

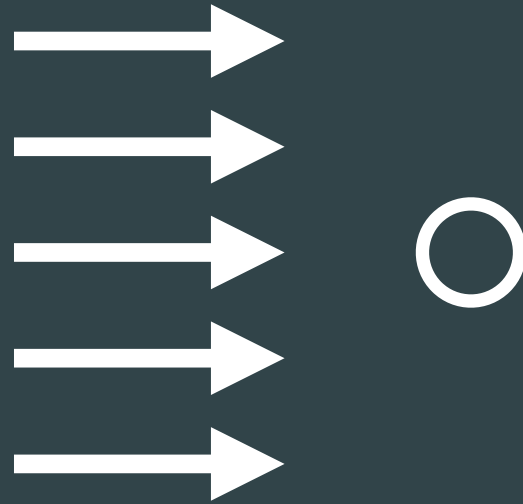
A LEADER'S COMPREHENSIVE
FIELD GUIDE TO

COGNITIVE CULTURES

in teams



{ fig. A }

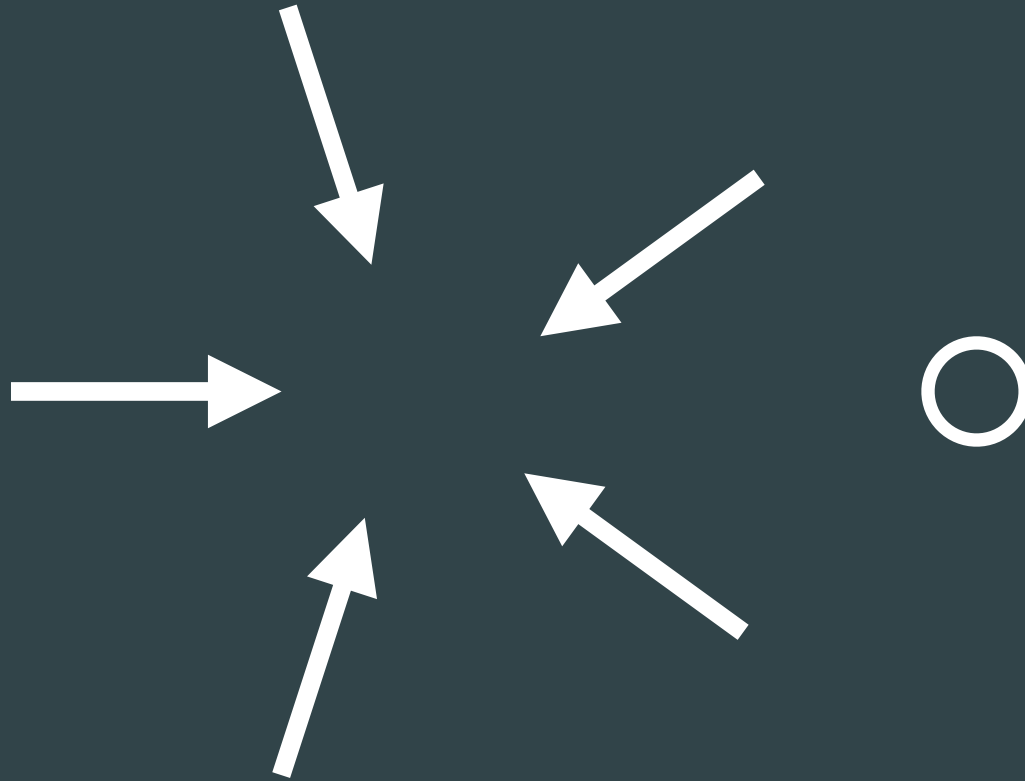


Most commonly observed in mono-cognitive environments, where there is little evidence of diverse thinking and a heavy expectation to solve tasks in a particular way.

Effective in the short term, within prescribed conditions, but likely to stagnate over time.

