Barry Johnson

And

Volume One: Chapter 5
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Making a Difference
by Leveraging
Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma

Volume One: Foundations

Table of Contents

Introduction to Volumes One and Two

I am in Brazil being warmly welcomed by a representative of Natura outside the front entrance to their main building. They know that I have written about polarities so they smile as they translate the Portuguese words carved deep and large into the wall: "Being Well *And*[1] Well Being." They explain that "Being Well" means that we must take care of Natura as a company. It must be financially sound and healthy. "Well Being" means that it is equally important to take care of those who work at Natura, the community, and the environment. (*from Chapter 6*)

This Book is the First of a Two-Volume Set.

Volume One – Foundations

Volume One is a resource for people who want to make a positive difference. How? By overcoming two obstacles: resistance to change and polarization. From a problem-solving perspective, either of these challenges could be overwhelming. From a Polarity Thinking™ perspective, both can be addressed by replacing *Or* with *And* when *And* is required.

For example, the question, "Am I going to hold on to my values *Or* accept the change proposed?" is likely to create resistance to the change. That resistance could be significantly reduced by replacing *Or* with *And.* "How am I going to hold on to my values *And* gain the benefits of the change proposed?" We can save the baby *And* throw out the bathwater. (*Section Three*)

The question, "Am I going to support the group that wants to decentralize *Or* the group that wants to centralize?" is likely to create polarization. That polarization could be significantly reduced by replacing *Or* with *And*. "How do we get the benefits of decentralization *And* the benefits of centralization?" Effective decentralization requires effective centralization. (*Chapter 5*)

"Am I going to support 'Black Lives Matter' *Or* 'All Lives Matter?'" This false choice is less polarizing if *Or* is replaced with *And*: "Black Lives Matter" *And* "All

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[1]   When the word "and" is used to connect two poles of a polarity, it will be capitalized and in italics: *And*. When the word "or" is used, incorrectly, to connect two poles of a polarity, it will also be capitalized and italic: *Or*.

Lives Matter." It is precisely because all lives matter that disproportionate attacks on and incarceration of black people matters. (*Chapter 7*)

Regardless of the size of the system that you want to change, this book guides you through a clear process:

1. **Seeing**: Is this an issue where *And* is required?
2. **Mapping**: How can I see a more complete picture and respect alternative views?
3. **Assessing**: How are we doing with this polarity?
4. **Learning**: What can we learn from our assessment results?
5. **Leveraging:** What action steps will we take to make a positive difference?

Reading this book will help you address resistance to your efforts to make a difference. Also, it will help you address chronic conflicts that become vicious cycles as both sides become more polarized.

You will learn when and how to bring *And* into your efforts to make a positive difference. When done well, supplementing *Or*-thinking with *And*-thinking will help you convert the wisdom of those resisting change into a resource to support a more effective change. *And*-thinking will help you join polarized groups and convert a vicious cycle into a benefit for all. The results will benefit both groups and the larger system of which they are a part.

Volume Two – Applications

Volume One is from my perspective with a lot of input and help from others. What is missing are important other voices. When considering groups with power and privilege which have dominance in the United States and those groups that have been marginalized by the dominant group, I am a member of the dominant group in every category. I am white, cis male [2], financially secure, college educated, raised in a het-ero-normative all-white family, from a Christian tradition, without physical or mental disabilities. Having the power and privilege that comes by being in these groups does not make me a good person or a bad person. But membership in the dominant group does come with responsibility to learn from those who are marginalized. It also includes sharing power with them and interrupting the practices and policies of the dominant group that contribute to their marginalization. This marginalization is oppressive and dehumanizing for both the dominant and the marginalized groups. Some marginalized groups include Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BI-POC), women, LGBTQI+ [3] people, the poor, those from religious traditions other than Christian, and those with physical or mental disabilities.

Volume Two includes the voices of people from marginalized groups. Each author provides an example of how they have applied Polarity Thinking to make a difference in their life and work. The authors come from a variety of disciplines. They have worked inside organizations as founders and leaders. They have also worked

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[2] Cis men are men assigned "male" at birth and feel that "man" and "male" accurately describe who they are.
[3] LGBTQI+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, plus other identities.

Table of Contents

as external resources to organizations as coaches, trainers, organizers for justice and equity, consultants, and teachers. At least one author in each chapter has completed a Two-Year Polarity Mastery Program.

Their stories can be used and adapted to your unique situation. The variety of examples will expand your possibilities and help you avoid common pitfalls as you apply Polarity Thinking. These diverse examples demonstrate how you can succeed in making a difference by combining your life experience with Polarity Thinking and the Polarity Map®.

Start with the Chapter That Interests You Most.

