



Leadership Compass: Appreciating Diverse Work Styles

Overview:

This material in this workshop is taken from the Bonner Curriculum from the Bonner Foundation in Princeton New Jersey.

The purpose of the workshop is to enable participants to articulate at a higher level why they work the way they do, as well as identify skills and strengths they would like to enhance. This workshop also is a tool to bolster team accountability by pushing people to consider the way in which their styles plays out on a team and how each person might become better at changing work styles to balance a team or fit a given work situation.

Category: Diversity; leadership development; problem-solving; team and personal management

Focus of this Workshop:

In sum, Leadership Compass is about:

- Developing a deeper sense of self-awareness about one's leadership style and approach
- Developing a more balanced approach to work style; seeking out areas of growth or change
- Developing an understanding of how one's work style affects team functioning
- Deliberately building skills in all four directions to enhance personal and team performance

History

The Leadership Compass draws from a Native American Indian–based practice called the Medicine Wheel or the Four-Fold Way. In the Four-Fold Way, the four directions are described as warrior (north), healer (south), teacher (west), and visionary (east). All directions have profound strengths and potential weaknesses, and every person is seen as capable of growing in each direction. Each direction has a primary “human resource,” including power (north), love (south), wisdom (west), and vision (east), as well as primary struggles, associated with loss or difficulty. Each person can access the gifts associated with each direction; through work, ritual, a variety of practices; in order to become more whole.

This workshop builds on the Leadership Compass framework to allow individual participants to dig deeper in their perceptions of self and team. Non-profit organizations modified the original framework and language to be more suited to the professionally-oriented cultures of organizations. This workshop pushes the notion of the “learnable” qualities of each direction, when a person adopts a willingness to learn and change.

Focus on these questions while reviewing the four directions

- **What's your first inclination when you get a new project?**
- **What's your tendency when you're under pressure?**
- **What feedback have you been given about yourself?**
- **What seems most comfortable?**

Listen carefully and consider...

- What is my 'PRIMARY DIRECTION'? That is the direction I most identify as my own style.
- WHEN ACTING AS A PROJECT DIRECTOR OR TASK LEADER, (keeping in mind that many of us work in some of all of the directions at different times)... Identify the direction that best fits me.
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*Remember... later in the workshop, we will explore skills from all of their directions.

Now that you have chosen your primary direction

Discuss these questions with your group:

- **What's really great about being your direction?**
- **What's really hard about being your direction?**
- **What's difficult about working with the other directions?**

*In this discussions, people can recognize that although they are at the same "primary" direction, they have different responses to these questions.

Group Activity

Each group sitting in their primary direction will address this question:

- **Plan a two week vacation**

Each group must report out their solution to the above question.

Going to Extremes

Focus on how your style might be misunderstood, conflict with others, or be taken too far in a group dynamic. This should raise awareness of people for the "balancing" possibility of different styles.

Your groups will have **five minutes** to focus on the following question:

- **When you take your direction to an extreme or are inflexible with your style, what do you think the other directions are saying about working with you?**

Each group will report out after time for discussion.

Which directions are your 2nd, 3rd, and last choices?

SECONDARY direction - the side s/he feels is second most likely to use in the project administrator role.

THIRD direction – the side s/he feels is next likely to use in the project administrator role. Look around and see where your teammates are now. 😊

FOURTH direction - what you perceive as your weakest

The next activity will involve working with our weakest direction.

Group Activity: Walking in someone else's "MOCCASINS"

This activity must be performed FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUR FOURTH (WEAKEST) DIRECTION (the one they are in now).

➤ **POSSIBLE SCENARIO:**

Your committee is part of the historical society of a local community. The historic drive-in movie theatre may be put up for sale and an outside land developer wants to purchase the property and demolish the drive-in to build an office complex. Even though the owner has let the property get completely run down and it has now become a haven for illegal drug activity, this drive-in is one of the first drive ins that were created in the country and your committee has been assigned the task find a way to save this historic landmark and get the community to invest in restoring it back to its original structure. The historical society has given you a budget of \$2000 for seed money to help you get an action plan started.

