Project Leadership – The Conundrum

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IPMA World Congress, Berlin

The Conundrum

- Leadership ideals vs. practical realities
- Behavioural standards (e.g. IPMA ICB4) – aspirational or achievable?
- Leader or Influencer?

Agenda

- Perfection or Aspiration
- Lead or Influence
- Leadership as a Competency
- The Challenge of Attributes
- Organisational Context

Expectations of Leadership

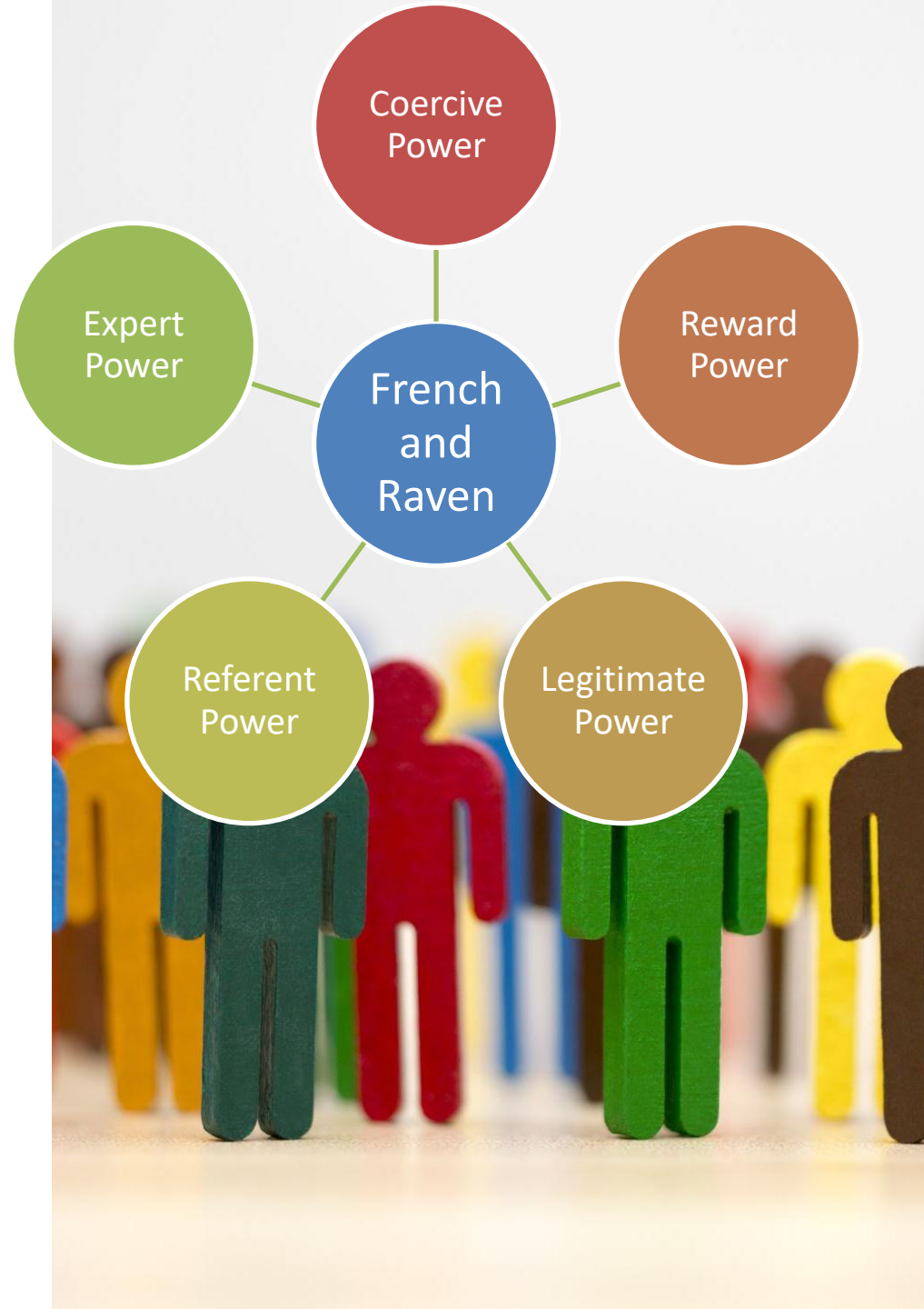Professional standards: ambitious behavioural models

Do they reflect reality?