Though Volume One is written in a logical sequence, I encourage you to find the chapter that seems most relevant to you and read it first. Which chapter connects to where you want to make a difference?

All Are Loved *And* Accountable – All Are Connected *And* Each is Unique.

This book begins and ends with two double-messages (polarities) that come to us from most religious traditions.

1. All of us are loved unconditionally, without exception, *And* we are all accountable for our actions and inactions, without exception. In our effort to make a difference, we need to hold ourselves and others accountable. At the same time, the context for our accountability is that we are loved unconditionally *(Section Four)*. When our message of accountability is combined with an often unstated message of unlovability, we generate a natural resistance from the self, family member, organization, or the country receiving the message of unlovability.
2. We are all connected in a unified whole *And* we are each unique. Neither our unity nor our uniqueness can be lost *(Section Two)*. We can make a difference by affirming the reality of our connectedness *And* our uniqueness. We need not struggle to make us connected *Or* to make us unique. We are already both.

Not recognizing these two polarities (*1 & 2 above*) undermines our efforts to make the positive differences we seek to make with our families, organizations, and countries. Not recognizing these and other polarities in this book has contributed to organizational dysfunction, gross inequity and the marginalization mentioned above. Recognizing and intentionally leveraging these polarities and others can make a difference in how well our organizations are run, how financially sound they are, and how effective they are at enhancing our quality of life on the planet for all of us. My hope is that <u>*And:*Volume One</u> and <u>*And:*Volume Two</u> will support you in making your difference in the world.

Barry Johnson (he, him)[4]

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[4] In this book, I recognize diversity of identity and use she, her / they, them / he, him. For people I know well, and those identified in the public arena, like Dr. MLK, Jr., I use the pronouns they use for themselves.
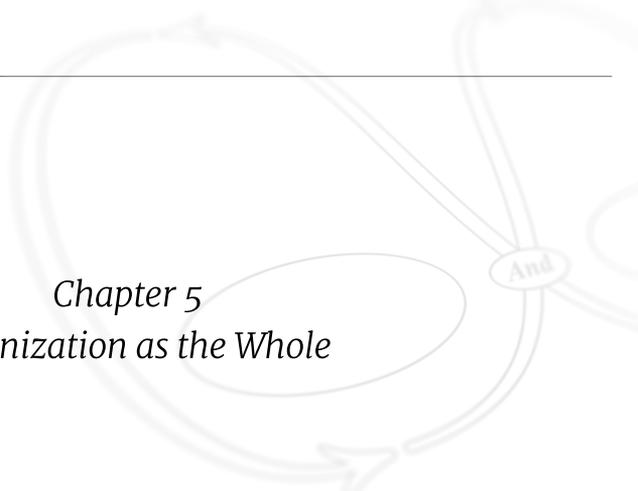
Chapter 5
Organization as the Whole

I am on a phone call with three people from a multi-national company located in 46 countries. Those on the call are the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Learning Officer, and the head of a design team preparing for a four-day leadership development program for their top 200 people. They want to spend one of the four days applying Polarity Thinking. The call is intended to help me understand the company and the design of the four days. I want them to experience Polarity Thinking as useful: that it will make a difference.

Leading Through Values

One of the first things they let me know is their program theme: "Leading Through Values." My response is that this is a terrific theme for learning Polarity Thinking because values come in pairs. They show up in the two upsides or the two poles of a Polarity Map®.[R47] The COO asks, "You're saying that values come in pairs?"

I respond, "Yes sir.[17] I think so. When I work with an organization in developing their values, I encourage them to put them as pairs. If they already have a list of values, I look through their list with them to see if one value on the list might have its value partner somewhere else on the list. If so, I encourage them to put them together as an interdependent pair. If one or more of the values does not have its pair on their list, I encourage them to identify its value pair and add it to their list. As a simplistic example, if they had "Activity" as a value, I would look for something like 'Rest' as another value somewhere on the list. If Rest is not on their value list, I would suggest that they add it – not because I have anything against Activity. I just know that Activity without Rest is not sustainable. It will lead to burn out and injury."

The COO anxiously responds, "Wait a minute. If you are going to be messing with our values in front of our top 200 people, I want to know what you would do with them." They immediately send the organization's list of values. One value on their list is "Autonomous Business Units." It makes sense that they would value Autonomy for their Business Units, especially when they are in 46 countries. What

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I immediately look for is an interdependent value within their list that would provide the necessary balance to "Autonomous Business Units."

If you were in my place on the phone, what would you be looking for as a pole partner on their list? Without reading ahead, write down, below, a couple of words or phrases that would provide some balance and help keep the company from getting into trouble from an over-focus on Autonomous Business Units alone.