Discuss these questions to address in relation to the scenario, like:

- "How do you handle this situation?"
- "Generate a proposal and strategic plan, within the timeline and budgetary limits, to take on this challenge."

After completing the activity, ask yourself these questions:

- Was it challenging to have to play out your weakest direction?
- What did you learn?
- Does this resemble or counter dynamics of our team? How? When?
- Does this make you think that you may have more of that direction than you thought?

Balancing for Success

The Leadership Compass is a good tool to use to see where our “comfort zone” is in our leadership style. We recognize that we need all the points of the compass to be a leader and even our “comfort zone” is probably between two points.

The Leadership Compass is also a good tool to use when determining the success of any project. For each project you are working on, you can ask yourself the following questions:

Vision (East)

- What was the vision of what we wanted the project to look like?
- How did we imagine and look at everything that was possible?

Relationships (South)

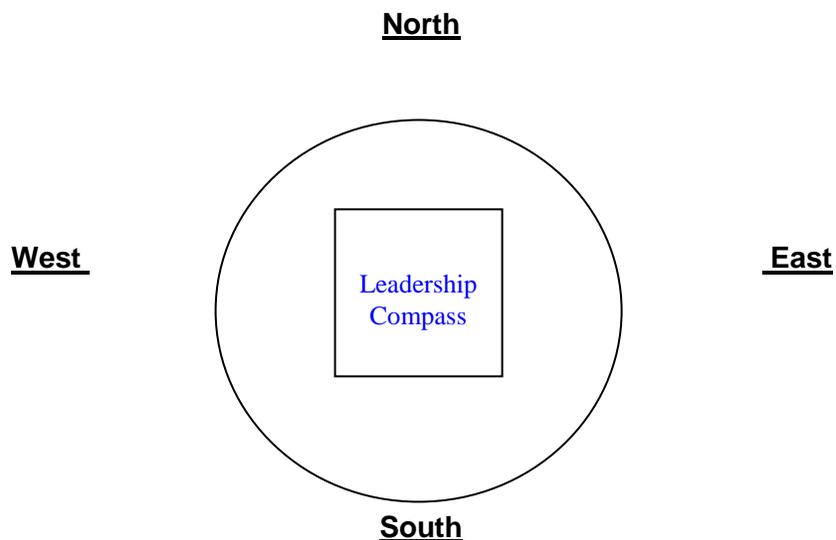
- How did people in the group relate to each other?
- How did individuals identify with the group?
- What did people feel about the project and their participation and contribution?

Process (West)

- How did we do the project?
- What was our plan and how did we come up with it?
- How was the project supervised and evaluated?

Results (North)

- How well did we complete the project?
- Which success criteria of the project did we meet?





Leadership Compass: NORTH (Warrior)

Approaches to Work/ Work Style:

- Assertive, active, decisive
- Likes to determine course of events and be in control of professional relationship
- Enjoys challenges presented by difficult situations and people
- Thinks in terms of “bottom line”
- Quick to act or decide; expresses urgency for others to take action
- Perseveres, not stopped by hearing “No,” probes and presses to get at hidden resistances
- Likes variety, novelty, new projects
- Comfortable being in front
- Values action-oriented phrases, “Do it now!”, “I’ll do it”, “What’s the bottom line?”

Overuse: Style Taken to Excess:

- Can easily overlook process and comprehensive strategic planning when driven by need to act and decide
- Can get defensive, argue, try to “out expert” others
- Can lose patience, pushes for decision before its time, avoids discussion
- Can be autocratic, want things their way, has difficulty being a team member
- Sees things in terms of black and white, not much tolerance for ambiguity
- May go beyond limits, get impulsive, disregard practical issues
- Not heedful of others’ feelings, may be perceived as cold
- Has trouble relinquishing control - find it hard to delegate, “If you want something done right, do it yourself!”

