

# White Paper

## Creating agile leadership teams

*How shared leadership models can better manage the ambiguities of sustainable innovation and growth*



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## About the research program

A key aim of this research was to identify how to assist leaders with building a sustainable innovation culture. The focus in this paper is on creating agile leadership teams through agile shared leadership models.

### An overview of the study

This research involved an intensive case study over a 2-year period.

The aim of the study was to identify how leadership teams can effectively manage the competing demands of innovation as an organisation innovates and grows. The focus was on studying a senior leadership team in detail over an 18-month period through a longitudinal ethnographic case study. The leadership team was from a medium sized organisation that had been rapidly innovating and expanding over a fifteen-year period. The intensive immersion approach provided the opportunity to observe how individual leaders negotiate differences to reach consensus in these contexts<sup>i</sup>.

After observing the leadership team in the case organisation for a short period of time, it soon became apparent that the full team also comprised a highly significant and powerful sub-team – a senior leadership duo. The dynamics of this sub-unit and the impact on the whole senior leadership team then became an additional area of focus for the research program.

### The research methods

Using an **inductive qualitative approach**, the research involved a period of immersion in the case organisation as a ‘participant’ observer at times, and at other times as a ‘non-participant’ observer<sup>ii</sup>. This included regular monthly or bi-monthly visits over an 18-month period for up to a four days at a time (16 visits in total) and a series of observations (with audio recordings) of leadership interactions at the executive level, including 27 regular management meetings and workshops, which ranged from two hours up to eight hours in length.

Along with observations, the data collection included 28 formal interviews and 31 informal interviews with executive team members and other members of RSO to identify the impact of leadership practices. In total there were 57 points of contact over the 18-month period totalling just under 182 hours. Over 50 relevant documents were also analysed, including internal strategic documentation, external communications and media reports to gain an understanding of the organisational context.



16  
site visits



27  
meeting observations



69  
interviews



182  
contact hours



50  
documents

The **formal interviews were semi-structured**, providing some initial direction but then allowing for the dialogue to evolve and follow any relevant direction. The informal interviews were captured in a diary format in a field book, and enabled more candid spontaneous insights.

The **‘draw and talk’ technique** was also used in some of the interviews as it can enable deeper thinking. This technique involves asking interviewees to answer the interviewer’s questions in a pictorial format, and to describe what they are drawing as they create the images<sup>iii</sup>. While interviewees will often tell you what they think you want to hear when asked to verbally respond to questions, asking interview participants to also draw what they are experiencing as part of the interview process can bypass potential verbal boundaries and limitations. This approach can allow for a broader exploration of deeper emotions and practices<sup>iv</sup>, leading to greater honesty<sup>v</sup>. Pictures can also reveal a different narrative to what is verbalised<sup>vi</sup>.

The analysis of the interview data led to the creation of an **‘event history database’<sup>vii</sup>** and historical narrative timeline which was constructed from the interview data, archival data, journal notes, drawings and other documentation.



## Key research insights

The executive leadership team in the case study demonstrated how leaders respond to the competing demands of

The study identified that shared leadership models can help navigate the paradoxical tensions that emerge in innovation and growth contexts where there is a process of **Dynamic Polar Positioning (PoP)**. This process involves a pattern of reflexive and responsive equal and opposite actions and re-actions to hold the competing demands in tension.

This process was found to initially require *paradoxical cognition* by at least one team member, or an awareness of how although the competing demands are contradictory they are also complementary. This is an ability to hold both polar positions in tension simultaneously.

Team decisions and actions can then be navigated through a combination of:

1. **Parallel posturing**, which involves team members representing polar positions through deciding on a particular stance on an issue in response to team members' positions
2. **Functional riffing**, which enables individuals to seek equilibrium through continually finding opportunities for making partial connections, and
3. **Bridging the gaps**, through reaching out and empathetically relating to build a platform for ongoing connection and growth.

When the leadership teams work together such that any divergent paradoxical elements were effectively temporally bridged in this way, the tension between the positions can be held in equilibrium long enough to provide a platform for productive ongoing action.



## Understanding the Issues

### The Jobs / Cook phenomenon

The single leader is often hero-worshipped, or idolised, and individual leader models are still the most common leadership models. Yet it can be difficult for individual leaders to single-handedly manage the competing demands of contemporary rapid change contexts.

