



NCWIT Summit
on Women and IT
practices and ideas
to revolutionize computing

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Are Alphas Impeding Innovation in Your Organization?

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Lifetime Partner: Apple

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AGENDA

- Alpha Attributes
- When Strengths Become Weaknesses – Impact on Innovation?
- Important Caveats to Remember
- Tools/Strategies for Channeling Strengths

INNOVATION

A CREATIVE PROCESS



ALPHA ATTRIBUTES

- Dynamic, charismatic, courageous and self-confident.
- Results-driven achievers who insist on top performance.
- Eager to tackle challenges that others find intimidating.
- They are turned on by bold, innovative ideas, and pursue their objectives with tenacity and an urgent sense of mission.
- At their best — awe inspiring and their noble leadership skills are revered by others.

WHEN STRENGTHS BECOME WEAKNESSES

ALPHA ATTRIBUTE	VALUE TO ORGANIZATION	RISK TO ORGANIZATION
Self-confident and opinionated	Acts decisively; has good intuition	Is closed minded, domineering, and intimidating
Highly intelligent	Sees beyond the obvious; takes creative leaps	Dismisses or demeans colleagues who disagree with him
Action oriented	Produces results	Is impatient; resists process changes that might improve results
High performance expectations for himself and others	Sets and achieves high goals	Is constantly dissatisfied; fails to appreciate and motivate others
Direct communication style	Moves people to action	Generates fear and a gossip-filled, CYA culture of compliance
Highly disciplined	Is extraordinarily productive; finds time and energy for a high level of work and fitness	Has unreasonable expectations of self and others; misses signs of burnout
Unemotional	Is laser focused and objective	Is difficult to connect with; doesn't inspire teams

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Do you see these behaviors in your organization?
- Do you see these behaviors more in tech than non-tech organizations?
- What potential impact on innovation do you see?

Readout: What came up in your conversations?

CAVEATS TO KEEP IN MIND!

- These “Alpha” attributes are not simply “natural” attributes of a leader or even of men, but rather historically and socially masculine traits often associated with leadership.
 - These attributes can be context specific.
 - Men more than women are rewarded when they enact them; women are often penalized.
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- ➔ Acknowledge/address social norms that led to this state of affairs in the first place; not about fixing people.
 - ➔ Distinguish “being Alpha” from “doing Alpha”.

REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION



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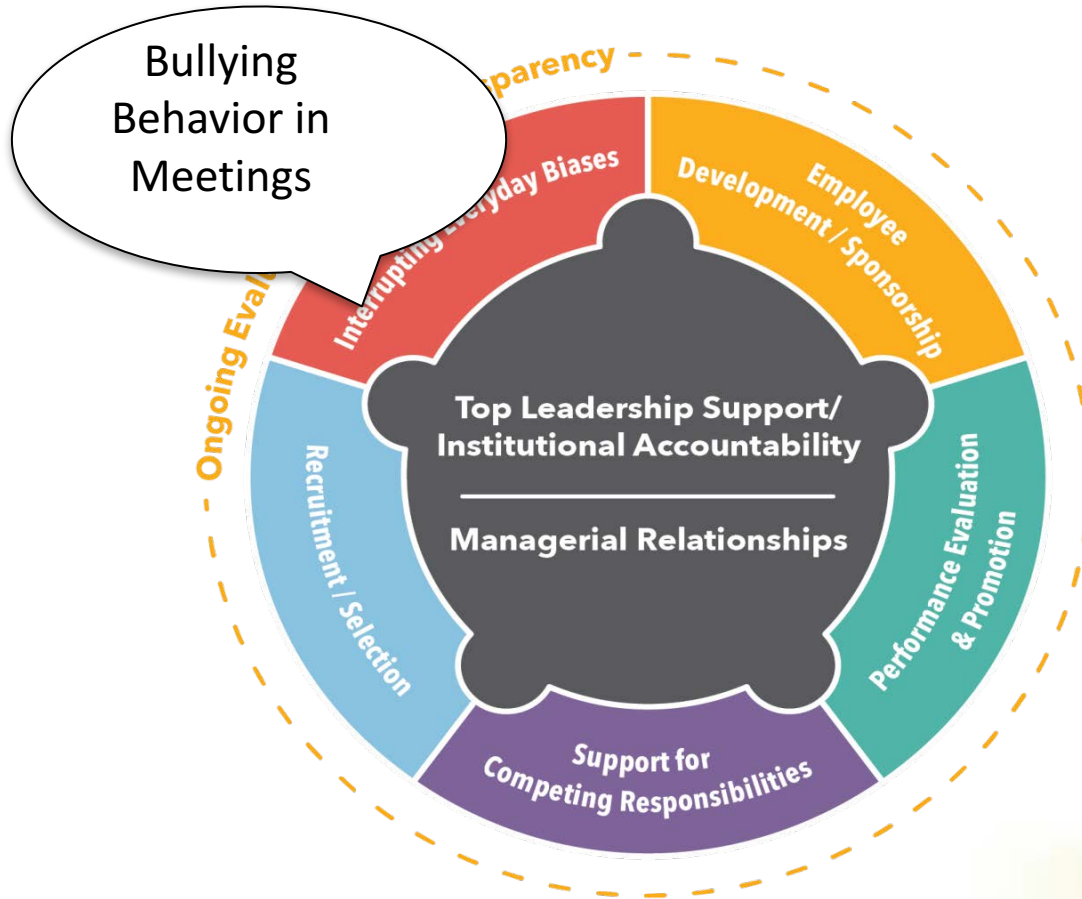
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REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION: YOUR TURN

- As you look at the change model, how might Alpha traits either support or bring risk to diversity and inclusion efforts in tech organizations?
- How might innovation be impacted?
- What is one thing you take from this or one thing you want to do about it?



IN CONCLUSION



Thank You

