LEADERSHIP KPI

Key
Polarity
Indicator

SIX POLARITIES
OF LEADERSHIP

fueled by

andiron
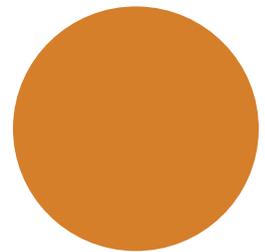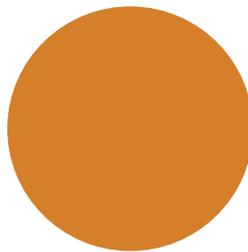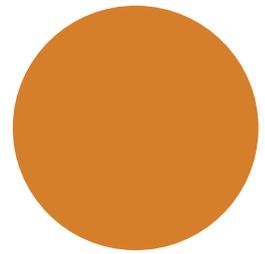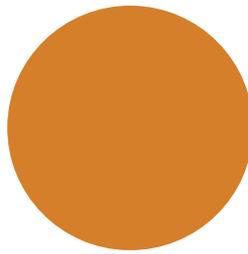
WHAT IS
A POLARITY?

Leaders need to balance things like empowerment and direction, change and stability, task and relationships. Too much of one without the other can have negative impacts, so finding the right blend is key.

These are polarities—interdependent, yet seemingly opposite, states that must coexist for success— Stability::Change, Direct::Empower, Challenge::Support.

Many leaders and organizations approach polarities with an either/or mindset – either I have to do this or that. However, those using a both/and mindset outperform those who don't – they direct and empower, exude competence and warmth.

The Leadership Key Polarity Indicator (Leadership KPI) assesses how well leaders navigate six polarities that undergird the central responsibilities they have to their teams and organizations.

6 KEY
POLARITIES OF LEADERSHIP

The Leadership KPI is built upon six polarities of effective leadership and assesses how often leaders demonstrate the benefits and overuses of each. All polarities work the same way—every pole has benefits but when overused, unproductive things happen. Candor has many benefits, but its overuse can be harmful when it's not blended with diplomacy.

The six polarities in the indicator were chosen based on our research, lived experience and client experiences. They are frequently discussed by leadership experts and serve as the foundation for core leadership responsibilities and capabilities.

ACTION :: REFLECTION

STABILITY :: CHANGE

CHALLENGE :: SUPPORT

EXUDE COMPETENCE :: EXUDE WARMTH

TASK FOCUS :: RELATIONSHIP FOCUS

DIRECT :: EMPOWER

ACTION :: REFLECTION

Leaders get things done. They move fast to make progress against an ever-growing list of to-dos and initiatives. But this focus on action, when overused, drives an "I'm so busy" culture that leaves no time or space for the strategic reflection vital to innovation and growth. When leaders navigate Action::Reflection, the importance of taking action and getting things done is matched by the importance of stepping back and taking time to reflect on what is and what could be. This drives the strategic action leaders need for sustained success.

| The benefits of **Action** are advancing goals and taking initiative.		The benefits of **Reflection** are learning and strategic thinking.
Action		**Reflection**
The overuses of **Action** result in being reactive and burnout.		The overuses of **Reflection** result in analysis paralysis and no achievement.
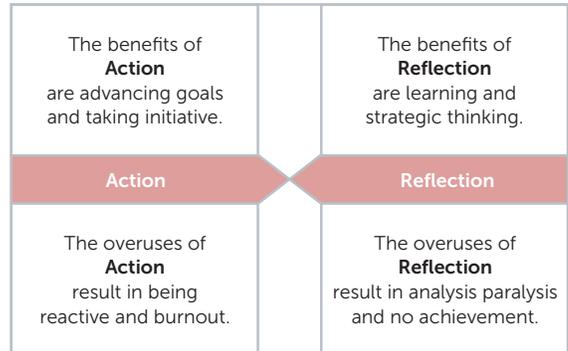
STABILITY :: CHANGE