Keeping up with the pace of change requires agile adaptation for rapid innovation, along with simultaneously ensuring responsible and reliable performance<sup>viii</sup>. Though the tensions from apparently contradictory requirements such as these can appear to be irreconcilable<sup>ix</sup>, it is essential for leaders to understand and address them. So how is it possible for leaders to effectively address these challenges?

Shared leadership models, including the dual executive leader model, have more recently emerged in response to these changing needs. Shared executive leadership teams and executive leader duos have been operating in companies such as Oracle, Wholefoods and Atlassian for some time now.

The high-profile dual leadership approach taken by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, after Tim Cook became COO is a particularly interesting example of how shared leadership can work in practice. While Jobs was recognised as the passionate creative genius, there needed to be someone at the executive level who could take a more tactical approach and focus on the systems and structures needed to support the rapid innovation. As executive performance advisor Ferracone<sup>x</sup> pointed out in a *Forbes* article,

*'Jobs reinvented the company by practically disrupting the entire music industry and innovating wildly successful products. Meanwhile, Cook made the operations sing by streamlining facilities and the supply chain, all of which dramatically increased margins. Under their (shared) leadership, the company went from its nadir to a remarkable \$100 billion today.'*

The result, Ferracone claimed, was that there was a spectacular turnaround and the company was rescued from almost certain annihilation. With Steve Jobs' passing away, however, there was perceived to be an imbalance in the company.

Tech start up founder Bhavnani<sup>xi</sup> more recently reflected,

*'Every "Steve Jobs" needs a COO like Tim Cook to help them really get things done; to balance their creative chaos. Unfortunately, when you have a COO in charge it squashes the "Steve Jobs" types... No one is (now) pushing Tim and forcing him to deal with creative chaos.'*

These descriptions allude to the role dual executive leader models may play in dealing with the competing demands of maintaining successful innovation and growth.

### Senior leaders play a significant role

Clear links between leadership and innovative development have been established, with some theorists identifying leadership as having the greatest impact on innovation and growth<sup>xii</sup>. A number of studies now confirm the role of leadership as one of the most significant requirements for innovation<sup>xiii</sup>, particularly at the senior leadership level<sup>xiv</sup>.

The tensions from the competing demands of the need for both fast-paced risk taking and breakthrough developments along with more cautious incremental developments are often experienced most acutely by senior leaders, as senior leaders are responsible for the strategic management of the organisation<sup>xv</sup>.

Not only do senior leaders support the types of group interaction that enable and guide development processes in their teams<sup>xvi</sup>, they are also able to create the conditions required for both innovation and implementation<sup>xvii</sup>. Senior leaders use a number of managerial levers to directly and indirectly impact innovative growth<sup>xviii</sup>, including strategic missions and goals,

resource allocation, organisational learning and management tools, and culture, which work together to support both direction and maintenance<sup>xix</sup>.

Senior leaders can achieve sustainable innovation and growth by displaying behavioural repertoires that foster 'consistency, stability and control' which support maintenance functions, at the same time as demonstrating 'passion, risk taking and creativity', which support breakthrough innovative development<sup>xx</sup>.

Yet little is known about the dynamics of how senior leaders and senior leadership teams experience and respond to the tensions that arise from these complex competing demands. Insights into these experiences and responses can further our knowledge of the skills needed for future-ready leadership.

Two or more leaders  
can be better than one...  
*but...*

Future-ready innovation leadership can require different capabilities that are not always present in the individual senior leader, such as the contrasting skills of idea generation and idea synthesis<sup>xxi</sup>.

In the shared leadership model, different leaders can provide diversity through bringing different skills and perspectives, can contribute more resources, and can jointly share the final decision-making responsibility.

There can certainly be challenges with the shared model, such as the potential need to compromise structures to adapt to the different individuals<sup>xxii</sup>; the challenge of sharing inseparable information, interpersonal and decision roles<sup>xxiii</sup>; the challenge of coordination<sup>xxiv</sup>; and the difficulties of achieving shared consensus<sup>xxv</sup>.

Studies have identified that when there is trust and alignment through an integrated shared vision<sup>xxvi</sup>, senior leadership teams can provide the diversity, behavioural complexity and social connections that may help address competing demands simultaneously<sup>xxvii</sup>.