_____ ,   _____ ,   _____

You probably came up with something like centralized or coordinated or integrated. There is not one right word or set of words we would be looking for. There is a general category of words that would work as a dynamic balance to Autonomy for the Business Units.

The reason you were able to come up with possible names for the other pole is that you have been living within this polarity as long as you have been working within any organization. Organizations will decentralize to give their "Parts" the freedom to do what they are uniquely qualified to do and to take initiative to quickly respond to situations they encounter. Over time, the "swing of the pendulum" will occur and the organization will self-correct by centralizing in order to take care of all the "Parts" *And* have them work as a coordinated or integrated "Whole."

In other words, you have been through some form of this infinity loop many times in your life. Your experience with this polarity, combined with your own intuition, will help you "take my place" on the phone.

The Generic Part *And* Whole Polarity Map

Your ability to help this organization will increase significantly when you combine your experience and intuition with a Polarity Map and our increasing list of polarity realities. Each section of this book has a generic Polarity Map which is a starting point for building a more specific map that will be a custom fit for a person or organization. The generic Part *And* Whole Polarity Map is the basis for all the chapters in this section.

Building a Polarity Map is always a values and language clarification process.[R48] The content of the map needs to make sense for the person or group using it or the map will not be useful to them. If any of the maps in this book do not make sense to you because you would use different words, just change the map so it works for you or your group. The map content just needs to follow certain guidelines:

1. Both poles need to be either neutral or positive.[R49] If one pole is seen as negative and the other as positive, the map will tend to favor the pole that is seen as positive. This is likely to lead to an over-focus on the pole with a positive value. For example, with the polarity of Activity *And* Rest, it would be a setup to have the pole names be: Burned Out *And* Rejuvenated. When the pole names are both neutral or positive, it is easier to identify the upside and downside of each pole.

2. The content of each upper quadrant needs to be the "positive results" from focusing on that pole. They will be "positive" based on the key stakeholders' definition of "positive."

3. The content of each lower quadrant needs to be "negative results" from an over-focus on that pole to the neglect of its pole partner.

4. There will be a Greater Purpose Statement at the top of the map that answers the question, "Why bother to leverage this polarity?" The answer becomes an integrative focus when agreed to by all stakeholders.

5. There will be a Deeper Fear at the bottom of the map which represents the opposite or loss of the Greater Purpose.

Hopefully, the content of the *Figure 1* map will work for you in terms of your language and values. If not, change as necessary. Just follow the above guidelines.

Let's look at the content in this map and I will identify a few more Polarity Realities. Then we can return to the conversation with the 3 people from the Fortune 100 company.

(+A) Whether the Part is an individual *And* the Whole is the Team, or the Part is a Business Unit *And* the Whole is a Company, or the Part is a Country *And* the Whole is the United Nations, the Part will value its Freedom, its Uniqueness and its ability to take Initiative without having to check with the Whole.

(+C) At the same time, those concerned about the Whole will value some basic Equality among the Parts, the Connectedness between the Parts and a Synergy between the Parts resulting in the Whole becoming more than the sum of the Parts (2+2=5).

Figure 1   Polarity Map®

We All Thrive

+A Values
• Freedom
• Uniqueness
• Initiative of Parts

+C Values
• Equality
• Connectedness
• Synergy of Parts

Part *And* **Whole**

• Inequality
• Isolation
• Lack coordination

• Loss of freedom
• Sameness
• Excess conformity

– B Fears   **We Don't Survive**   **– D Fears**

(−B) In any human system, when we over-focus on Freedom, Uniqueness and Initiative by its Parts (+A) to the neglect of Equality, Connectedness, and Synergy between the Parts (+C), it leads to Inequality, Isolation of some Parts from others, and a Lack of coordination between the Parts.

(−D) Also, if we over-focus on Equality, Connectedness, and Synergy between the Parts (+C) to the neglect of Freedom, Uniqueness, and Initiative for the Parts (+A), it leads to Loss of Freedom, bland Sameness, and Excess Conformity (Group Think).