The ability to lead change is a leadership imperative. Change management, leading transformation, and being a change leader are written about everywhere—without it, leaders and their organizations become stagnant and fall behind. However, when leaders focus too much on change and neglect to focus on stability, order, and continuity, they can create chaos and instability in the organization. Being able to navigate Stability::Change is central to a leader's ability to preserve the core as they simultaneously work to stimulate progress – it's how great leaders make great organizations.

| The benefits of **Stability** are predictability and consistency.		The benefits of **Change** are creativity and new approaches.
Stability		**Change**
The overuses of **Stability** result in stagnation and boredom.		The overuses of **Change** result in chaos and inefficiency.
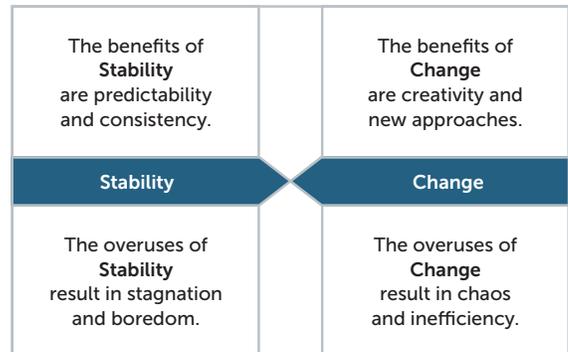
CHALLENGE :: SUPPORT

To excel, leaders need to set a high bar and push people to accomplish bigger and better things. While challenge like this is necessary to achieve excellence, it quickly pushes people too hard, too far, and too fast if it is not mixed with the support and reassurance people need while reaching for new heights. To achieve both excellence and growth, leaders must provide Challenge::Support. This means daring people to reach higher while also providing the encouragement and instilling the confidence needed to clear the high bar that's been set.

| The benefits of **Challenge** are stretching farther and pushing higher.		The benefits of **Support** are confidence and willingness to take risks.
Challenge		**Support**
The overuses of **Challenge** result in anxiety and apprehension.		The overuses of **Support** result in complacency and no growth.
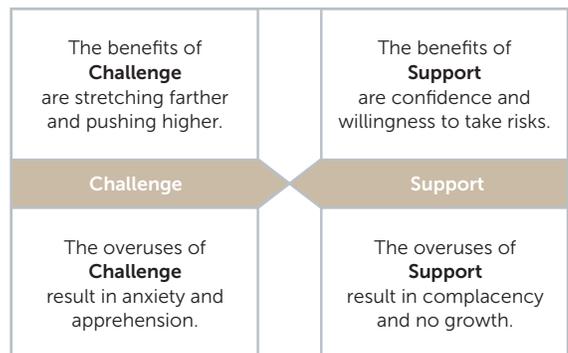
EXUDE COMPETENCE :: EXUDE WARMTH

There are two big things people look for in leaders—do you have the ability, skills, and strength to lead me where we're going, and will you care about and support me as a person while we get there? Showing up strong and competent is crucial. Leaders need to be confident with their expertise and ideas. But without warmth, care, and connection, confidence becomes arrogance and limits leadership effectiveness. Exude Competence::Exude Warmth is about showing up strong and assured while also having humility and finding ways to connect.

The benefits of **Exude Competence** are being seen as strong and knowledgeable.	The benefits of **Exude Warmth** are being seen as approachable and open.
Exude Competence	**Exude Warmth**
The overuses of **Exude Competence** result in being seen as arrogant and impersonal.	The overuses of **Exude Warmth** result in being seen as weak and incapable.
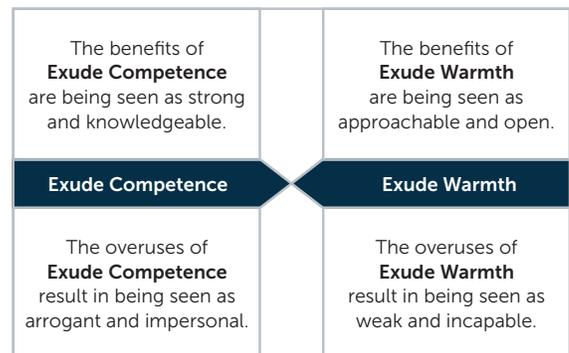
TASK FOCUS :: RELATIONSHIP FOCUS

We all have jobs to do—things to check off the list. And we need to do them in a way that doesn't leave people trampled and bruised. While leaders shouldn't be everyone's best friend or let people off the hook for the things they're accountable for, they do have to connect with the people they work with. Leaders need to balance their drive to achieve with their concern for the people they lead. Sustainable results requires hitting targets while caring for those doing the work by navigating Task Focus::Relationship Focus.

