

MOUR BIGGEST STRENGTH

—THE QUALITY THAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT FROM OTHER PEOPLE—CAN ALSO BE YOUR GREATEST DOWNFALL

We all have an underlying worldview that determines the way we approach all of the challenges we face. Some people are big-picture thinkers.

Others fixate on particulars.

Some people are pragmatic and by-the-book when it comes to solving problems.

Others are dreamers who go outside the box.

Some people are goal-oriented, driven by the thrill of competition.

Others are patient listeners, inspired by a co-operative community that they build around them.

WE CALL THIS FUNDAMENTAL PERSPECTIVE YOUR CORE COMPETENCY OR

DOMINANT

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Patient thinkers seek out connection, harmony, and togetherness. They are mentors, facilitators, and team-builders who work with a set of shared values. Their core competency is empathy as they listen carefully and thoughtfully to others, gaining a deep understanding of their peers' desires and needs. Oprah Winfrey is an exemplary of this archetype. Her ability to connect with and influence her audience is a testament to her remarkable capacity to empathize with them.

Pragmatic thinkers are individuals who seek efficiency and quality and who depend on processes. They are highly disciplined and see the value of systems and bureaucracy. Alan Mulally, the newly retired CEO of Ford, embodies all the qualities of this type. He came in and saved the company by streamlining its processes and performing an aggressive overhaul on the quality of its product.

Innovators are, of course, much more complicated than a mere personality type. But, despite our quirks and idiosyncrasies, our surprising depths and funny inconsistencies, we all do have an underlying dominant logic that likely fits one of these four profiles.

At the opposite end of the innovation spectrum from the pragmatic thinkers are the big-picture thinkers. These thinkers embrace revolutionary growth through wild experimentation and an extreme rejection of conventions. These radical explorers are drawn to breakthrough innovation projects. They create grand visions and are likely to try unexpected solutions. Their core competency is imagination. Richard Branson embodies the Create profile as his deeply original, even whimsical or offbeat projects come out of the desire for something totally new.

Quick thinkers are everything that patient thinkers are not. They thrive in a Darwinist, competitive atmosphere where the strong prevail at the expense of the weak. These kinds of people are often results-driven workhorses. They set concrete goals for themselves and meet those goals. Their core competency is courage.

Warren Buffett is an exemplary of this worldview. His aggressive, relentless form of investing signifies great courage as he makes bold—often contrarian—financial decisions.

WHAT KIND OF THINKER ARE YOU?

The problem is that our dominant logics overpower all other points of view. Each of us sees the world in such a prescriptive way that it's hard—indeed, impossible—to consider anything without being overwhelmed by our own preferred method of thinking.

Left by themselves, the pragmatic thinkers become bureaucrats. Their methodical march of progress often also brings with it endless rules and regulations. The big-picture thinkers become chaotic. Their projects are almost always high-risk initiatives. The goal-oriented thinkers become control freaks. Their "sweat-shop approach" shows little concern for the development of others. The patient thinkers become irrationally enthusiastic. Their vision for a community of the future is so ambitious that it takes a generation to build.

DOMINANT LOGICS ARE SO INTENSE THAT LOSE LOSE

THE ABILITY TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THEM

This is one of the biggest obstacles to overcome in our current political situation, where stubborn leaders and decision-makers, paralyzed by their dominant logics, unwittingly block progress. Take a look at the political schisms and ideological battles happening around us, stalling forward movement and change. When we're too committed to our own dominant logics, we start thinking irrationally.

In order to achieve an innovative mindset, we need to overcome our own dominant logics. The only way to fully understand something is to look at it from multiple viewpoints. This is about communicating with people who are unlike us, understanding that no single outlook is better than another. We are most likely to create something new when we put diverse outlooks together. I'm not suggesting that we all abandon our dominant logic and become different kinds of thinkers.

RATHER, THE GOAL IS TO EMBRACE OUR DOMINANT LOGIC WHILE WE COMPLEMENT IT BY SURROUNDING OURSELVES WITH THINKERS OF ALL KINDS



THE BEST TEAMS ARE LIKE BANDS OF SUPERHEROES

Each member acknowledges and makes use of his or her gifts and talents, but they don't let those superpowers limit them. They use them at the appropriate moments and then stand back and let their partners take over at other moments. Do things that make you feel uncomfortable. Talk to people with whom you have nothing in common. Remember that the ideal solutions to the most complicated problems will never involve just one mode of thinking. They always require a cross-boundary, interdisciplinary approach that takes advantage of multiple—and often seemingly contradictory—mindsets and ranges of skills.

INNOVATION IS NOT ABOUT ALIGNMENT; IT IS ABOUT CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT— POSITIVE TENSION =



The best combinations of thinkers aren't just a little different—they're from opposing ends of the innovation spectrum. Big-picture thinkers work best with pragmatic thinkers because, together, they blend extreme creativity with the reliability of process. Quick thinkers work best with patient thinkers because, together, they benefit from both the long-term focus on values and culture and the short-term emphasis on tangible outcomes. By working alongside our polar opposites, we can make up for our own shortcomings. Enlist the expertise of people who have something to gain from the things you can do—and who can do all the things that you can't. Now that you've figured out what kind of thinker you are, it's time to answer the more important question: what kind of thinkers do you need to enlist on your innovation superhero team?



