Are Alphas Impeding Innovation in Your Organization?

irene kendall (Apple), Lucy Sanders (NCWIT)
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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

INSPIRATION → GOALS → INSPIRATION → ACTION → GOALS → PLANS → SUCCESS

PLAN → FOOLING AROUND → INSPIRATION

MISTAKES → DOING → FAILURE

FAILURE → INSPIRATION
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alpha Attribute</th>
<th>Value to Organization</th>
<th>Risk to Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident and opinionated</td>
<td>Acts decisively; has good intuition</td>
<td>Is closed minded, domineering, and intimidating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highly intelligent</td>
<td>Sees beyond the obvious; takes creative leaps</td>
<td>Dismisses or demeans colleagues who disagree with him</td>
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<td>Action oriented</td>
<td>Produces results</td>
<td>Is impatient; resists process changes that might improve results</td>
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<td>High performance expectations for himself and others</td>
<td>Sets and achieves high goals</td>
<td>Is constantly dissatisfied; fails to appreciate and motivate others</td>
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<td>Direct communication style</td>
<td>Moves people to action</td>
<td>Generates fear and a gossip-filled, CYA culture of compliance</td>
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<td>Highly disciplined</td>
<td>Is extraordinarily productive; finds time and energy for a high level of work and fitness</td>
<td>Has unreasonable expectations of self and others; misses signs of burnout</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemotional</td>
<td>Is laser focused and objective</td>
<td>Is difficult to connect with; doesn’t inspire teams</td>
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Coaching the Alpha Male, Kate Lundemann and Eddie Erlandson, Harvard Business Review, 2004
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.

➔ 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

Ongoing Evaluation & Data Transparency
Interrupting Everyday Biases
Employee Development / Sponsorship
Top Leadership Support / Institutional Accountability
Managerial Relationships
Performance Evaluation & Promotion
Recruitment / Selection
Support for Competing Responsibilities
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Top Leadership
Exhibit Alpha Traits
Themselves
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Employee Development Programs Based on Alpha Traits
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Evaluation Processes Enable & Reward Unacceptable Behavior
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Burnout & Work Boundaries not Noticed & Respected
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Alphas Hire Those Who Also Have Alpha Traits
REFLECTIONS AND INTEGRATION

Bullying Behavior in Meetings
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