The benefits of **Task Focus** are concentration and getting stuff done.	The benefits of **Relationship Focus** are connection and people feeling valued.
Focus on Task	**Focus on Relationship**
The overuses of **Task Focus** result in damaged connections and low morale.	The overuses of **Relationship Focus** result in lack of accomplishment and frivolity.
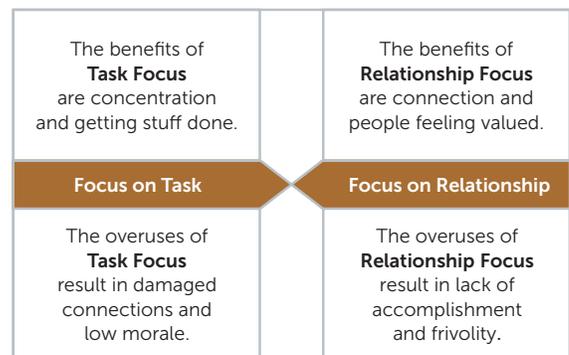
DIRECT :: EMPOWER

If leaders didn't provide direction, no one would be in charge, nothing would get accomplished, and organizations would be in disarray. However, while maintaining order is an important leadership characteristic, taking it too far leads to micromanagement and over-controlling which have negative impacts on engagement and creativity. To succeed, leaders need to provide control and direction while also empowering their people to think and do on their own. This blending of Direct::Empower provides employees clear direction and the freedom to make decisions.

The benefits of **Direct** are clear guidance and keeping things under control.	The benefits of **Empower** are people thinking for themselves and engagement.
Direct	**Empower**
The overuses of **Direct** result in micromanagement and stifling creativity.	The overuses of **Empower** result in people feeling confused and no focus.
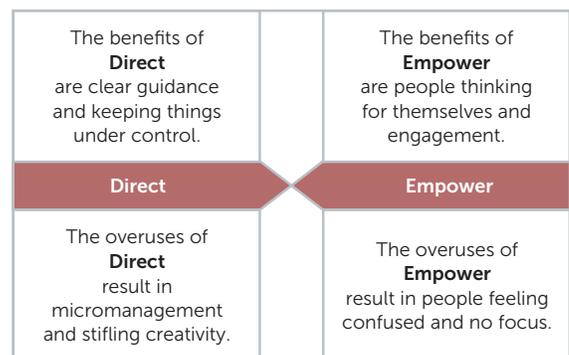
THE **THIRD WAY**

Each polarity contains multiple perspectives. Often the perceived contradiction between two of the perspectives creates conflicts and as a result a person, relationship, team suffers as they work to prove their perspective is right. In a polarity, both perspectives are accurate, but neither is complete. However, using a polarity lens and viewing the situation as an interdependent pair, we start to realize there is yet a third perspective that honors, respects, and holds both simultaneously — the Third Way. The Third Way is the space that re-integrates and holds the poles together. For example, combining the benefits of Direct::Empower can create a mindset that says, my role is to construct appropriate guardrails that give people freedom yet drive accountability.

The benefits of **Direct** are well-defined goals and processes.	I'm a guardrail provider that gives freedom and drives accountability	The benefits of **Empower** are people feeling free to operate and ownership.
Direct		**Empower**

The Leadership KPI measures how well you are navigating each of the six key polarities and identifies the ones where you might benefit from harnessing more of the Third Way. You then develop strategies to increase your overall effectiveness in those areas.