Navigating the  
challenges of  
leadership teams

When Steve Jobs and Tim Cook were running Apple together they found a way to navigate the challenges of the oppositional positions they each represented. While Jobs was entrepreneurial and innovative and was known to operate from a sense of entrepreneurial passion, Cook was rational:

*Cook was known to be 'temperamentally different from Jobs... cool, calm and never ever raises his voice'<sup>xxviii</sup>, and he 'differentiated himself from Jobs in myriad ways' which resulted in 'a level of stability in the senior management ranks few expected'<sup>xxix</sup>.*

Cook respected Jobs' talents, and recognised the importance of providing the counterbalance position to provide stability for long term sustainability. In this way Cook provided the means for a productive dynamic tension between the two positions.

A key finding of the research outlined in this paper was that successful negotiation and navigation towards a collective future where there are competing demands involved some level of recognition of the others' polar positions, and the willingness of at least one actor to provide a counterbalance before finding ways to meet in the middle.



## The unique research study findings

### Actively balancing competing demands

This study identified how leadership teams and duos can deal with the competing demands that arise as organisations innovate and grow.

The organisation that was the subject of the case study had rapidly grown from a handful of passionate individuals to a more corporatised structure, and the members of the senior leadership team appeared to be polarised in their responses to where the organisation should be positioned.

The leadership duo in the case study represented contrasting perspectives between the CEO, who demonstrated a responsive orientation to exploration and risk taking through a passionate and innovative stance, and the COO who demonstrated an orientation towards efficiency and control through a more rational approach. These oppositional orientations clearly shaped the way they approached their work and their interactions. Observing their interactions therefore provided a valuable insight into how leadership teams can manage the tension between competing demands.

It was possible to see the interplay or the 'dance' between the two dynamic positions as positions shifted through mapping the patterns of communication.

Like in a chess game, the power dynamics shifted rapidly with each new move and, although the player in the 'stronger' position (the CEO) often appeared to command the play and control the board, the COO was often (not always) able to gradually manoeuvre the play in a different direction.

This finding was consistent with previous research that has identified how the overemphasis on one polar perspective can lead to negative tension and vicious cycles<sup>xxx</sup>. It is important to note that the pattern of shifting positions to find joint equilibrium was only observed when there were strong contradictory philosophical positions on an issue that led to competing demands, whereas when there was agreement there could be smooth consensus and ready alignment.

**Paradoxical cognition** was identified as a critical core factor throughout for this collective leadership behaviour pattern to evolve, as paradoxical awareness in at least one actor in the executive leadership team enabled a detection of the challenges and actions that could work towards spanning the divide.

The emergent pattern of dynamic interaction then revealed three unique and distinctive elements in the interactions between the CEO and the COO, which were often but not always sequential:

1. *parallel posturing*, through action and re-action
2. *functional riffing* to seek equilibrium through partial connections, and
3. *bridging the gaps* through reaching out and relating.

*Parallel posturing* was often the first action detected, as one leader would take a strong stance on an issue in line with their core orientation (*action*), then the other would take an oppositional stance (equal and opposite '*re-action*', playing devil's advocate). The actors would then pick up the threads of the other's orientation to look for partial connections and maintain some sort of fragile equilibrium through *functional riffing*. One actor would finally find opportunities for consolidating those connections based on empathetic understanding and appreciation of the other's position by *bridging the gaps*.

The emergent themes were identified as shown in Figure 1 below.