Organisational views: 'Heroic leader' vs. team enabler
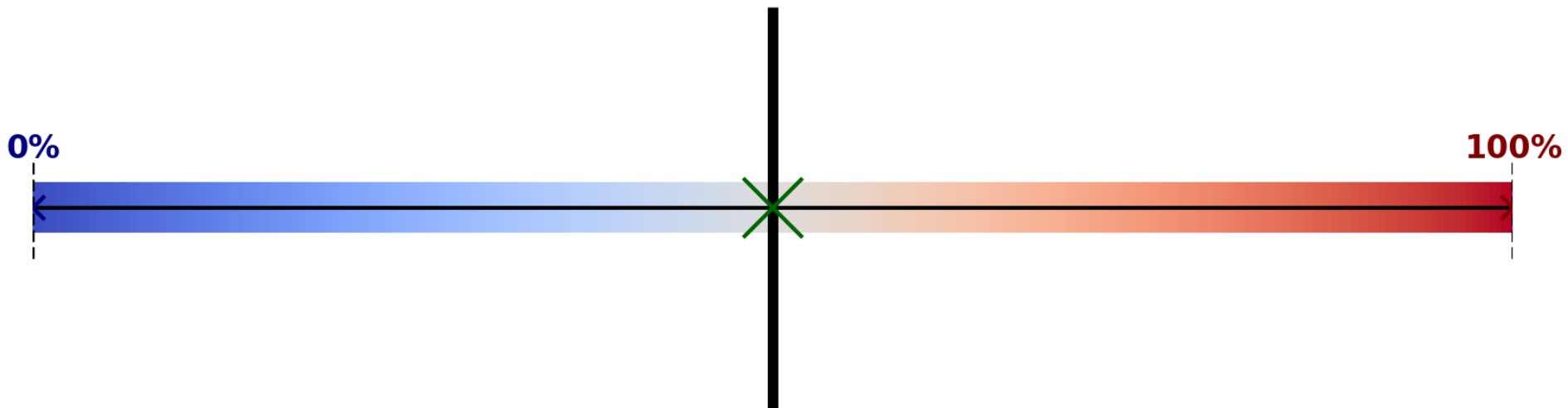
Pressure on individuals

Leadership vs Influence

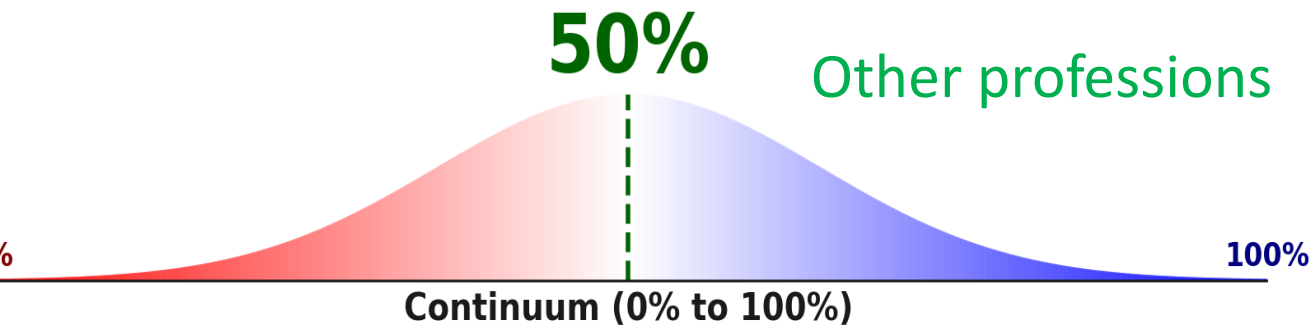- Lead or Influence
- Personal preference
- Capability
- Context and Power Source

