



Managing Polarities

Dr. Barry Johnson, author of *Polarity Management*, says, "Polarities are equally attractive possibilities that co-exist in tension with one another, when an over-focus on one leads to (or creates) the other." He says that a "polarity" is often found at the heart of any form of change where there are two competing sides. For example, one side may be identified with problems with the status quo and the other with an improvement or vision for the future.

Common Polarities

- The balance in the country of Security AND Privacy
- The balance in the government of Conservative AND Liberal ideology
- The balance in my life of Home AND Work

Sometimes opposing points of view can be defined as settlers or pioneers. To gain insight into a cultural challenge many organizations face today, complete the following:

The millennials in a traditional organization have been leaving. During their exit interviews, the primary reason given is that they want to have a more flexible workplace (work from home and work during hours most desirable to them).

List below what the "Settlers," or those who want to <i>maintain</i> the status quo, would say as reasons <i>not</i> to change:	List below what the "Pioneers," or those who see a <i>need</i> to for change, would say as the reasons to change:

The goal is to see multiple perspectives in any situation. For any polarity to be managed successfully, all parties need to see others' perspectives while honoring their own. Remember:

- Sometimes things aren't problems to be solved but polarities to be managed.
- Trying to solve a polarity leads to extreme, and unconscious vacillation between poles.