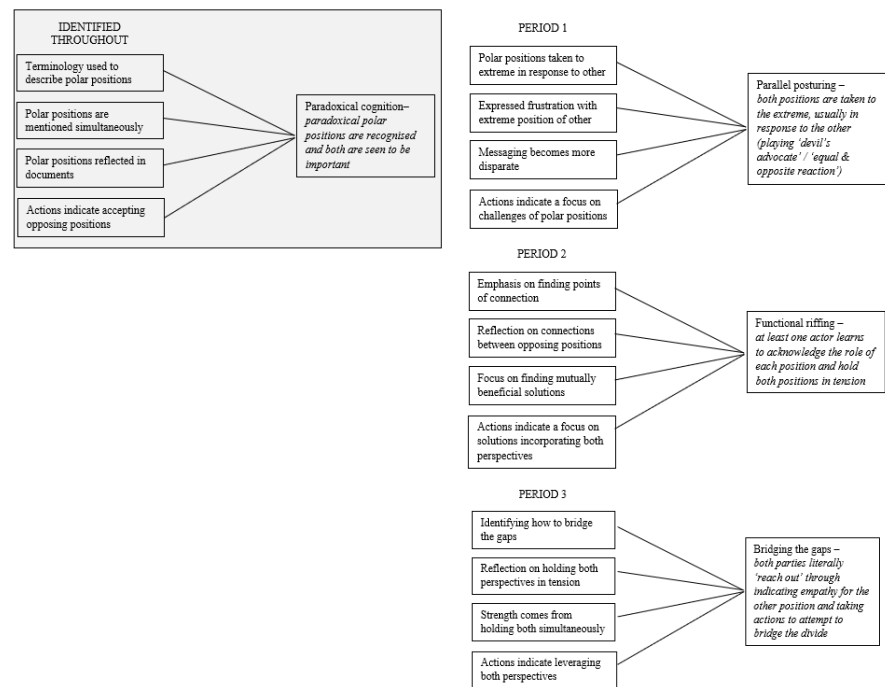


Figure 1: Pattern of emergent themes from the data collected

Some details of how these principles worked in practice can be seen as below.

## The power of paradoxical cognition

The first element that impacted practice, which could be identified at the beginning of the research period, was an evolving shared awareness of the paradoxical nature of the competing demands in innovation through *paradoxical cognition*. This paradoxical cognition is a recognised mental framing that involves acknowledging the nature of polar positions and embracing the inherent contradictions<sup>xxxix</sup>.

This ability to reflect on paradoxical elements could be seen to be related to ‘the regular exercise of the mental ability... (for) people to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa’<sup>xxxix</sup>.

In this research it was clear that the executive team model was most effective where there was evidence of *shared awareness* in the language and behaviours of the team members. This evidence included paradoxical language (‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’ language), and an ability to identify the coexistence of paradoxical phenomena, which the COO was readily able to demonstrate.

A growing shared awareness through paradoxical cognition could be seen through the use of language that demonstrated paradoxical awareness, such as the COO stating he was brought in as the ‘yin to the CEO’s yang’ at the beginning of the research period, and through the establishment of systems and processes that indicated polar positions were actively being pursued simultaneously as the research period progressed, such as establishing an ‘integrated partner model’ for a new centre in a developing region that demonstrated principles of both growth, exploration and consolidation towards the end of the research period.

In this interview, the COO drew his reflections on the dynamics of the leadership team from one year before at the beginning of the research period when he first arrived (disconnected circles vaguely grouped under different reporting lines), along with his desired model for the executive leadership team (a yin/yang model with the senior leadership team in alignment).

The COO explained his awareness of the dynamics further when he explained:

*‘I was brought in to be the yin to (the CEO’s) yang... The organisation’s innovative and it demands to be, it needs to be by necessity on a number of fronts... we prove we can do that, and I think that’s a real tick and a real strength of the organisation. What I’m talking about (needing) is the sort of internal structures and systems that sit behind all of that, that provide a real stability and a real foundation for the organisation to scale off... We’re moving into the strategic planning process for the*



*next three years, and I think that provides a great opportunity to start to think into that space around those new ideas and those new ways of thinking... So I think there's been some improvement in processes.'*

This ability to reflect on principles and actions has been found to play an important role in team effectiveness, and it has been demonstrated that an ability to reflect on tasks is positively related to affective well-being, clearer team objectives, and participation in decision making<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Moreover, shared awareness has been found to be associated with creativity and innovation in leaders and teams, as there has been found to be greater innovation where there are high levels of reflexivity in conditions of minority dissent in teams<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Additionally, reflexivity in authentic leadership has been found to influence team performance<sup>xxxv</sup>, and reflexivity in transformational leadership has been found to facilitate creative problem-solving capacity<sup>xxxvi</sup>.

A leadership crisis just prior to the research period had forced the CEO to reflect on the strong stance he had taken to that point, which enabled the board (through the Chair) to step in and establish themselves as a complementary force to help provide a more balanced platform for action. In the months prior to the leadership crisis, the CEO had initiated a period of rapid growth, including a shift to a very large new premises, so the leaders were under considerable stress.