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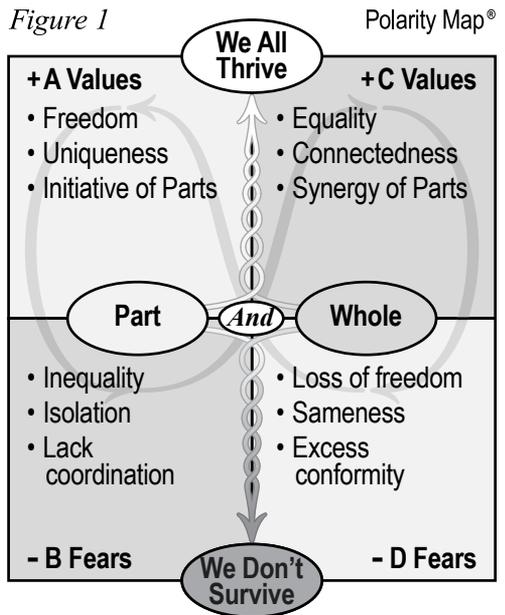
You will notice that each of the two upper quadrants have the word "Value" in them, and the two lower quadrants have "Fear" in them. This reminds us that the words in the two upper quadrants represent something that is valued about each pole. Thus, the two upsides of a polarity represent a values pair. The downside of the opposite pole represents the loss of that value which is a legitimate fear by those holding on to the diagonal upside value. Those who value Freedom (+A) will fear the loss of Freedom (-D). The stronger the value, the stronger the fear and the reverse.[R50]

A powerful value/fear diagonal when combined with *Or*-thinking gets us "hooked" by a false choice between the poles. We become blind to the other value/fear diagonal and over-tolerate the downside of our valued pole. We then get "stuck" there – unable to access the upside of the pole that is feared.[R51] For example, the strong value for Freedom (+A) and strong fear of its loss (-D) combined with *Or*-thinking, will make it difficult to access Equality (+C). For them, the false choice is, "Do I want Freedom (+A) *Or* do I want to lose Freedom (-D)?" They, of course, will choose Freedom every time. Their choice is within one diagonal (+A/-D) as if the other diagonal (-B\+C) does not exist.

The final two content pieces in the Polarity Map in *Figure 1* are the Greater Purpose Statement (at the top) and the Deeper Fear (at the bottom). The Greater Purpose answers the question, "Why bother to leverage this polarity?" My answer, in the case of *Figure 1*, is that "We All Thrive." The Deeper Fear is the opposite of the Greater Purpose which could be that "We Don't Survive".

A Customized Version of the Generic Part *And* Whole Map

As I create a customized version of the generic Part *And* Whole map in my head, I know I want to give them a "Competitive Advantage," so this becomes the "Higher Purpose" in my mental map, *Figure 2*. The "Deeper Fear" at the bottom is, "Can't Compete."

Seeing – With the generic Part *And* Whole map, *Figure 1*, as a reference, I think of a Business Unit as a Part *And* the Company as the Whole. I wanted to use their exact language for the left pole and use parallel language for the right pole. Thus, in

Figure 2
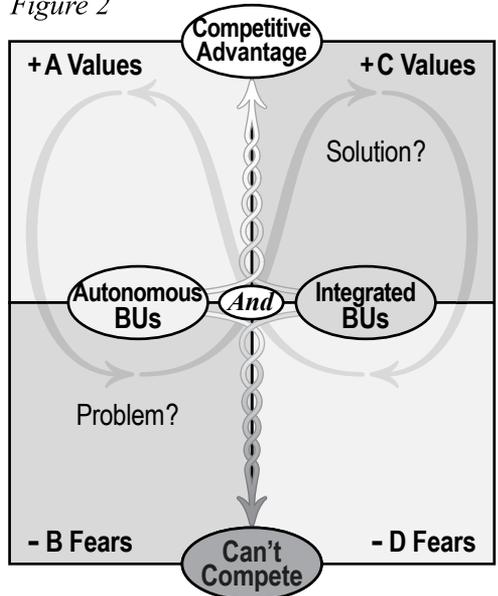
Figure 2, my customized mental map was Autonomous Business Units *And* Integrated Business Units.

They do not have "Integrated Business Units" or any reference to centralizing or coordination on their values list. This means they are likely to over-focus on Autonomous Business Units (+A) to the relative neglect of Integrated Business Units (+C). With this over-focus, they will find themselves in the downside of Autonomous Business Units (-B).

Without reading ahead, but using *Figure 1* if you would like, think of some words that would work for you to describe the content for (-B). What difficulties is this company likely to experience if they over-focus on Autonomous BU's to the neglect of Integrated BU's? Write a few words or phrases that come to mind:

——————————— , ——————————— , ———————————

Now, think of some words that would work for you to describe the content of (+C). What is this company likely to decide they need to do to address the difficulties in (-B)? This content will be the positive results from focusing on Integrated BU's. Write a few words or phrases:

——————————— , ——————————— , ———————————

Back to the Phone Call

The COO asks me what I think of their values list. I say, "It's a great list. I notice that you have Autonomous Business Units as a value but there is no value about Business Unit Integration or Coordination." He agrees that they are absent and asks me what I think of that. I respond, "From a polarity perspective, your organization is likely to experience: silos and isolation of some of the business units; excess competition between the units; inequality within the units with resentment toward those that appear to have "preferred" status; and, redundancies that are costly."

