Animal Leadership Exercise

Goals

1. To explore our personal communication styles and how we communicate with each other.
2. To recognize communication styles that are different from our own.
3. To discuss communication guidelines.

**Set up**

Post around the room signs for the four animal groups: EAGLE (STRATEGIC), ELEPHANT (RELATIONSHIP BUILDING), BEE (INFLUENCEING), BEAVER (EXECUTING)

Look at your strength domains and see where you land the most. If you are in between a couple, choose the one that you feel most captures your leadership style.

**In small groups**

1. While in the group, instruct participants to talk to their same animal group members about **why that animal characterizes their leadership style**. Share examples of how this shows up for you at work?
2. Ask each group to write “You can come to me for…” on chart paper and capture how that leadership style translates to their strengths.

(*If time permits:*) After they’ve shared in their small groups why they chose their particular animal, invite them to share their reasons with the large group.

1. Next, ask each group to write down what they need from each of the other groups in order to be successful.

**Report Back in Large Group**

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**Debrief Notes:**

You will notice that people will begin to create an affinity for others who share their communication style. For example, if someone in the hawk group says something negative about the tiger style, the tiger group typically reacts. One point you will want to make: notice how easily and quickly they developed an **affinity**. Imagine the depth of affinity with groups based on gender, ethnicity, administrators, etc. Lesson: sometimes the “style” is a function of the group membership. How do we create a respectful space when different groups come together?

Other points you will want to make:

* You could have just as easily instructed the women and men to talk about their leadership styles. Just as easily the animals found similarities, we hope that people noticed the differences, too. Similarly, this could be done with men and women. **There will be differences and similarities within groups. Can we appreciate this and not be rigid about what we understand?**
* In creating effective communication protocols, the task is not to have the dominant group make sure others learn how to communicate like them. In other words, just because there might be more eagles, the eagle communication style should not be the “standard” for communicating. That’s “**eaglism**”, which is just like racism and sexism, when we expect folks to communicate as if they’re the same race and gender. The task is to ensure that all people use **communication styles that get their needs met and to offer to meet the communication needs of others.**
* Recognizing the differences, the challenge in effective leadership is to constantly gauge how we are collectively meeting the needs of all individuals in the group and collectively offering our strengths.