

Take a Look at Yourself

The Self In System Sensitizer

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Progress in any system sometimes depends on uncharacteristic action.

But people, leaders, managers and workers have preferred patterns of behavior, things they like to do, things they avoid, and things they do because they are required by the rules of the game, the systemic imperatives.

Often, these behaviors are automatic and don't help. Most of this is unconscious. It's just what happens. To recognize and act on these repetitive patterns in work, family, community or government takes a special kind of self awareness.., .a willingness to be vulnerable for the sake of a greater good.

This ***Self in System Sensitizer*** is a personal assessment that will open your eyes to the automatic behavior that you and others bring to life and work in systems.

We all develop our own unique patterns of interaction with others. These patterns often become so ingrained that we lose sight of them and the consequences they have for ourselves, for others and for the situations we are in. As a result, we may also fail to consider optional patterns which have potential for ourselves and our systems.

This exercise is not a test. There are no summary scores to tell you how well you are measuring up as a manager. The purpose is to heighten awareness and to broaden your sense of the options available to you. Hopefully, somewhere in this process, you will say something like:

“Aha! Isn't it interesting that ‘X’ is what I typically do, and that ‘Y’ and ‘Z’ might also be worthwhile alternatives for me to explore?”

Described below are eight dimensions of organizational behavior. Read each description carefully, then step back, take a look at your behavior in organizational life, and ask yourself:

“How characteristic is this description of my organizational behavior?”

Dimension 1: Political Awareness

Sometimes we are able both *to involve ourselves in our work* (to get into whatever work we are supposed to be doing and enjoy it) and *to be political about our work* (to analyze the system we are in, to strategize, to attempt to change system conditions).

Sometimes, however, we get stuck on INNOCENCE (doing whatever it is we are supposed to be doing without much political awareness or action); and sometimes we get stuck on POLITICAL (spending much of our time in analyzing, planning, and maneuvering, and little time involving ourselves in the work of the system).

When we are STUCK ON INNOCENCE, we tend to pay little attention to the politics of our work. When given a job to do, we tend to do it with few questions asked. We tend not to strategize or plan on how to sell others on what it is we want to have happen. We tend to trust others; we tend not to question their motives; we tend not to be suspicious or skeptical about why people do what they do; we tend not to raise questions for ourselves as to whether we should or should not do whatever we are doing. Our focus tends to be on the work itself rather than on the politics of work.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that INNOCENCE characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON POLITICAL, we tend not to give ourselves to our work as *it is* nor do we derive our satisfaction from doing that work. Our energy is focused more on *analyzing* our current condition—is it fair, reasonable or unreasonable—and on *maneuvering* and *strategizing*, and *attempting to change* conditions.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that POLITICAL characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 2: Interaction Comfort

Sometimes we are able to interact freely with our social system environments. We can comfortably give and take. We feel we can both influence these environments and allow ourselves to be influenced by them.

Sometimes, however, we do not feel comfortable in such interactions. We don't like what is happening to us and around us and we don't feel able either to *go with it* or to *change it*. At such times, we tend to become stuck on LOOSE or on TIGHT.

LOOSE is the tendency to give in, to allow what is happening to happen, and to suffer through it. TIGHT is the tendency to become rigid, tense, and unyielding.

When we are STUCK ON LOOSE, we tend to go along with what is happening to

us even when we are uncomfortable with what is happening. We accede to others' wishes even when we don't want to. We allow unpleasant conditions to continue when we don't want them to continue. We would like to change these unpleasant conditions yet feel that we cannot.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that LOOSE characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON TIGHT, we tend to become rigid and unyielding in the face of conditions we are uncomfortable with and don't feel able to change. We tend to resist all attempts to influence us. We tend to become inflexible, stubborn, annoyed, frustrated, and angry. We feel upset about being that way, yet feel unable to change.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that TIGHT characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 3: Authority Interactions

Sometimes we are able to interact with authority figures—our bosses, experts, etc. At times we cooperate with them and at times we confront them. At times we allow ourselves to be influenced by them, and at times we resist such influence.

Sometimes, however, we tend to get stuck on SUBMISSION. That is, we tend to consistently cooperate with authority figures, support them, submit to them, and rarely confront them or rebel against them.

And sometimes we tend to get stuck on REBELLION. That is, we tend to consistently resist them and attack them, and rarely cooperate with them or submit to them.