The actions of the board in appointing a COO with a strong operational background and clear reflexive capabilities then indicated paradoxical awareness on some level by the board. The COO himself then also demonstrated paradoxical awareness once he moved into his new position by taking actions that indicated cognition of the emergent oppositional stories. The clear paradoxical cognition that the COO demonstrated as his position became more established was found to be a core requisite factor for enabling the dynamic process that could lead to equilibrium.

Throughout a representative dialogue in a pivotal point in the research, there was evidence of mutual reflexivity through *paradoxical cognition*. The opening sentence of each individual's speech uses inclusive 'and' language (rather than exclusive 'either/or' language) which indicates there is recognition there are two polar positions that can be held in tension simultaneously:

*'I think that's part of it... and...' (COO), 'This is part of what I was trying to get at, (and) it's actually about...' (CEO), 'There is that element to it as well, and that's where...', 'I think the missing piece...' (COO).*

This study also found that taking a strong stance, and then adapting according oppositional positions through active *parallel posturing* and *functional riffing*, can be a means for the competing orientations to be held in tension in executive leadership teams. The CEO as the founding leader of the case organisation had established a strong position for himself and for the organisation, typically taking a firm stance in opposition to other established positions (such as the government and other similar organisations). He would often take a fervent emotive perspective from a passionate commitment to the cause, and from a deep sense of purpose. He chose to take risks to achieve ambitious goals as an entrepreneur and an innovator.

These findings build on recent research that has identified that charismatic leaders, and in this case founding entrepreneurial leaders like the CEO, are often 'visionary and innovation-oriented, with a clear focus on creating new opportunities... tolerat(ing) chaos and a lack of structure'<sup>xxxvii</sup>. If there were strong differences in opinions, the COO would often establish an equal and roughly opposite position from a rational strategic perspective in order to try to maintain some sort of equilibrium. This pattern of behaviours seemed to help ensure both polar perspectives were represented, and appeared to be a means for exploring how the polar orientations could continue to be held in tension, which is considered to be essential according to paradox theory<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

## 1. Parallel posturing

The first practice that could be identified once the new senior leadership team started to settle in was labelled here *parallel posturing*. This practice incorporated a series of actions and re-actions that appeared to help to stake out the territory that needed to be covered by the dual leaders and establish opposing balancing positions.

The CEO had maintained a clear 'vision' since he founded the organisation, and this led him to take a strong position driven by his passion for the cause. Throughout the 15 years since the organisation had started, he had clearly and consistently positioned himself in terms of this story, and he had made it clear that the organisation operated in opposition to established political pressure. Another of the founding principles he constantly referred to was that the organisation was 'innovative' in responding to clients' needs, and as a result it had grown rapidly, offering a large number of unique programs and managing a large number of staff, volunteers and clients (*actions*).

The board established some re-orienting actions (*re-actions*) in response to the CEO's strong stance to enable more balance, for example by appointing new directors, identifying the potential underlying causes of the conflict, providing consulting support, and initiating a staff satisfaction survey. By the time the COO arrived, the organisation was under significant pressure as there were not adequate systems and structures in place to support the rapid growth, so the COO took over the board's *re-active* position. The CEO had often used emotive language to describe his commitment to the cause, and his body language demonstrated the weight of responsibility and personal impact of the challenges to his leadership – he was very serious and often literally 'burdened' by the weight of responsibility.

When the COO arrived, he acknowledged the 'enduring commitment in the face of increasing (external) hostilities' and the 'passion' of the CEO and the organisation in general. He recognised that the organisation needed to be 'nimble' in order to be responsive to rapidly changing government policies and client needs, but he could also see the stress this placed on the organisation. The COO's reference to the 'newly created role' he took over indicated his attempt to position himself in oppositional yet complementary terms: 'You could even classify it as a chief operating officer – effectively it's more around the operational side of things' (*re-action*). The COO was clearly energised and 'optimistic' about the challenges ahead, and he had framed the challenges at the time of his arrival (August 2016) as follows:

*'So, what's happened is significant growth, and what hasn't kept pace is all of those factors around the hygiene factors, the governance, the operating, the procedures, the processes, the policies, so a big part of my role is getting all those underpinnings right so that we can be effective, nimble and manage our risks and be able to deliver our impactful services with the resources we have.'*

The emergent contrasting orientations became the CEO's 'responsiveness' on the one hand, and the COO's focus on 'efficiency' and 'control' on the other hand.