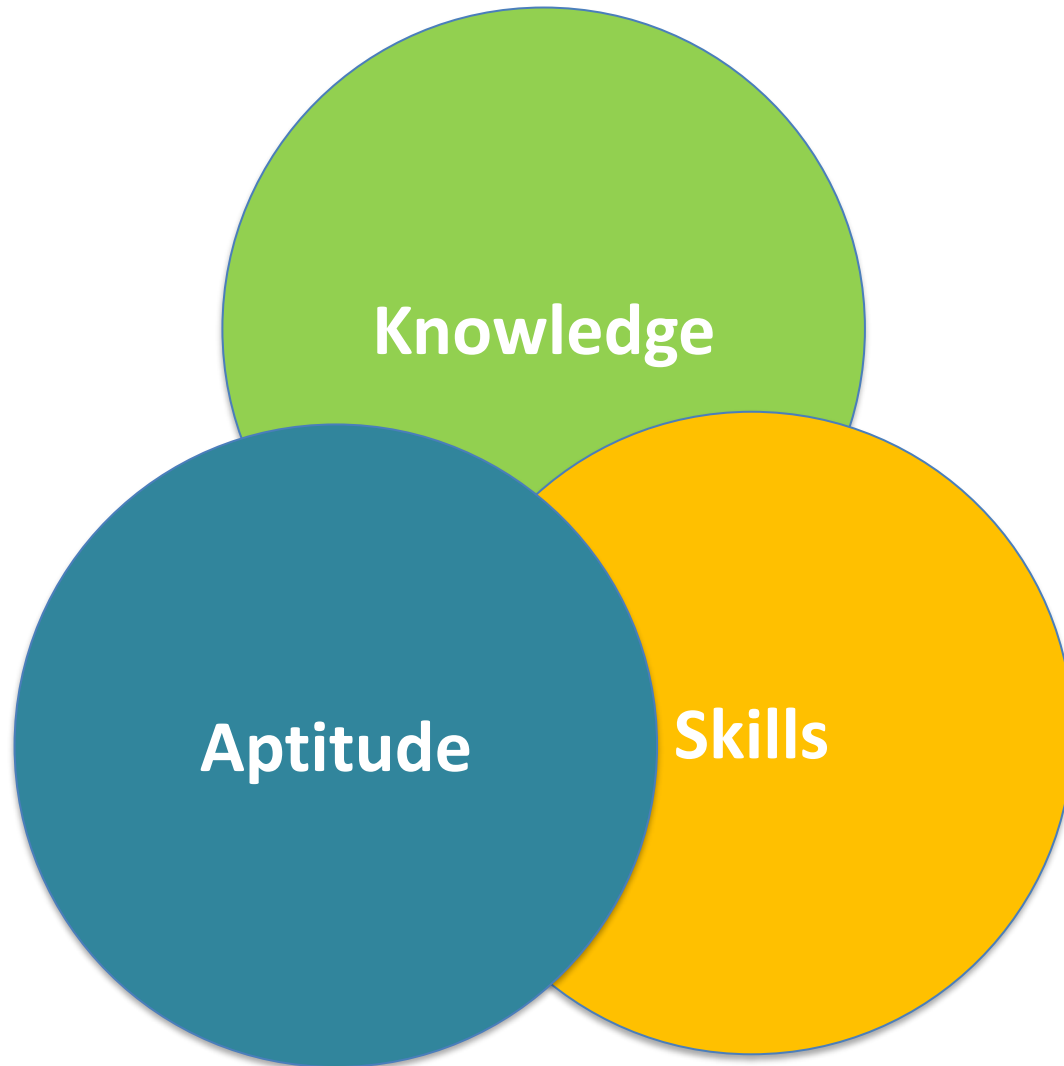**50%** Us here today

0% 100%

Continuum (0% to 100%)

50% Our project peers

0% 100%

Continuum (0% to 100%)

50% Other professions

100%

Continuum (0% to 100%)
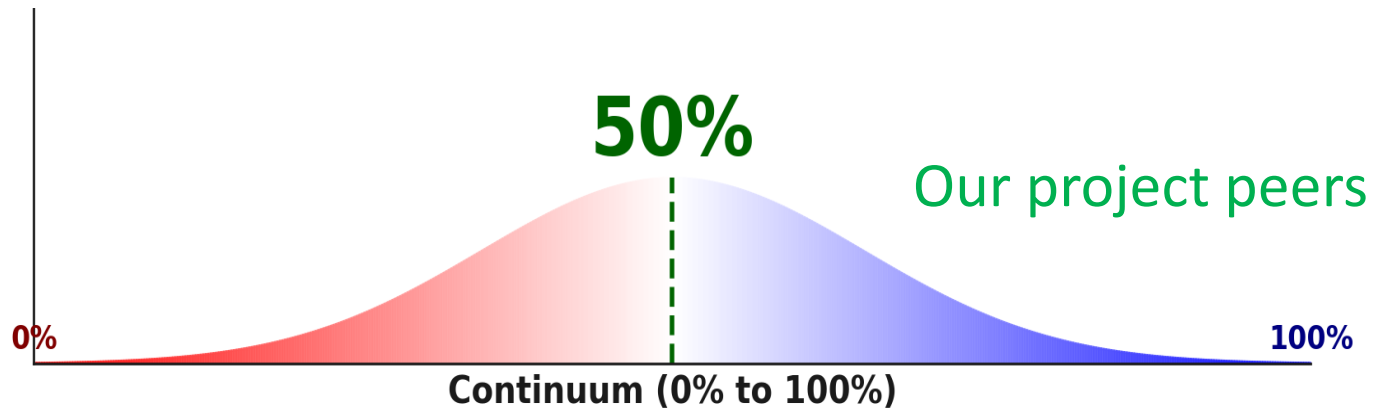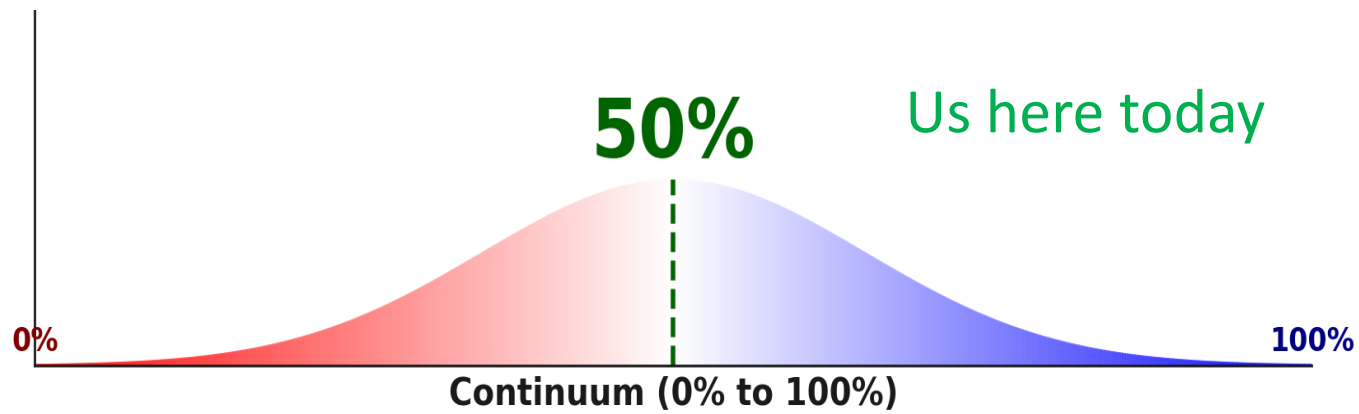
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A Competency Perspective

