicate or sell a vision
- ☐ Not a good presenter
- ☐ Can't turn a good phrase or create compelling one-liners
- ☐ Uncomfortable speculating on the unknown future
- ☐ Isn't charismatic or passionate enough to excite and energize others
- ☐ Can't simplify enough to help people understand complex strategy
- ☐ May not understand how change happens
- ☐ Doesn't act like he/she really believes in the vision
- ☐ More comfortable in the here and now

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

SUBSTITUTES: 5,9,15,24,28,36,46,49,59,60,63

SKILLED

- ☐ Communicates a compelling and inspired vision or sense of core purpose
- ☐ Talks beyond today
- ☐ Talks about possibilities
- ☐ Is optimistic
- ☐ Creates mileposts and symbols to rally support behind the vision
- ☐ Makes the vision sharable by everyone
- ☐ Can inspire and motivate entire units or organizations

OVERUSED SKILL

- ☐ May leave people behind
- ☐ May lack patience with those who don't understand or share his/her vision and sense of purpose
- ☐ May lack appropriate detail-orientation and concern for administrative routine
- ☐ May lack follow-through on the day-to-day tasks

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

COMPENSATORS: 3,5,24,27,33,35,41,52,64,67

NOTE: This competency deals with communicating and implementing an existing vision; for creating a vision, see #58 Strategic Agility.

SOME CAUSES

- ☐ Can't create simple messages
- ☐ Can't deal with conflict
- ☐ Don't understand change
- ☐ Don't walk the talk
- ☐ Not committed
- ☐ Poor presenter
- ☐ Talk too long

LEADERSHIP ARCHITECT® FACTORS AND CLUSTERS

This competency is in the Personal and Interpersonal Skills Factor (VI). This competency is in the Inspiring Others Cluster (Q) with: 36, 37, 60. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

THE MAP

Much research has shown that organizations with sound and inspiring missions and visions do better in the marketplace. Sound missions and visions motivate and guide people on how to allot their time and how to make choices. As important as the vision, mission and strategy might be, communicating and managing them is even more critical.

SOME REMEDIES

- ☐ **1. Crafting the message.** C.K. Prahalad, one of the leading strategic consultants, believes that in order to qualify as a mission statement, it should take less than three minutes to explain it clearly to an audience. Really effective mission statements are simple, compelling and capable of capturing people's imagination. Mission statements should help everyone allot his/her time. They should signal what's mission-critical and explain what's rewarded in the organization and what's not. Create a simple obvious symbol, visual or slogan to make the cause come alive. Ford's "Quality is Job One" seems clear enough. Nordstrom's "The Customer is Always Right" tells employees how they should do their jobs. Although the actual mission and vision document would be longer, the message needs to be finely crafted to capture the essence of what's important around here. *More help? – See #27 Informing.*
- ☐ **2. Common mindset.** The power of a mission and vision communication is providing everyone in the organization with a roadmap on how they are going to be part of something grand and exciting. Establish common cause. Imagine what the change would look like if fully implemented, then describe the outcome often—how things will look in the future. Help people see how their efforts fit in by creating simple, obvious measures of achievement like bar or thermometer

charts. Be succinct. People don't line up behind laundry lists or ambiguous objectives. Missions and visions should be more about where we are going and less about how we are going to get there. Keep your eyes on the prize.

