Example Applications (1) - Situation

→ Think of a small team of six members including yourself. For simplicity, there are two predominant "profiles" along the dimensions of Erin Meyer's Culture Map:

— Some members (including you) are very direct in their communication (low-context, direct criticism, confrontational). They are used to argue based on principles and act very egalitarian.

— Other members are less direct in their communication (high-context, indirect criticism, less confrontational). They are used to argue based on application and think more hierarchical.

→ Think how the team is collaborating throughout a series of strategy discussion. The business is not going very well. The question is what root causes can be identified and what change should be prioritized.

→ Such a discussion is not easy to handle per se. It has to focus on what is going "wrong" and what is going "well" and "what has to change first". Try to put yourself at the meeting table, in front of the computer when writing/reading email communication.

Example Applications (2) – Dynamics, roadblocks and enablers

→ There might be heated discussions, as every team member is arguing and making their case with passion. However, there might likely be challenges in the discussion:

— The members communicating very direct will voice straightforward feedback (criticism) on what they think is going wrong and who is responsible. This can easily upset the other group and lead to tensions that are not constructive.

— The members communicating with high context will voice their criticism in an indirect way, because of which the other members might not fully comprehend their full argument.

— The members that think more hierarchical are likely to wait for your opinion, which they would struggle to then openly disagree with. Less confrontational members might fall more and more silent in a heated and direct discussion.

— Members who argue "application first" risk to not get their argument across to members that start with principles. As they might not share their full reasoning, their argument might be interpreted as subjectively defending their position.

→ An important aspect to consider is yourself – you will likely have easier communication/ interaction with the team members sharing a similar profile. But as a leader you should balance the discussion and ask yourself, whether/how your own profile affects your communication, decision-making, and actions.

Example Applications (3) – Considerations and how could you (re-)act?

→ Frame the discussions:
  — Change is necessary and unavoidable. You need a shared plan how to act. For that you need to understand what is not working well and take a development focus.
  — Make the decision-making transparent: will you decide in the end? Will it be a team decision? Or will you make a recommendation to a higher board?
  — Set rules, define no-go areas: what statements/criticism would go too far? This might also be done in a 1:1 context.

→ Ensure understanding:
  — Ask a lot of questions for the statements brought into the discussion to ensure everybody fully understands the messages that are being sent.
  — Ask to clarify, ask to explain and elaborate, summarize for understanding. Ask people to challenge or question what is being said.

→ Make sure everyone contributes their perspective
  — Invite dissenting opinions, invite those who have fallen silent.
  — Ask people how they would argue from a different perspective as their own.
  — Hear contributions around the table have everyone contribute