Competency

Example: Cost Management

Dimension	Examples	How is this Achieved
Knowledge (what you know)	- Estimating methods (analogous, parametric,etc) - Cost control concepts (EVM, CPI, SPI) - Financial frameworks (CAPEX/OPEX, lifecycle costing) - Organisational cost policies - Contractual and regulatory cost compliance	Generally teachable, can be learned from study.
Skills (what you can do)	- Preparing and updating project cost estimates - Developing and managing cost baselines. - Tracking costs and variances. - Developing cost and variance reports - Negotiating scope/cost trade-offs in real time	These are personal behaviours that improve with practice.
Aptitude (your natural or developed capacity)	- - Attention to detail and numerical accuracy - Comfort with estimating uncertainty - Persistence in monitoring and following up on cost issues - Judgement in balancing precision vs. practicality - Resilience under financial scrutiny	This is dispositional — harder to teach, more about temperament and mindset.

Example: Negotiation

Dimension	Examples for Negotiation	How is this Achieved
Knowledge (what you know)	- Negotiation theories (e.g. principled vs. positional bargaining) - Zero Sum vs Abundance Models - BATNA/ZOPA concepts - Cultural/contextual factors in negotiation - Legal/contractual frameworks	Generally teachable, can be learned from study.
Skills (what you can do)	- Active listening and questioning - Framing proposals clearly - Managing concessions and trade-offs - Quiet observation and adjusting tactics in real time	These are personal behaviours that improve with practice.
Aptitude (your natural or developed capacity)	- Patience and emotional control - Confidence without arrogance - Intuition in reading people - Comfort under pressure and ambiguity	This is dispositional — harder to teach, more about temperament and mindset.

Example: Leadership

Dimension	Examples for Leadership	How is this Achieved
Knowledge (what you know)	- Leadership approaches and styles - Communication and influence models - Organisational context and governance - Basics of motivation and change	Generally teachable, can be learned from study.
Skills (what you can do)	- Setting direction and purpose - Motivating and supporting people - Managing conflict and hard conversations - Building trust and accountability	These are personal behaviours that improve with practice.
Aptitude (your natural or developed capacity)	- Self Awareness - Empathy and integrity - Adaptability and resilience - Working to peoples skills - Authenticity	This is dispositional — harder to teach, more about temperament and mindset.

How the Balance Changes

Balance of Knowledge, Skills, and Aptitude
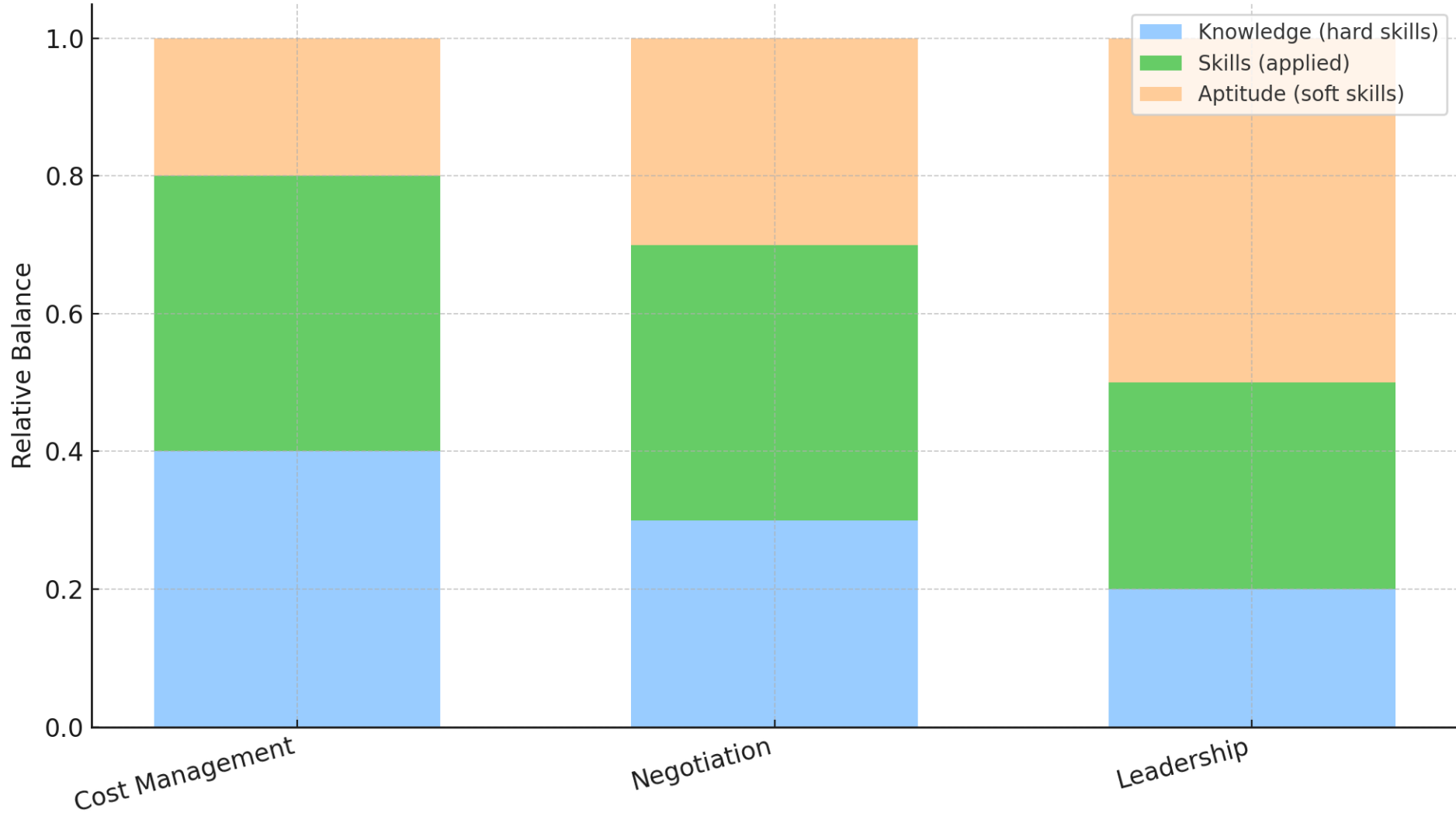
Mining Sector Competency Framework circa 2012