COGNITIVE **STASIS**

{ *fig. B* }

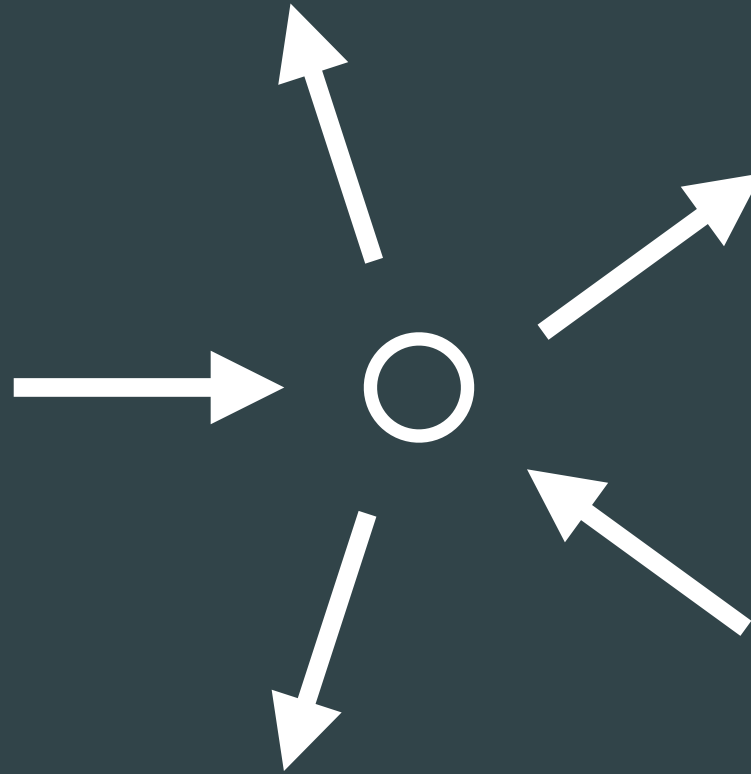


A frequently observed phenomenon, particularly in highly intellectual or technically competitive environments.

Characteristics include ignoring the problem completely and preferring to challenge the competency and approaches of colleagues.

COGNITIVE TOXICITY

{ fig. C }

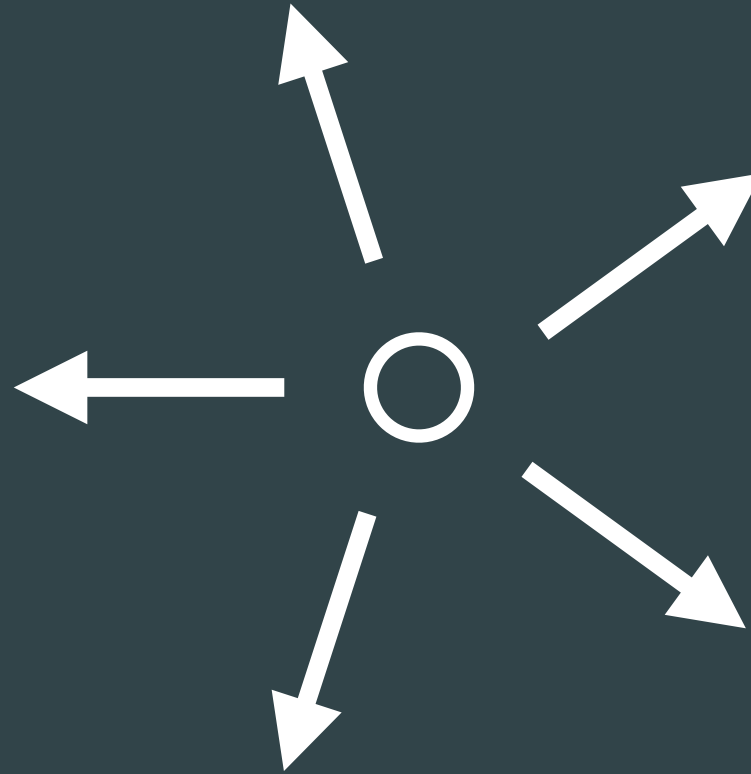


This culture thrives in environments of ineffective or absent leadership, where team members display a lack of clarity about outcomes.

There are ill-defined processes that impede rather than help, and colleagues can dip in and out of the cognitive process based on their own interests and time constraints.

COGNITIVE **CHAOS**

{ *fig. D* }



This case is easily recognised because nobody cares about the problem or can articulate what challenge they are trying to solve.

Often a symptom of disengagement or frustration, this behaviour has deep roots and requires serious leadership care if discovered.