- **3. Change management.** Most significant vision and mission statements represent a deviation from the past. They represent a rallying call for a departure from business as usual. They require that people are going to have to think, talk and act differently. For that reason, underneath the excitement will be apprehension, anxiety and fear of the unknown. All of the principles of change management apply to communicating a mission. Expect trouble and admit that 20-40% of time will be spent debugging, fixing mistakes and figuring out what went wrong. Treat each one as a chance to learn—document difficulties and learn from them. Without sounding like you're hedging, present it as a work-in-progress to be improved over time. How changes are made should be as open as possible. Studies show that people work harder and are more effective when they have a sense of choice over how they accomplish stretch goals and objectives. Invite multiple attacks, encourage experimentation, talk with people who have successfully pulled off changes. *More help? – See #28 Innovation Management.*
- **4. Walking your talk.** Many times employees listen more to what you do than to what you say. The largest reason change efforts fail is that the messenger does not act in line with the new vision and mission. Words are wonderful. Actions are stronger. If you want to be credible, make sure you incorporate the new thinking and behavior into your repertoire. Otherwise it will be gone as soon as the echoes of your words are gone. *More help? – See #22 Ethics and Values.*
- **5. Matching the audience.** Learn to adjust to your audience. Unfortunately, one vision and mission speech generally does not play equally well across audiences. Many times you will have to adjust the tone, pace, style and even the message and how you couch it for different audiences. If you are giving the mission speech—or delivering the same message—to multiple audiences, always ask yourself how are they different. The union? Managers? Individual producers? Already stressed out from the last mission that fizzled? Merged team? Adjust accordingly. *More help? – See #15 Customer Focus.*
- **6. Inspiring.** Missions and visions are meant to motivate. Don't threaten. Don't say this is our last chance. Don't blame the past. Visions are optimistic, inspirational, about possibilities, about getting to a grand place in the market. Paint a positive, "we can do it" picture. You have to blow a little smoke and use fairy dust. It's a performance. You have to get people to see what you see. This is all about how to present well (*More help? – See #49 Presentation Skills*) and motivate (*More help? – See #36 Motivating Others*). Always rehearse. Use a test group before you go public. See it yourself on video. Would you understand and be motivated?

- **7. Detractors and resisters.** There will always be those who don't buy it, have seen it all before, haven't yet seen a mission or vision come true. They may be private about it or come at you in public. Before you communicate the mission and vision, think about the 10 critical questions that might come up. "What happened to last year's brand-new mission that we've already abandoned? I don't think that will work. Our customers won't go for it." Be prepared for the most likely criticisms. Mentally rehearse how you might respond to questions. Listen patiently to people's concerns, protecting their feelings, but also reinforcing the perspective of why the change is needed. Attack positions, not the people. Show patience toward the unconverted; maintain a light touch. Remember, there was a time during the crafting of this vision that you were not convinced. Invite alternative suggestions to reach the same outcome. In the end, thank everyone for their time and input and just say the train is leaving. Rarely, you may have to pull a specific person aside and say, "I understand all your worries and have tried to respond to them, but the train is moving on. Are you on or off?" *More help?* – See #12 *Conflict Management*.
- **8. Managing vision and mission is a lot like selling.** You have a product you think others would buy if they knew about it. Each customer is a little different. What features and benefits would they be looking for? What would they be willing to pay in terms of time and commitment? What are their objections likely to be? How will you answer them? How are you going to ask for the order?
- **9. The very nature of missions and visions is that they are statements about the future.** A good manager of visions and purpose would have to be able to talk the future. The future in general. The future of the industry and the market. The future of this organization. Futuring is a series of educated "what ifs." What if there is life on other planets? Will they need our products? What if fusion is possible? Will cheaper energy impact us? When over 50% of the wealth in the U.S. is held by retired baby boomers, will that change anything we are doing? Will the green movement cause any opportunities for us? In order to get good at futuring, you need to read widely, especially outside of your industry. Read *THE FUTURIST*, a magazine of the World Future Society. Watch *Modern Marvels* on cable. Try to attend one meeting a year to hear futurists speculate on what they see. *More help?* – See #46 *Perspective*.
- **10. The loyal opposition.** Most of the time, you may be delivering someone else's view of the future. Top management and a consultant created the mission, vision and strategy off somewhere in the woods all by themselves. You may or may not have been asked for any input. You may even have some doubts about it yourself. Your role is to manage this vision and mission, not your personal one. Do not offer conditional statements to your audience, "I've got some concerns myself." Don't let it be known to others that you are not fully on board. Your job is to deliver and manage the message. While it's okay to admit your problems in

dealing with change, it's not okay to admit them in dealing with this change. If you have better ideas, try to get them to the people who form missions in your organization. *More help? – See #22 Ethics and Values.*

*The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him
in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.*

– Walter Lippman

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