- Integration
- Scope
- Time
- Cost
- Quality
- Human Resources
- Communication
- Risk Management
- Procurement

- HSEC
- Engineering
- Construction
- Commissioning
- Finance
- Legal
- Systems

Process

Contextual

Inter-personal

Corporate

- Interpersonal Understanding
- Achievement Orientation
- Impact and Influence
- Teamwork and Cooperation
- Developing Others
- Team Leadership
- Directiveness

- Flexibility
- Self Confidence
- Negotiation
- Conflict and Crisis
- Organisational Commitment

One Person's

Integration, Scope, Time, Cost, Quality, Human Resources, Communication, Risk, Procurement, HSEC, Engineering, Construction, Commissioning, Finance, Legal, Systems, Flexibility, Self Confidence, Negotiation, Conflict and Crisis, Organisational…, Interpersonal…, Achievement Orientation, Impact and Influence, Teamwork and…, Developing Others, Team Leadership, Directiveness

An Adjusted View

What is Normal Anyway?

- Difference is normal
- Determined by development
  - Experience, Learning, Reflection
- Context
- Balance
- Capacity to Compensate

Project Leadership – the Conundrum

Aptitude Barriers to Leadership

Aptitude Barriers

- Cognitive
- Personal preferences
- Personal characteristics

Cognitive Barriers to Project Leadership

Natural limits of attention, memory and perception

Biases –

Confirmation, anchoring, and status quo distort judgement

Intelligence –

General, Emotional and Cultural

Human Limits in Action

Stress & fatigue – short-term fixes over strategic thinking

Inflexible thinking – defaulting to familiar approaches

Communication gaps – mismatched cognitive styles with team

Key insight: Barriers are natural limits. Strong leadership comes from recognising and mitigating them.
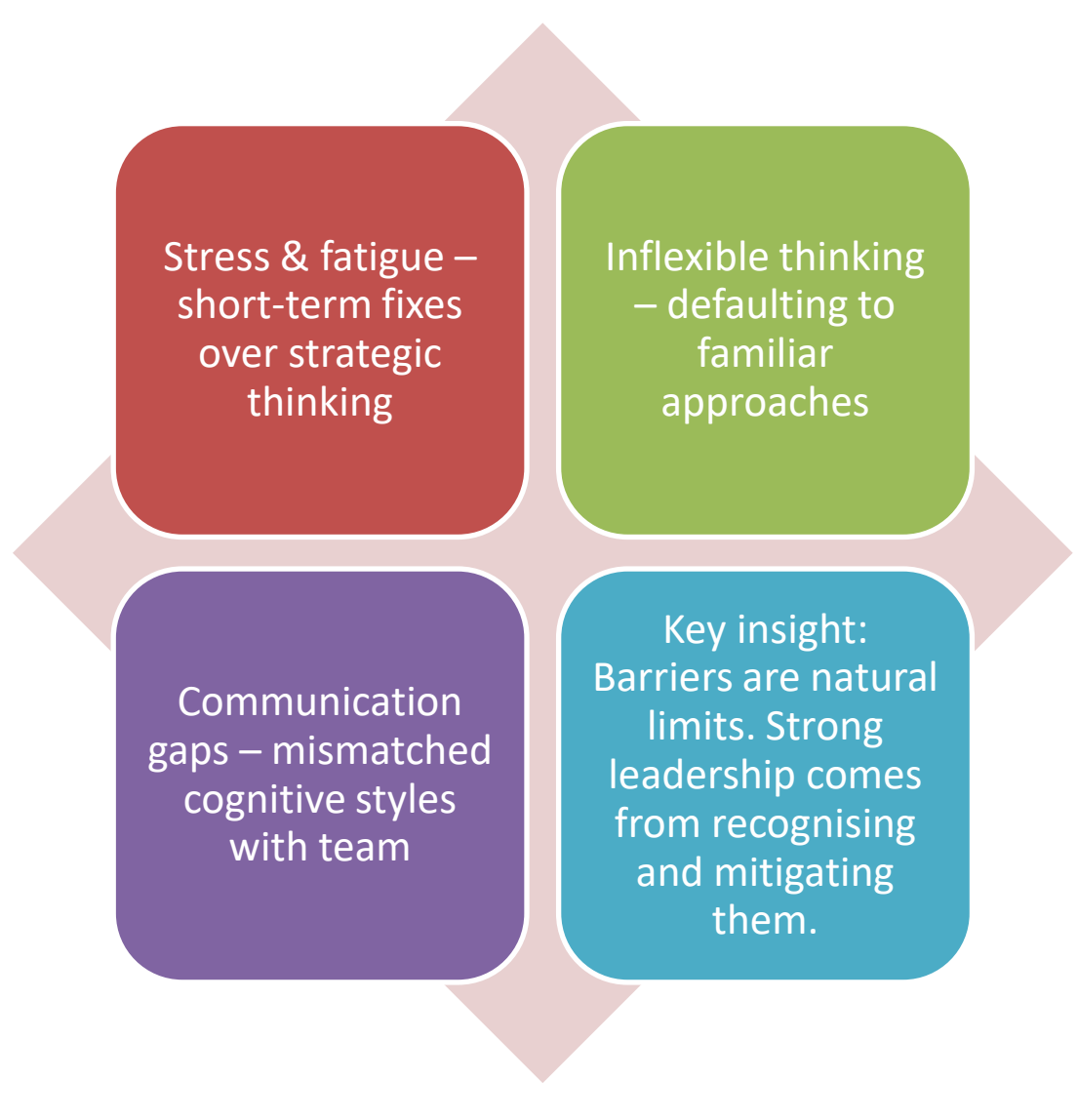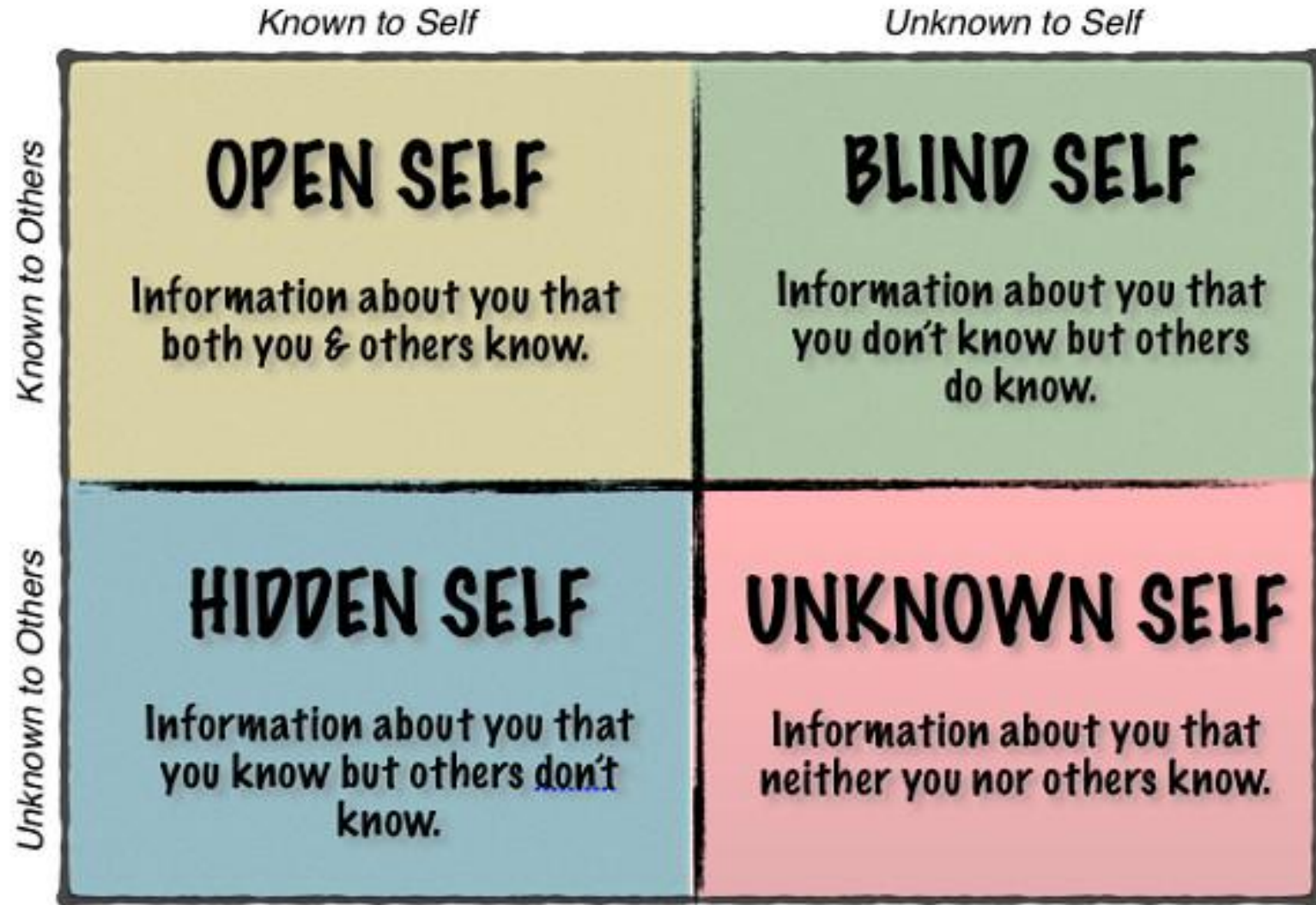
How do you see yourself?