Your listed words or phrases for (-B) would probably be different than mine but they are likely to have a lot of overlap. We are not looking for a few "correct words" but for a general set of issues that are likely to occur when you over-focus on Autonomy of Business Units to the neglect of Integration.

I continue on the phone to suggest, "At some point, these issues are going to be identified as a 'problem.' You will bring your Business Unit Heads together with your executive team to address them. When you meet, you will agree to do a number of things to 'solve' these issues. You will agree to move from Silos to Integration; from excess competition to collaboration and mutual support; from inequality to equality; and from redundancies to coordinated efficiency."

Again, your list for (+C), though probably different from mine, would fit into the same general cluster of things they would decide to do to centralize and coordinate their organization.

Not Walking Their Talk

The following *Figure 3* shows the next phase of the conversation. After suggesting what problems are likely from their not having a pole partner for Autonomous Business Units (–B) and what they will agree to do to solve those problems (+C), I suggest that they are not likely to move toward (+C) in spite of their agreement to do so.

There is silence on the other end of the phone. After a few seconds, I say, "Hello?" The COO speaks with an angry tone and says, "Who have you been talking to?!"

I respond that I have not been talking to anyone. I just understand how values work and how polarities work so the results are predictable.

The COO responds by saying, "Wait a minute. I understand how our Value of Autonomous Business Units without adequate attention to Integrated Business Units would lead to your "Problem" list (–B). It is also clear how you would identify what we would agree to do as a "Solution (+C)." But did I hear you correctly that we were not likely to walk our talk and do the very things we agreed to do?"

My response is, "Yes sir."

The COO continues, "I want to know how you knew that, because I held that meeting you described two years ago. We agreed, to the person, to make those corrections and we have hardly made any progress. It is costing us millions of dollars. I want to know how you knew this would happen and what can be done about it."

This became the focus of the leadership day I spent with them. I knew they were likely to see the issue as a problem to solve and frame it from a "Gap Analysis" perspective. *Figure 3* is how it might look. Gap Analysis has 3 parts:

1. The present state, with its limits = the Problem (–B).
2. The preferred future state, with is possibilities = the Solution (+C),
3. A strategy to bridge the Gap between the limited present state and the preferred future state.

You will recall that when a system is in the downside of one pole, it is easy to see the upside of the other pole as a

Figure 3

+ A Values   **+ C Values**

Solution:
• Integration of business units
• Collaboration and mutual support
• Equality and mutuality
• Efficiencies of coordination

Autonomous Business Units   **Gap**   Integrated Business Units

Problem:
• Silos: isolation of the units
• Excess competition
• Inequality between the units
• Redundancies

– B Fears   **– D Fears**
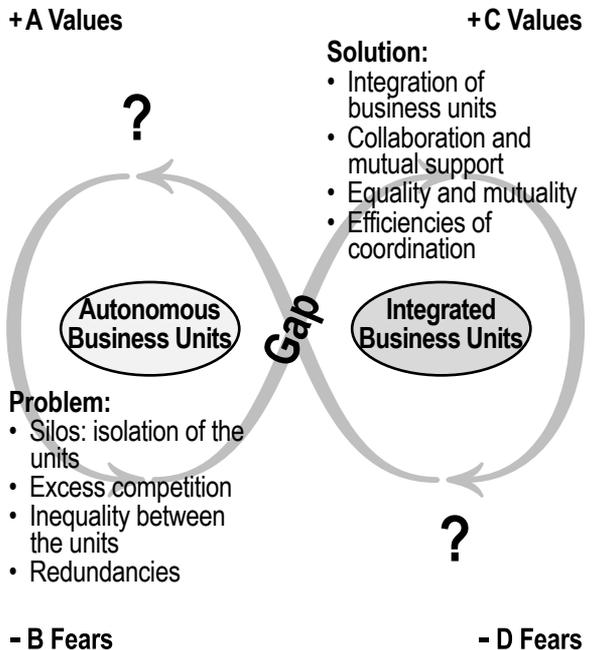
solution. It was the combination of a problem solving, gap analysis frame and an *Or*-mindset that undermined their ability to walk their talk.

Since some form of gap analysis is used in virtually all change efforts and since problem solving is our natural response to dealing with difficulties, there was a strong possibility that these two would be combined to address their issues.