## 2. Functional riffing

The second practice observed as the research progressed was labelled *functional riffing*, as it seemed to involve the dual leaders more actively seeking even tentative points of connection and constantly shifting and adjusting as the landscape changed to find a way to enable paradoxical positions to be held in tension.

Throughout the research period the CEO and COO continued to adapt to maintain the dynamic tension between the two polar positions established by each orientation. The COO soon introduced a number of new systems and structures to support the entrepreneurial growth of the organisation and worked on improving the budgeting process. As a result, the CEO started to develop some trust and stepped back from the day to day running of the organisation. This repositioning was evidenced through the CEO attending fewer executive team meetings to focus on public relations work, particularly in areas where there was still a leadership gap. The CEO conceded the budgeting process initiated by the COO was the 'best yet', demonstrating a willingness to meet the COO halfway, but was still cautious about the significant amount of work involved, asking the executive team 'was the time investment worth it?' Throughout this period the COO continued to work on addressing areas of need identified in the staff satisfaction survey with other executive leadership team members, thereby seeking to maintain some sort of fragile equilibrium through the uncertain period following the leadership crisis.

Along with indicating paradoxical awareness, the opening sentence each actor used in the pivotal representative dialogue also reflected the attempts to pick up on the other's intent and continue the conversation in a pattern of *functional riffing*. This action by both actors contributed to maintaining some sort of equilibrium between the two positions. The indication of the intention to make 'partial' connections through meeting at a point in the middle came from the phrases as follows:

*'I think that's part of it... and...' (COO), 'This is part of what I was trying to get at, (and) it's actually about...' (CEO), 'There is that element to it as well, and that's where...' (COO).*

These phrases signpost an effort on both sides to pave the way for bridging the gaps between the oppositional perspectives. This terminology and the implied intentions behind the language indicated the beginning of a new pattern.

### 3. Bridging the gaps

The third practice identified through the research process was labelled *bridging the gaps*, as it involved the opportunity to develop empathy, trust and respect for the opposing orientations over time. This practice strengthened the initial tentative connections and provided a flexible interconnected platform for sustainable innovation and growth.

As the research period progressed it became possible to identify a change in dynamics, where each party appeared to demonstrate a certain level of empathy for the other's position. The COO, in particular, was able to 'reach out' and demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the CEO's perspective and cross the boundaries that had previously been so distinct.

The COO picked up on the CEO's strong response to the 'efficiency and control' orientation at a key pivotal meeting. Soon after this time the COO appeared to take this perspective on board and become more 'responsive'. Around this time the COO established monthly executive leadership team meetings to ensure there was the time and space to talk through deeper issues and concerns. He also initiated external facilitation to help address these issues and concerns professionally, and in his language he talked about the need for 'trust', 'consensus' and 'accountabilities'.

In response, the CEO took an action that appeared to align more closely with the COO's focus on 'efficiency and control'. Soon after this time the COO took up a role that would give more of an opportunity to focus on higher level operations management. In the process the other members of the executive team also appeared to develop paradoxical awareness, as evidenced through their language, such as talking about the need to be both 'empathic and gentle' and 'firm' with staff, which enabled more effective executive team leadership actions overall. These actions assisted with bridging the gaps between the two polar positions, at least temporarily, to enable a period of stability and a strong enough foundation for ongoing action.

The increasing paradoxical awareness provided a platform for meeting in the middle and reaching consensus, as illustrated in the broadening arrow in Figure 2 below. As paradoxical cognition increased, the gap between polar positions could be bridged while polar positions could be maintained.