Attention to Detail	I am very much a big picture person	I prefer summaries, but will go into detail by exception	I can easily switch between detail and big picture	I tend to drill into detail and call out inconsistencies	I am very thorough; love the detail
Adaptability	I am most comfortable when a plan does not change.	I am open to change when persuaded but need support.	I can adapt when required. Comfort depends on the context	I usually adjust smoothly to shifting circumstances.	I thrive in change. Routine bores me.
Social Preference	I prefer individual work and to observe others	I am more comfortable in one-one or small group settings	I am happy to participate in group interaction when required	I am comfortable to speak up, not afraid to air my opinion in most issues.	I am a natural networker, seek interaction and can very easily 'work the room'

How do others see you?

Known to Self | Unknown to Self

Known to Others

OPEN SELF
Information about you that both you & others know.

BLIND SELF
Information about you that you don't know but others do know.

Unknown to Others

HIDDEN SELF
Information about you that you know but others don't know.

UNKNOWN SELF
Information about you that neither you nor others know.

Attention to Detail				I am very thorough; love the detail
Change Style				I thrive in change. Routine bores me.
Social Preference	others	small group settings	interaction when required	afraid to air my opinion in most issues.	I am a natural networker, seek interaction and can very easily 'work the room'

Self-Awareness

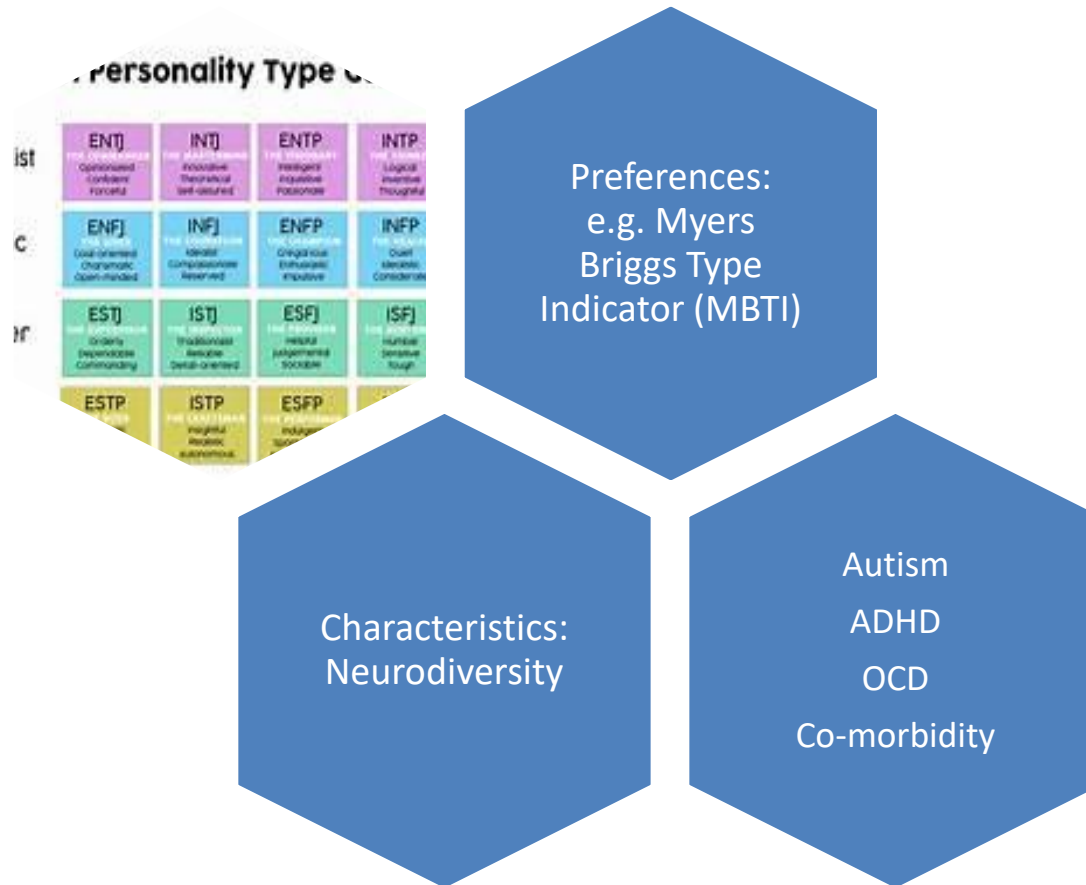# Preference vs Characteristic

Preferences:
e.g. Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Characteristics:
Neurodiversity