When we look at their values from a polarity perspective, we quickly see what is missing. The problem solving, gap analysis frame, gives us two parts of the underlying Part *And* Whole Polarity Map and assumes that we have everything we need: A problem (-B), a solution (+C), and a strategy to gain the solution. The strategy would show up as Action Steps to gain the upsides of Integrated Business Units (+C). These two, diagonal parts of the map are important and accurate, they are just incomplete. When we get into trouble with polarities, the reason is not that our problem-solving perceptions are inaccurate, it is that they are incomplete.[R52]

What is missing in the gap analysis is the upside Value of Autonomous Business Units (+A) and the downside Fear of Integrated Business Units (-D). We know we can get "hooked" by a strong Value/Fear diagonal combined with *Or*-thinking. We then get "stuck" in the downside of our valued pole and are unable to access the upside of the pole that is feared.

All we need to do is fill in the missing parts of the map to see what this company values so strongly (+A) and what it will fear with its loss with equal intensity (-D). This will tell us why they have had trouble getting to their agreed upon solution (+C).

With the support of the generic Part *And* Whole map, *Figure 1*, combined with your life experience, you can create your own content for (+A) and (-D) in *Figure 3*. What would be the positive results of building in some autonomy for your business units, especially if you are in 46 countries? Your answers, below, will help us appreciate why they put Autonomous Business Units in their values list in the first place. What words would you put in (+A) of *Figure 3?* Write below:

———————————— , ———————————— , ————————————

Given whatever you have written above, the exact opposite would go in (-D) of *Figure 3*. The real opposites in a Polarity Map are the diagonals. The poles are interdependent but not always what we might call opposites.[R53] As a culture, the company that values your (+A) words, above, will be afraid of losing that which is valued. What "opposite of (+A)" words come to mind for you for (-D) in *Figure 3*?

———————————— , ———————————— , ————————————

In *Figure 4*, on the following page, we can see a more complete map that I had in mind when looking at the companies values list. Your content above for (+A) and (-D) will be different than mine but, hopefully, there is overlap and we are thinking about the same general cluster of words that would fit in those two quadrants. They are not the same words as in the generic Part *And* Whole map, *Figure 1*, but you

can see how *Figure 1* would help you think of the general type of content that would show up in *Figure 4*.

Notice what a solid list of items shows up in (+A). This great list does not show up within gap analysis. This list of values is the heart of the company on the phone. They love this so much that, not only did they have "Autonomous BUs" as a value, they did not have anything like "Integrated" or "coordinated" in their values.

Notice the items that show up in (−D). This also is a rich list that does not show up with gap analysis. There is a powerful fear, at the gut level, in this culture, of these downsides. This value/fear (+A/−D) diagonal will get in the way of doing what the COO and everyone else at the head level saw as the logical "Solution" (+C) to their "Problem" (−B).

It is not that they could not come up with content for (+A) and (−D) if they were asked. The gap analysis framework just doesn't ask for those two quadrants. The wisdom is in the company. The Polarity Map asks for more of that wisdom than does the gap analysis frame.

Figure 4

+A Values
- Entrepreneurial initiative
- Speed and responsiveness
- BU freedom and innovation
- BU recognition

Competitive Advantage

+C Values
- Integration of BUs
- Collaboration and mutual support
- Equality and mutuality
- Efficiencies of coordination

Autonomous BUs　*And*　**Integrated BUs**

- Silos: isolation of BUs
- Excess competition
- Inequality between the BUs
- Redundancies

- Bureaucracy - red tape
- Slow and unresponsive
- Excess conformity and lack of innovation
- Lack of BU recognition

− B Fears　**Can't Compete**　**− D Fears**

Engage Key Stakeholders in Each Step of the SMALL Process.[R54]

I have talked about a Polarity Map being a wisdom organizer. I have also talked about building a map being a values and language clarification process. The combination of these two realities supports the engagement of key stakeholders in each step of the SMALL process. What I mean by key stakeholders are those people who are influenced by or could influence the process for which you are building the map. The wisdom you are organizing within the map will be wiser and less vulnerable to "blind spots" when key stakeholders are involved. Also, if the values and language of the map do not work for some key stakeholders, their support will not be there to help you leverage the polarity.

Below is a quick summary of why and how the practice of including key stakeholders was useful in the leadership session we were preparing for on the phone call.

Seeing – Perceptions about an organization's reality are different in different parts of the system. In order to have a more accurate "Seeing," it is helpful to get a view from different parts of the system: different levels, locations, and areas of focus. One way to do that is to get as representative a group as possible of key stakeholders to help identify the most important polarities at play for the organization and to name the poles. In this case, the top 200 represented all geographical areas and areas of business. There were representatives from the Business Units (Part) *And* representatives from the executive, corporate offices (Whole). Key stakeholders from lower levels of the system were missing. You can always build a map without some key stakeholders present. We often do. The vulnerabilities of doing so are reduced if their interests and perceptions are kept in mind as you go through the process.

