



The Versatility Principle

Versatility in our context here is defined as...

The ability to dynamically and effectively access an appropriate blend of masculine and feminine archetypal strengths/values to solve problems and design systems/processes to deliver optimal outcomes.

The word Versatility comes from the Latin root word Versa meaning “to turn”. When people in an organization feel comfortable expressing their own unique blend of masculine and feminine positive strengths to achieve results, we call this, “Being Versatile”. When enough individuals on a team become accomplished at “being versatile” the team itself begins to become versatile increasing both individual and team performance.

The distinction of Versatility provides a path to innovation and gender inclusion where differences are celebrated but not limiting. Businesses that lean into the Versatility Principle move beyond the patriarchal business paradigm by engaging feminine wisdom and talents which all humans and human systems possess. Organizations that are dominated by one gender become enthusiasts for increasing gender diversity.

As a result, those organizations...

- Are more welcoming to people of every gender and gender identity
- Balance the masculine/feminine polarity and gain the benefits of both ways of operating
- Deliver on the triple bottom line of profits, people, and our planet

The Masculine/Feminine Polarity

Polarities are complementary opposite energies, that require attention to both over time to gain and maintain performance. Polarity Thinking is the ability to identify the conflicts inherent in polarities to create healthy deliberations that resolve the dilemmas they present. Since polarities are unavoidable, they are present in every individual, team, organization and nation.

Polarities and the concept of interdependency have existed since ancient times. The Taoist “yin-yang” symbol represents interdependent energies – like light and dark – and the acknowledgement that life

requires both. Societies throughout history have sought to find ways to provide for the collective “village” while meeting the needs of individuals.

In modern times, businesses and organizations use polarity thinking (aka “both-and” thinking) to supplement traditional problem-solving (aka “either-or” thinking). Polarity thinking invites a move away from wrong/right thinking to “we are both right.” This kind of thinking creates long-term solutions that are sustainable.

1. Highly effective leaders have a strong ability to manage polarities (e.g. individual vs. team, centralization vs. decentralization, autonomy vs. standardized, etc.)
2. High-performing organizations perform well by creating systems and processes that help them manage polarities.

Polarity Thinking and Versatility



Polarity Thinking is a key tool to leverage and manage the tension between the conflicting forces and values associated masculine and feminine points of view.

Masculine and feminine energy represents a fundamental polarity at play in gender dynamics.

Feminine Energy

Organic/Emergent
Focus on Others
Collaborative
Democratic/Inclusive
Respect Intuition

Masculine Energy

Structured/Linear
Focus on Self
Competitive
Hierarchical
Respect Evidence

How to Lean into the Versatility Principle

Distinguish the term masculine from male and feminine from female. These are not synonyms! While males tend to be more naturally masculine and women more naturally feminine, both men and women have access to masculine and feminine energy.

Distinguish the upsides and downsides of masculine and feminine energy. Both masculine and feminine energy have their upsides and downsides. People often collapse the downsides of masculine energy (e.g. being pushy) with being masculine (being competitive) and the downsides of feminine energy (e.g. being wimpy) with being feminine (being inclusive). Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!

Masculine and Feminine Energy in balance leads to robust, sustainable solutions. Feminine energy without masculine energy to balance it will land you in the downsides of feminine energy, similarly masculine without feminine spells masculine overkill. Developing Versatility in ourselves, our teams and our products and services increase productivity and performance.

Systems that acknowledge and intentionally combine masculine and feminine strengths are rare yet powerful. Any system (all male, all female or mixed gender) may intentionally balance masculine and feminine energy simply by being conscious of this polarity and fostering open dialogue about it; not doing so risks disenfranchising key players and poor performance.

The Masculine Feminine Polarity