Autism

ADHD

OCD

Co-morbidity

Preference/Characteristic Crosswalk

Neurodiverse Trait (perceived)	MBTI Types Commonly Associated	Resembling Behaviours	Important Clarification
ADHD-like	ENTP, ENFP	High energy, fast switching, improvisation, difficulty sustaining focus	Preference-driven behaviours, not neurological ADHD
OCD-like	ESTJ, ENTJ, ISTJ	Strong need for order, closure, structure, predictability	Looks like compulsive rigidity, but reflects preference for organisation
Autism-like	INTJ, INTP	System-focused, deep analytical thinking, reserved social style	Superficial similarity; MBTI does not diagnose neurodiversity

Affirming Practices

Celebrate differences

Listen and learn

Empower, don't fix

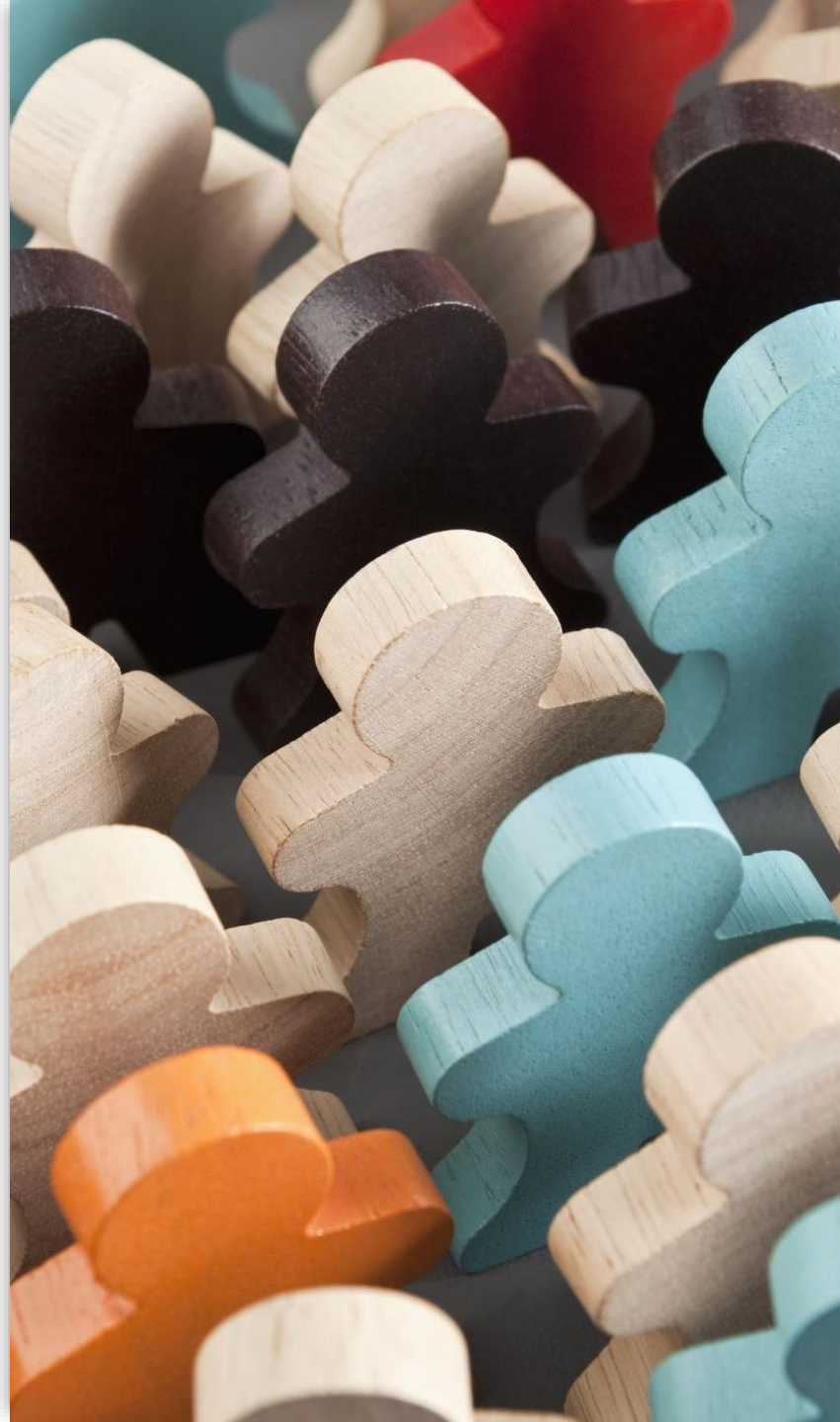Respect communication styles

Adapt environments not people

Respect stimming and self regulation

Project Leadership – the Conundrum

Contextual Barriers to Leadership

Contextual Barriers

- Organisational culture
- Competing stakeholders
- Governance & decision bottlenecks
- Limited authority
- Dispersed / hybrid teams
- Misaligned expectations

Project Leadership – the Conundrum

So, to Wrap Up

Leadership vs Influence

- Lead or Influence
- Personal preference
- Capability
- Context and Power Source

Summary

The answer lies in the project context

Do we lead or influence?

Leadership is a career long journey

Know yourself and make this a planned journey

Leverage strengths, compensate and develop

Leadership profiles are highly individual

Leadership in Diversity

Respect, celebrate and support individual diversity

Identify, acknowledge and 'work the room'

Corporate barriers are the norm

Closing

Thank you for participating

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