We agreed on Autonomous Business Unites (BU's) *And* Integrated Business Units (BU's) as the two pole names for the leadership day on Polarity Thinking.

Mapping – At the gathering, we had table groups of six, all filling out the four quadrants of the Autonomous BU's *And* Integrated BU's map. We consolidated the highly overlapping content into a map that worked for them. We did our best to make sure the map would work for those stakeholders not present. When building a map for yourself and people not present, it is helpful to think of the initial map as a "draft." Keep some flexibility to edit the map to incorporate the wisdom and points of view of others as you share the draft map with them.

Assessing – They recognized that they were in the downside of Autonomous BU's (–B) and needed to self-correct to the upside of Integrated BU's (+C). Here again, having key stakeholders involved in the assessment will increase the trust-worthiness of the assessment. It will be more trustworthy to the degree the stake-holders involved do represent the variety of perspectives in the company (and outside the company, if that is desired.)

Learning – This step involves giving your own meaning to the assessment results. What have we learned from our process so far? How do we understand and interpret the results? What contributed to the results, whether positive or negative? Key stakeholders' presence can enhance the richness of this step. What you learn from this step supports the actions you take in the next one.

Leveraging – This step involves identifying what "Actions Steps" the company was already doing and could start doing to maximize the upside of each pole. Also, what would be "Early Warnings" that would be measurable, early indicators that they are getting into the downside of one pole or the other. This would help them self-correct without getting caught in the downside of a pole. Here, again, having key stakeholders present will improve the quality and quantity of the Action Steps and Early Warnings.

In summary, with groups and organizations, it is helpful to include key stake-holders in every step of the SMALL process.

Coaching – When doing one-on-one coaching, the process is easier. The map you create together only has to fit with the values and language of the person you are coaching. If it works for them, you are good to go.

> **Important Acknowledgement**
>
> *Over the last 20 years, Robert 'Jake' Jacobs has been a friend, coach and founding partner of Polarity Partnerships, LLC. Jake is the author of <u>Real Time Strategic Change</u> (RTSC).[18]*
>
> *In our years together, Jake has significantly influenced how we think about and work toward fast, sustainable change within Polarity Partnerships, LLC. His RTSC principles and his processes for engaging key stakeholders are built into our Polarity Approach to Continuity And Transformation (PACT). Polarity Thinking and RTSC have influenced each other significantly over the years. This mutual influence is summarized in Jake's chapter in our applications book.*

Paradoxical Shift in Poles – A Return to the One-Day Workshop with the 200

In the process of creating Action Steps for each upside, we started with the Action Steps for the upside of Autonomous BU's first (+A). The reason we started with Autonomous BU's was to counter the fear that we would focus on Integrated BU's to the neglect of Autonomous BU's (-D). To assure everyone that we were not neglecting Autonomous BU's (AKA "Throwing the baby out with the bathwater"), we <u>started</u> by identifying things we will continue to do and new things we will start doing to maximize Autonomous BU's. After everyone was assured that we were committed to Autonomous BU's, then, and only then, did we shift to focus on Action Steps for Integrated BU's (+C). This fits with our paradoxical orientation toward moving from one pole to the other: If you want people holding on to the present pole to support movement toward the other pole, first guarantee, with Action Steps, support for the present pole.[R55]

It is also helpful to acknowledge, with Early Warnings, the legitimate fears of the downside of the pole we are moving toward (-D) before creating Early Warnings for the downside of the pole we are moving from (-B).[R56] The message to those holding those fears is that they have a point and that we can identify measurable, early ways to let us know when we are starting to get into this predictable downside. Those warnings will help us self-correct to keep from getting "stuck" in that downside. When we have gotten early warnings for the pole we are moving toward (-D), we can create early warnings for the present pole as well (-B).

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[18] Jacobs, Robert. *Real Time Strategic Change. How to Involve an Entire Organization in Fast and Far Reaching Change*. Berrett-Koehler,1994.

The leadership found this perspective and process very useful. They now know that this is a polarity that they will be living within as long as their company exists. They know that there is a natural tension between the two poles that can be leveraged. And, if they can leverage it well, they will outperform any competition that sees one pole or the other as a "solution" to a problem. They made a difference for themselves using a polarity map and the SMALL process.

Summary

Looking at values in pairs, as a polarity, can strengthen an organization's value platform. Not identifying the pole partner of a value will make an organization vulnerable to what is missing. Adding the value partner does not diminish the original value. On the contrary, it contributes to the sustainability of the original value and the sustainability of the company. This is true because a polarity is indestructible while one pole of a polarity is inherently unsustainable. For a story of a Brazilian company, Natura, converting its original values list to a list of values in pairs, see the chapter, "Values come in pairs at Natura" in *And*: Volume Two.