An additional significant finding was that the transition to the final stage of *bridging the gaps* could only occur when the right conditions were in place. A working dynamic equilibrium could only be reached when one actor was willing to cross the fragile socially constructed divide and 'reach out' to the other through a combination of active listening, empathy and collaborative interpersonal communication. High emotional intelligence (which includes these factors) has been found to be critical in managing the competing demands of flexibility and efficiency in contemporary organisations<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Once the COO started to recognise the CEO's need to be heard and to have his concerns acknowledged, for example, rather than simply taking a parallel polar position, he then took the next step by reaching out to the CEO through demonstrating active listening along with empathy and perspective taking<sup>xl</sup>. This included a willingness to not simply focus directly on solutions, but also to demonstrate an understanding of the deeper issues and dynamics that needed to be addressed. The outcome was that the COO and CEO were no longer talking at cross purposes, but more aligned and 'on the same page'. The CEO was then ready to cross the divide by offering the COO a different role once there was a perceived mutual commitment and respect.

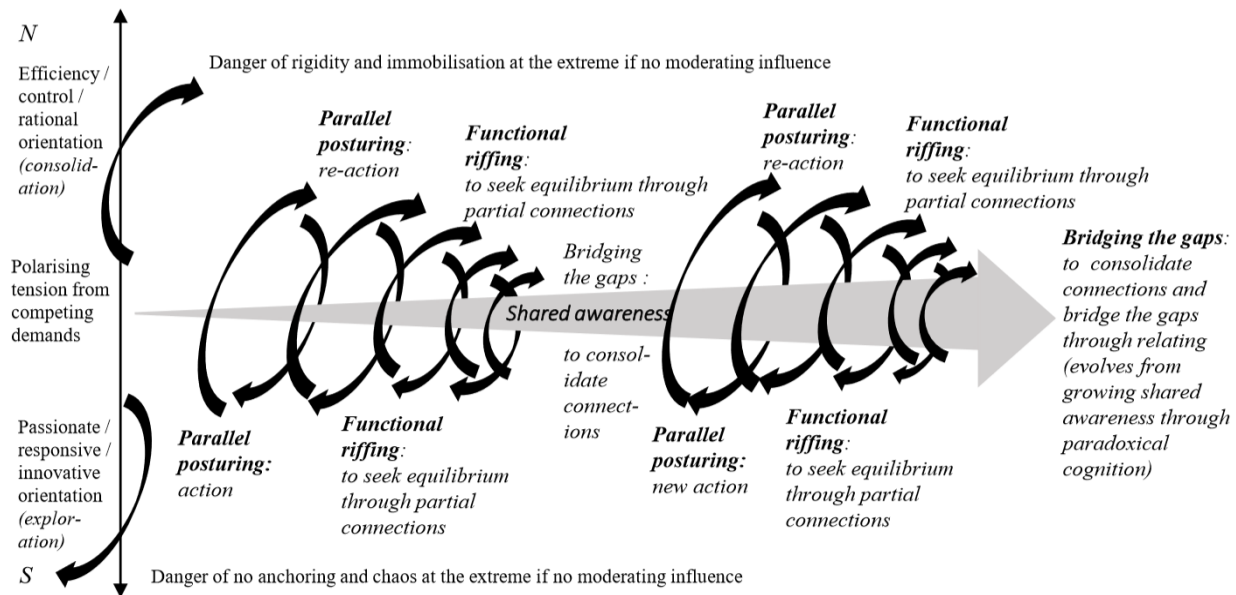


Figure 2: Dynamic Polar Positioning model – agile rapidly shifting practices for maintaining equilibrium between polar positions

## Principles for practice

This study found that where the signals arising from paradoxical innovation leadership orientations are detected, just as a compass detects and uses the earth's magnetic fields for positioning, contrasting orientations could be more readily identified, and resolution could be reached more effectively. This can be done through developing *paradoxical awareness* or *paradoxical cognition*.

Where the individuals were not able to identify or visualise the contradictory positions leadership team members might typically take, underlying tensions can remain as 'unconscious resistance', 'pressure' or 'pushback', or can emerge as a potentially destructive impediment to effective team and organisation functioning.

The research demonstrates how the transition from a single entrepreneurial founder/leader representing a single orientation can be made to shared leadership models that can effectively represent polar positions and hold them in tension. This conscious shared leadership that embraces paradoxical cognition enables more nimble and agile responses to innovation and growth needs. It also demonstrates how it is important to understand the specific practices that can enable leadership teams to work together most effectively to manage the competing demands. It is therefore important to build an awareness of these practices and their usefulness in supporting shared leadership in complex innovation contexts. An ability to develop *Dynamic Polar Positioning* through utilising the following practices will help with improving team leadership capabilities:

1. **Parallel posturing**, or identifying polar positions in a specific scenario
2. **Functional rifting**, or seeking opportunities for equilibrium through continually finding opportunities for making partial connections
3. **Bridging the gaps**, through reaching out and empathetically relating to build a platform for ongoing connection and growth.