When we are STUCK ON SUBMISSIVE, we tend to consistently support authority figures—our bosses, the establishment, the organization. We are less likely to say “no” to authority figures, to confront them or resist them. Sometimes even the thought of confronting authority makes us so uncomfortable that we do not do it. And sometimes it never enters our minds that such confrontation is an option for us.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that SUBMISSION characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON REBELLION, we tend to consistently resist, resent, and reject authority figures. We do not cooperate with them or allow ourselves to be influenced by them. Sometimes submission to authority makes us uncomfortable, and sometimes we simply do not see submission or cooperation as options for us. Whatever the case, our tendency is to resist authority.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that REBELLION characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 4: Peer Interactions

Sometimes we feel that we can both *cooperate as members of groups*—work units, teams, friendship groups, couples, etc.— and *function as independent individuals*, that is, sometimes we can *go along with* the group and sometimes we can *act independently* of it.

Sometimes, however, we get stuck on INDIVIDUALITY (consistently going it alone, rarely joining up with others, involving others, or allowing others to include us); and sometimes we get stuck on INCLUSIVENESS (consistently going along with the group, and rarely taking independent action).

When we are STUCK ON INCLUSIVENESS, we are reluctant to take individual action. We are consciously or unconsciously dependent on the support of others, and without that support we will not act on our own. We tend to reject options when such options might alienate us from others whose support we feel we need.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that INCLUSIVENESS characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON INDIVIDUALITY, we are reluctant to opening ourselves to others, to seeking their help, to asking their support, to including them in our thinking, planning and action. We tend to persist in working things out for ourselves even when we need or could use the help and support of others.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that INDIVIDUALITY characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 5: Managing Resources

We are often in situations in which we control resources that others want — funds we could give, an opportunity we could provide, a favor we could do, etc.— and we have the choice either to give or to withhold. Sometimes we are flexible in the way we manage resources, at times giving and at times withholding.

Sometimes, however, we get stuck on GIVING (whenever others want what we have, our tendency is to give); and sometimes we get stuck on WITHHOLDING (whenever others want what we have, our tendency is to withhold).

When we are STUCK ON GIVING, we are reluctant to say “no” to others. Sometimes we give up resources—provide funds, give our services, do favors, and so forth—even when we don’t want to and even when we would prefer to say no. And sometimes we give up resources because we feel that’s the right way for us to be, because we don’t believe in saying no.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that GIVING characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON WITHHOLDING, we are reluctant to say “yes” to others. Sometimes we tend to withhold because we feel we’re being taken advantage of by others. And sometimes we withhold because we feel that’s the right way for us to be, that withholding strengthens others, helps them become more independent, and helps them develop greater initiative.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that WITHHOLDING characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 6: Managing Structure

Structuring has to do with the extent to which we maintain control over the framework within which others work. Do we create clear agendas for meetings and hold to these agendas? Do we clearly spell out for others what we expect them to do, and do we hold them to these expectations? Do we set time schedules, and do we hold others to these schedules? Do we specify the rules and procedures we expect others to work by, and do we hold them to these rules and procedures?

Sometimes we are comfortable in being able both to structure situations for others and to modify or adapt structures we have created. We are able to set agendas, time schedules, expectations, rules and procedures and hold people to these; *and* we are able to back off from what we have created and modify it, change it, or eliminate it

altogether.

Sometimes, however, we get stuck on OVERSTRUCTURING, that is we are reluctant to modify existing structures and once we create new structures, we are reluctant to modify these. And sometimes we get stuck on UNDERSTRUCTURING, that is, we are reluctant to create structures for others and we allow others to change whatever structures we have created.

When we are STUCK ON UNDERSTRUCTURING, we tend to be reluctant to create structures for others, and we are reluctant to enforce whatever structures we have created. Sometimes we understructure because structuring makes us uncomfortable; we allow situations to be looser than we would like because we don't feel comfortable in tightening them up—asking others to stick to schedules, to follow agendas, to play by the rules, to follow procedures, and so forth. And sometimes we understructure because we don't believe in imposing our will on others, because we believe that people ought to be free to do what they want to do.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that UNDERSTRUCTURING characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON OVERSTRUCTURING, we tend to be reluctant to modify or allow others to modify whatever structures we have created for them. We create tight structures for others and we resist changes in these structures. Sometimes we do this because we feel personally uncomfortable with such changes and are uncertain of our ability to manage the resulting ambiguity; and sometimes we do this because we believe it is our responsibility to structure situations for others and that it is their responsibility to operate within these structures.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that OVERSTRUCTURING characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 7: Involvement

Sometimes in organizational interaction we are able to move back and forth between participating and observing, between jumping right into the middle of the action and pulling back from the action to look at and try to make sense out of what is happening. Sometimes we are able to manage our involvement flexibly; we are able both to get into the thick of the action and make things happen for ourselves and others, and to step back and observe.