The generic Part *And* Whole polarity is useful as a starting point for seeing various versions of this polarity in our organizations. Since building a Polarity Map is always a values and language clarification process, we need to make sure the map we create is one that works with key stakeholders. When building a map, keep open to having it modified as you share it with others. For it to work for them, you may need to create a modified map with words and values that will work for you and them.

When an organization treats a polarity as if it were a problem to solve, it will reduce the attainability, speed, and sustainability of the "solution" they are trying to accomplish. When an organization can see a key underlying polarity within a difficulty or set of difficulties, it will increase the attainability, speed, and sustainability of the desired outcome.

A lack of "Power" or lack of "Alignment" were not the problem. In this change effort, those with the power in the organization were serious about wanting to make the change. So was everyone else. They were all "aligned" to move from the "problem," as they saw it, to their collective "solution." This is important to recognize. The "resistance" to this move was coming from the very people who were supporting it. They were not being dishonest and would not see themselves as saboteurs. At the same time, their values for the upside of Autonomous Business Units and equally strong fears of the downside of Integrated Business Units combined with *Or*-thinking was keeping them from getting to the upside of Integrated Business Units: their "Solution."

This is a very important reality to be aware of when trying to make a difference from either inside or outside of a system. Sometimes leaders and others in the organization may be flat out lying when they say they are committed to a change you are trying to make. I think this is seldom the case. It is much more likely that in their heads it seems reasonable and they do support it. They will even invest

considerable time and money working in support of the change. Yet the change does not happen! There is an alternative explanation which I believe is much more common than lying about their support.

The alternative explanation is that everyone supporting the change has misdiagnosed the context. They have seen it as a problem to solve when it is, more accurately, seen as a polarity with a much-needed move from the downside of an over-focused pole to the upside of a neglected pole. Everyone in this company agreed to go from the downside of Autonomous Business Unites to the upside of Integrated Business Units. They had the power of leadership support, the power of employee alignment, and the reality that the change had significant financial benefits, yet they were still unable to walk their talk! This is the power of our unconscious bias for *Or*-thinking.

At an unconscious level, even the strongest advocates for the change, those who really wanted to make a difference in company performance, were undermining the effort. Their undermining was coming from an unconscious framing of a false choice in which their support of the benefits of Integrated Business Units would result in their losing the benefits of Autonomous Business Units. This would lead to being caught in the downside of Integrated Business Units. The stronger the value, the stronger the fear. The stronger the fear of the downside of a pole, the more difficult it is to access the upside of that pole, especially when approaching it from an *Or* perspective. This is very important in organizational change efforts as in this case. It is equally important in social change efforts and political change efforts, locally, nationally, and internationally.

New Realities in Chapter 5

Reality 47   Values come in pairs. They show up in the two upsides or the two poles of a Polarity Map.

Reality 48   Building a Polarity Map is always a values and language clarification process.

Reality 49   Both poles need to be either neutral or positive.

Reality 50   The downside of one pole represents the fear of losing the value in the upside of the other pole. The stronger the value, the stronger the fear and the reverse.

Reality 51   A powerful value/fear diagonal when combined with *Or*-thinking gets us "hooked" by a false choice between the poles. We become blind to the other value/fear diagonal and over-tolerate the downside of our valued pole. We then get "stuck" there – unable to access the upside of the pole that is feared. Cliff Kayser was the first to describe this process as getting "hooked" leading to getting "stuck."

Reality 52   When we get into trouble with polarities, the reason is not that our problem-solving perceptions are inaccurate; it is that they are incomplete.

Reality 53   The real opposites in a Polarity Map are the diagonals. The poles are interdependent but not always what we might call opposites.

Reality 54   It is helpful to engage key stakeholders in each step of the SMALL process. Based on Robert 'Jake' Jacob's Real Time Strategic Change (RTSC).

Reality 55   Our paradoxical orientation toward change – that if you want people holding on to the present pole to support movement toward the other pole, first guarantee support, with Action Steps, for the upside of the present pole. Based on Gestalt psychology described by Arnold R. Beisser in Gestalt Therapy Now.[19]

Reality 56   It is helpful to acknowledge with Early Warnings the legitimate fears of the downside of the pole we are moving toward before creating Early Warnings for the downside of the pole we are moving from. This is based on the same paradoxical orientation in Reality 55.

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[19] Shepherd, Irma Lee; Fagan, Joen. *Gestalt Therapy Now*. Gestalt Journal Press, 2008.

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