Best Ways to work with a North:

- Present your case quickly, clearly, and with enthusiasm and confidence
- Let them know they will be involved – their pay off and their role
- Focus on the “challenge” of the task
- Provide them with plenty of autonomy
- Establish timelines and stick with them
- Give them positive, public recognition
- Use them to complete tasks that require motivation, persuasion, and initiative



Leadership Compass: SOUTH (Healer)

Approaches to Work/ Work Style:

- Understands how people need to receive information in order to act on it
- Integrates others input in determining direction of what's happening
- Value-driven regarding aspects of professional life
- Uses professional relationships to accomplish tasks, interaction is a primary way of getting things done
- Supportive to colleagues and peers
- Willingness to trust others' statements at face value
- Feeling-based, trusts own emotions and intuition, intuition regarded as "truth"
- Receptive to other's ideas, builds on ideas, team player, noncompetitive
- Able to focus on the present
- Values words like "right" and "fair"

Overuse: Style Taken to Excess:

- Can lose focus on goals when believes relationships or people's needs are being compromised
- Has trouble saying "No" to requests
- Internalizes difficulty and assumes blame
- Prone to disappointment when relationship is seen as secondary to task
- Difficulty confronting or handling anger (own or others'); may be manipulated by emotions
- Can over-compromise in order to avoid conflict
- Immersed in the present or now; loses track of time; may not take action or see long-range view
- Can become too focused on the process, at the expense of accomplishing goals

Best Ways to Work with a South:

- Remember process, attention to what is happening with the relationship between you
- Justify your decisions around values and ethics
- Appeal your relationship with this person and his or her other relationships
- Listen hard and allow the expression of feelings and intuition in logical arguments
- Be aware that this person may have a hard time saying "NO" and may be easily steamrolled
- Provide plenty of positive reassurance and likeability
- Let the person know you like them and appreciate them



Leadership Compass: EAST (Visionary)

Approaches to Work/ Work Style:

- Visionary who sees the big picture
- Generative and creative thinker, able to think outside the box
- Very idea-oriented; focuses on future thought
- Makes decisions by standing in the future (insight/imagination)
- Insight into mission and purpose
- Looks for overarching themes, ideas
- Adept at and enjoys problem solving
- Likes to experiment, explore
- Appreciates a lot of information
- Values words like “option,” “possibility,” “imagine”

Overuse: Style Taken to Excess:

- Can put too much emphasis on vision at the expense of action or details
- Can lose focus on tasks
- Poor follow through on projects, can develop a reputation for lack of dependability and attention to detail
- Not time-bound, may lose track of time
- Tends to be highly enthusiastic early on, then burn out over the long haul
- May lose interest in projects that do not have a comprehensive vision
- May find self frustrated and overwhelmed when outcomes are not in line with vision

Best ways to work with an East:

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



Leadership Compass: WEST (Teacher)

Approaches to Work/ Work Style:

- Understands what information is needed to assist in decision making
- Seen as practical, dependable and thorough in task situations
- Provides planning and resources, is helpful to others in these ways and comes through for the team
- Moves carefully and follows procedures and guidelines
- Uses data analysis and logic to make decisions
- Weighs all sides of an issue, balanced
- Introspective, self-analytical, critical thinker
- Skilled at finding fatal flaws in an idea or project
- Maximizes existing resources - gets the most out of what has been done in the past
- Values word like “objective” “analysis”

Overuse: Style Taken to Excess:

- Can be bogged down by information, doing analysis at the expense of moving forward
- Can become stubborn and entrenched in position
- Can be indecisive, collect unnecessary data, mired in details, “analysis paralysis”
- May appear cold, withdrawn, with respect to others’ working styles
- Tendency toward remaining on the sidelines, watchfulness, observation
- Can become distanced
- May be seen as insensitive to others’ emotions or resistant to change

Best Ways to Work with a West:

- Allow plenty of time for decision-making
- Provide data-objective facts and figures that a West can trust
- Don’t be put off by critical “NO” statements
- Minimize the expression of emotion and use logic when possible
- Appeal to tradition, a sense of history, and correct procedures.