Sometimes, however, we get stuck on PARTICIPATION (we jump into situations and we tend not to pull back to see what is happening to us and others); and sometimes we get stuck on OBSERVATION (we spend much of our energy watching, observing and figuring things out, and we tend to keep ourselves from direct participation).

When we are STUCK ON PARTICIPATION, we tend to be unable to back off from situations. We become so fully involved that we tend to lose our objectivity. We tend not to pull back, to look at and reflect on what we and others are doing.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that PARTICIPATION characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON OBSERVATION, we tend to keep ourselves from participating directly in the action. We tend to withhold ourselves. We tend to remain on the outside, watching, observing, sizing up and evaluating situations.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that OBSERVATION characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?

(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

Dimension 8: Managing Energy

Sometimes we are in situations which need to be stirred up. We and others may be uninvolved, listless and apathetic. We may not be using the skills and abilities we have. We may be in a rut, going along with our usual ways of doing things even when these ways are no longer effective. The pot needs to be stirred in order to get us thinking, feeling, and acting more effectively.

And sometimes we are in situations which need to be cooled off. The situation may be explosive, chaotic. Feelings may be so high that people are unable to listen to one another and to work together. And the situation needs to be cooled down in order that people can think more clearly, communicate more effectively, and work together.

Sometimes we are able to move back and forth between stirring things up and calming them down. Sometimes, however, we get stuck on CALMING DOWN (we tend not to act in ways which would increase tension in the system). And sometimes we get stuck on STIRRING UP (we tend to be reluctant to act in ways which would reduce tension in the system).

When we are STUCK ON CALMING DOWN, we tend to be reluctant to act in ways which would increase tension in the system. We tend to avoid conflicts, to keep them from developing and to suppress them when they do develop. We tend to avoid actions which might create trouble for ourselves and others. In the face of conflict or potential conflict, our tendency is to compromise, mediate, heal and repair. Sometimes we are stuck on CALMING DOWN because we believe that tension is bad for the system; and sometimes we are stuck because we feel uncomfortable in high tension situations.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very characteristic), to what extent do you feel that CALMING DOWN characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?
(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

When we are STUCK ON STIRRING UP, we tend to be reluctant to act in ways which would reduce tension in the system. We tend to avoid healing activities or activities that would repair relationships; we tend to avoid compromises or mediation processes. Sometimes we are stuck on STIRRING UP because we believe that high energy is good for the system; and sometimes we are stuck because we are uncomfortable with activities involving healing, repairing, compromising, and mediating.

On the same 7-point scale, to what extent do you feel that STIRRING UP characterizes your pattern of organizational behavior?
(Choose and note an appropriate number) _____

SUMMARY

Circle the numerical value below which you selected in each of the categories, to get a feel for your basic pattern. Be particularly attuned to those areas in which you are high on one tendency and low on its opposing tendency.

POLITICAL AWARENESS

Innocence / Political

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

INTERACTION COMFORT

Loose / Tight

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

AUTHORITY INTERACTIONSSubmission / Rebellion

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

PEER INTERACTIONSInclusiveness / Individuality

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

MANAGING RESOURCESGiving / Withholding

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

MANAGING STRUCTUREUnderstructuring / Overstructuring

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

INVOLVEMENTParticipating / Observing

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

MANAGING ENERGYCalming Down / Stirring Up

7 ---- / ---- 7

6 ---- / ---- 6

5 ---- / ---- 5

4 ---- / ---- 4

3 ---- / ---- 3

2 ---- / ---- 2

1 ---- / ---- 1

About Your Sensitizer Results

We hope completing the Sensitizer provided you with insight into your patterns of system behavior. System leadership requires flexibility and the ability to respond effectively to the unique opportunities of each situation we face. Being high on one aspect of these dimensions and low on its opposing tendency may indicate areas where greater flexibility is needed. *Your Sensitizer summary scores point the compass in the direction of which areas you may need to work on to be a more effective leader.*

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The Power Lab is a practice field designed specifically to deal with these dimensions. It is a learning environment in which you are guided by expert coaches who encourage you to go beyond your usual patterns and to test out behaviors that produce more powerful results -- for you and for the systems of which you're a part. For more information, contact us at:

http://www.powerandsystems.com/power_and_leadership.htm

or call: 800/241-0598