Recruiting people with different orientations who can provide a counterpoint to the dominant voices at the senior leadership level is important, as is recognising the importance of having someone who can represent the 'devil's advocate' position in discussions, projects and meetings.



# Applications for leadership and culture development

Overall, the research provided unique new insights into the complex paradoxical nature of innovation. It also helped to reveal some of the unique interrelated dimensions embedded in ambidextrous innovation and change management.

## IMPACT ACTIONS

The principles identified through this research can be applied through practical action areas such as:

<b>Profiling</b>	Individual profiling of ambidexterity for better shared leadership can be conducted using the iCLi (Innovative Change Leader Inventory) measure, and team / organization profiling can also be conducted using the iCi (Innovation Culture Index) to identify individual / team / organization strengths and fit. A 360-degree version of the iCLi version is also available for comprehensive feedback. Useful for feedback, coaching, recruitment, individual and team management etc: <a href="https://the-innovation-race.com/icli-survey/">https://the-innovation-race.com/icli-survey/</a>
<b>Awareness Education</b>	Education sessions, workshops and/or motivational presentations help to introduce the concepts and build awareness of the need for ambidextrous approaches to change and innovation leadership at all levels. These can assist individuals and teams with managing uncertainty and change for sustainable innovative development through a business simulation approach and / or by providing practical strategies and tools.
<b>Strategic Planning Models</b>	The Magnetic Alignment tool developed from the research provides a valuable frameworks for development. It is possible to build innovation leadership and a sustainable innovation culture by following the recommended development approach and using the summary checklists for guidance.
<b>Navigation Tools</b>	The Polar Positioning (PoP) tool developed from this research enables discussion of mapping current state, ideal future state and action steps needed to reach the desired state. This can be done with individuals, teams and – and is especially effective with senior executive teams. The extended workshop session can include case studies and interactive exercises designed to provide practical navigation insights and strategies
<b>Individual &amp; Team Development</b>	The insights gained from the tools and workshops can assist with identifying areas for individual development, as well as how to put together and develop innovative teams for projects, for more effective business units, etc
<b>Measurement &amp; Evaluation</b>	Through this process it is possible to assess areas of need, target appropriate actions, and measure progress. The instruments provide useful feedback and assessment tools for the process.

## INTEGRATED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Extended organization intervention programs have demonstrated how these actions can be integrated for a comprehensive culture development, change management and / or innovation development journey.

Integrated implementation strategies can include:

<b>STAGE 1:</b>	<b>Diagnosis of current state and needs</b> Can include profile assessments, interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys etc
<b>STAGE 2:</b>	<b>Co-design of integrated development program</b> Feedback of initial research results to key leaders, and co-design of integrated program in consultation with relevant stakeholders – eg can use design thinking model to identify target areas
<b>STAGE 3:</b>	<b>Delivery of integrated development program</b> Focus can be on awareness education (workshops, seminars, motivational presentations), coaching, strategic consulting, analytical redesign plans etc
<b>STAGE 4:</b>	<b>Evaluation of development program</b> Can include follow up profile assessments, interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys etc to measure shifts and identify recommendations – delivered as report

# References

This paper is a summarized and adapted version of material from the following full academic papers:

Grant, G., Knight, E. & Cuganesan, S. 2017, 'Rallying around a shared purpose: how the top management teams experience paradoxical demands in strategizing'. Presented at the 33rd European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium, Copenhagen, 8 July.

Grant G. 2018, 'From detecting dichotomies to navigating dipoles: a theoretical and practical model for identifying paradoxical innovation leadership orientations', 34th European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) Colloquium, Tallinn, Estonia, 7th July 2018.

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Case studies, checklists and practical strategies can also be found in the following resource book:

Grant, A. & Grant, G. (2016). *The Innovation Race: How to change a culture to change the game*. Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons.

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