

## 21 Pairs of “C” Words to Consider

A casual comment by a presenter at a conference we were facilitating led us to quickly build these word pairs for you to consider. Think about each pair, the tension between them, the relative merits of each, and which you value more (and apply) in different situations. We believe you will find this exercise as enlightening as we did.

### *Leaders*

1. **Centralized vs. Common.** In organizations there is often much conversation about how to share expertise and knowledge. When services are centralized, the end results are often new silos and dissatisfaction. Think instead of how you can share services, by finding common needs. When the focus is on the commonalities, the results will be better services, more flexibly delivered.
2. **Control vs. Coordinate.** When building a plan, which of these approaches do you take? There are times when each is appropriate, but which is your tendency? Are you flexible in determining which approach to use? L, i
3. **Compliance vs. Commitment.** Do you want people to be compliant or committed? Which are you? While it may seem easier to work for compliance, it is worth the effort and investment to build true commitment over blind compliance.
4. **Competition vs. Collaboration.** Do people in your organization compete or collaborate? What about you? Is it possible to be a highly competitive person and yet collaborate? Spend some time thinking about how you can nurture the best from both of these opposites.
5. **Congruent vs. Complementary.** When you are building a team or a network, do you look for a group of people with the similar or additional skills and experiences? All too often teams are formed with a congruent skill set when a wider focus is required. Depending on the flexibility required, you may want to increase the level of complementary skills in a team, or in your network.
6. **Contrived vs. Compelling.** Reasons that are compelling can drive behaviors and change. When reasons for change seem contrived, or don't pass the “bulletin board test,” they won't work. Build compelling cases. Find ways to communicate your purpose in a meaningful way. Make it compelling.
7. **Combine vs. Compartmentalize.** We think in silos. We try to “divide and conquer.” Specialization has a place, but we need to think in the bigger picture. Combine ideas, let things get a little messy sometimes. Too often in our effort to segment things and organize them we lose the forest, seeing only the trees.

### *Individuals*

8. **Complacency vs. Change.** Improvement requires change. When we are complacent, feeling that our performance is “good enough,” we seldom make the choice to change. It is valuable to consider our motivations related to our relative willingness to change.

9. **Combat vs. Conflict.** Conflict, when understood for what it is and valued for its merits, can help you find better solutions to problems. Conflict comes from divergent opinions and ideas. Unfortunately, conflict often becomes combative. Think about how you can value and manage conflict, without the combative component.
10. **Constrained vs. Creative.** When working on a project, how often are you focused on the constraints? When you are, how creative are your outcomes? While acknowledging any constraints in the system, they must be questioned, and creativity must be encouraged, perhaps in spite of those constraints.
11. **Climb vs. Coast.** We might be able to coast for a bit, but take it as a rest and rejuvenation step on the path of continuous improvement and growth. When we have goals to reach, we have to keep climbing towards them!
12. **Close-minded vs. Curious.** Is your style to laser-focus on the task at hand? This is a great ability, allowing people to shut out distractions around them and accomplish what they need. When this happens, they often overlook the interesting and intriguing areas of the task. How successfully do you approach a task, particularly one you have done many times, with curiosity?
13. **Contained vs. Comical.** The image we project can set the mood on a situation and influence the outcome. Work situations are often viewed as serious, where we must contain many parts of ourselves. Comedy serves to highlight and exaggerate some aspect of a situation that others find to be true. Try to make your most serious situation comical. You might be amazed at the outcome, and if nothing else, you may get a laugh out of it.
14. **Clarify vs. Convince.** When working with another person, how often do you work to clarify your position or thoughts and how often do you work to convince the other person you are right? Partnerships require two-way streets, with both having an opportunity to decide the merits of a position. Whether or not we want to convince the other person, we always need to work to clarify.

#### Consultants

15. **Coach vs. Correct.** When we use our expertise and experience to help others, it is easy to form a judgment about how we think things should be done, then correct other's actions based on that. It is far more powerful to honor and acknowledge your opinion and the actions of another by offering the difference, alternatives that you see, and use your perspective to coach them into a place that neither of you would have arrived on your own. C, L, I
16. **Consult vs. Collude.** In every consulting relationship, there is a simultaneous pressure to be different and to be similar. Take the time to monitor when you are bringing your difference to others and when you are being drawn into collusions with their ideas and values. Both are important to maintain the relationship.
17. **Contribution vs Cost.** We have all heard and used the old adage "time is money". When we work with others, often we will think about the cost of spending extra time, particularly where there is no apparent benefit to our business or immediate goals. We always must bear in mind that our presence, our

- time, and our energy is given to others, not used up, and that it contributes to purposes outside of ourselves.
18. **Computational vs. Cognitive.** Technology is wonderful. The informational power of the PC this is being written on is awesome, especially when it is connected to the internet. We certainly need to value and use this power. But sometimes rather than collecting and analyzing more data, we need to stop and think. Just think. Often the answers are waiting for us when we think about them.
  19. **Colloquial vs. Clear.** Communicating with people from the west coast, if you grew up in Louisiana, can be challenging – and not just because of accents. We often use regional phrases—words or phrases that won't be clear to other people. The challenge is greater, and more important, when you work with people from around the world. It is important with your technical jargon too. Focus on clear communication.
  20. **Consistent vs. Chaotic.** Consistent actions produce predictable results. We often strive to keep things constant and prevent our world from becoming chaotic. Chaotic situations yield possibilities and can be highly energizing. When you approach a new situation, work to allow things to be somewhat chaotic and see what emerges.
  21. **Caring vs. Clinical.** Often for expediency or emotional detachment we become like Joe Friday, “Just the facts. Ma’am.” Facts are important, but so are attitudes and emotions. When we become too detached, too clinical, we don't make the best decisions for ourselves or those around us. Collect information on (and act on) feelings as well as facts.

This article came to life through our curiosity about C words, and was a true collaboration. We hope you find it compelling and not contrived.

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