

Activity – Your Tolerance for Diversity

Diversity brings its challenges. We can find it difficult to connect with people whose views are very different from ours, particularly when the stakes are high and rising. It isn't difference itself that can be a problem but our degree of tolerance for difference. Where tolerance is high, disagreement enriches our boardroom conversations. Where tolerance for difference is low, disagreement can turn to resentment or hostility which impoverishes our boardroom conversation.

Here are some questions that will help you reflect on your own tolerance for difference. Don't worry, no one is going to judge you.

Questions for Reflection

- How do you feel when you meet someone who is very different from you?
- Do you feel uncomfortable?
- Do you feel disgust, anger or fear?

Perhaps you have a fellow board member whose preferred way of looking at the world (their operating system) is the polar opposite of yours.

Perhaps a member of the Executive Team speaks a very different language from you and pays attention to very different things.

Which of the following responses have you experienced either consciously or unconsciously –

- Did you try to ignore or avoid them?
- Do you have antipathy towards them?
- Do you blame them and encourage others to do likewise?
- Did they remind you of someone from the past or an uncomfortable situation from the past?
- Were they displaying some behaviour that you dislike about yourself?
- What did they remind you of?
- Did you find yourself saying “they are just like” or “ they are just as bad as”?

And, finally....

- What are three ways in which you would like your fellow board members to be different?
- To what extent might these reflect differences in Operating System or Communication Domain?