COGNITIVE **VACUUM**

{ *fig. E* }

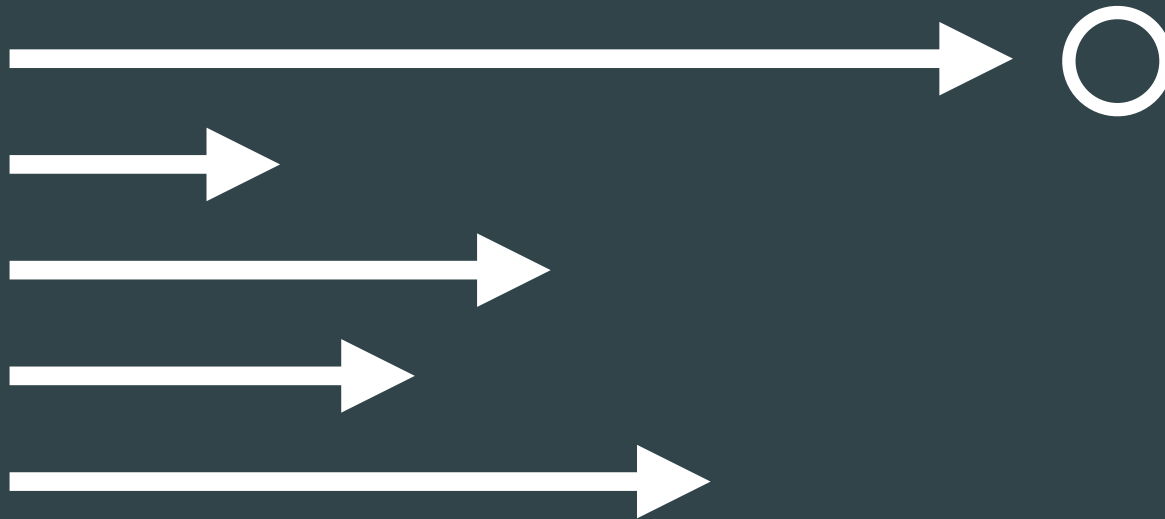


Often seen in environments where there are high potential individuals or perhaps a broader culture of endemic learned helplessness, this cognitive pattern is an easy ticket for the wider team.

Default behaviours here are about "leaving it to the superstar" or a general sense of being left behind and waiting for somebody else to solve the problem.

COGNITIVE ISOLATION

{ *fig. F* }



A broadly positive culture of cognitive processing where team members are aligned on the problem to be solved.

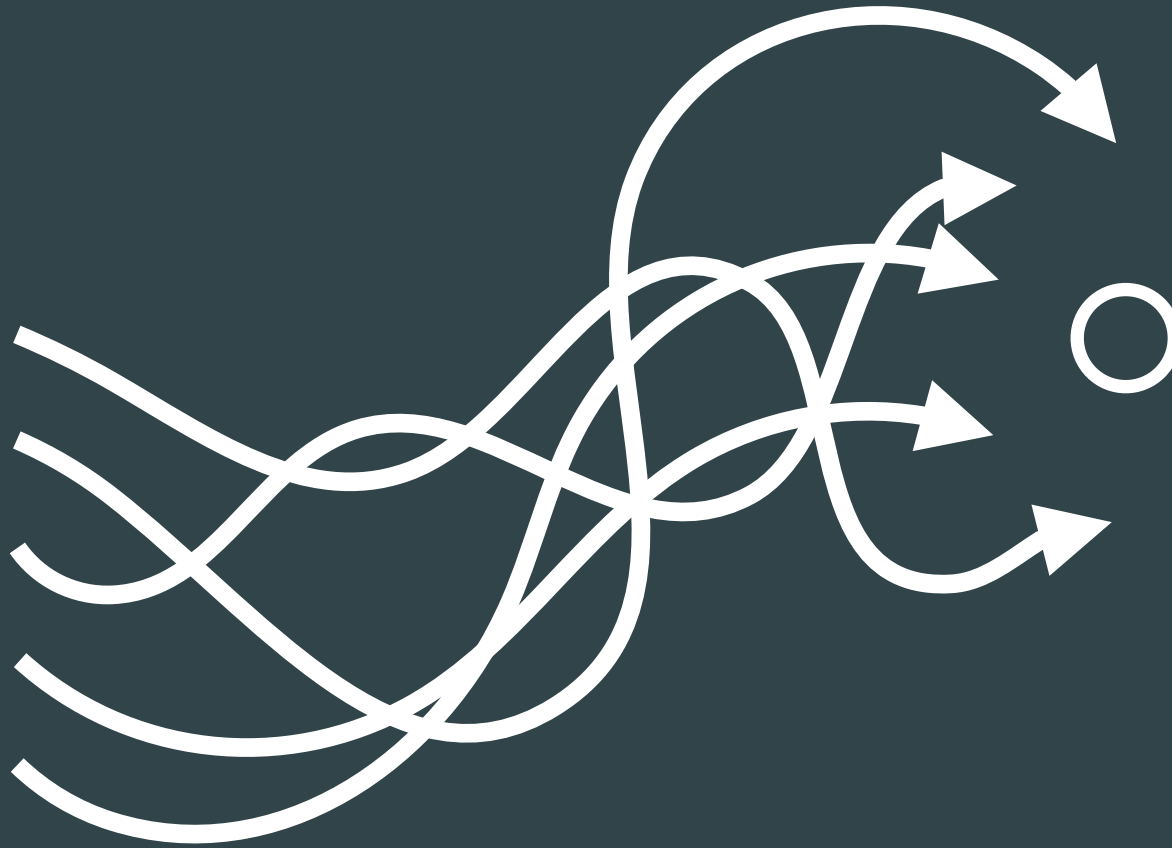
What distinguishes this variant is the concept of "temporal diversity". Team members relate more readily to specific time frames (short, medium and long term thinking) which has a positive impact on strategy, implementation, planning horizons, and a sense of urgency.

Teams with balanced "temporal cognition" are up to 15% more likely to generate innovative solutions and adapt well to rapidly changing circumstances.*

COGNITIVE **STEPPING**

**Polzer, J. T., Crisp, C. B., Jarvenpaa, S. L., & Kim, J. W. (2006)*

{ fig. G }



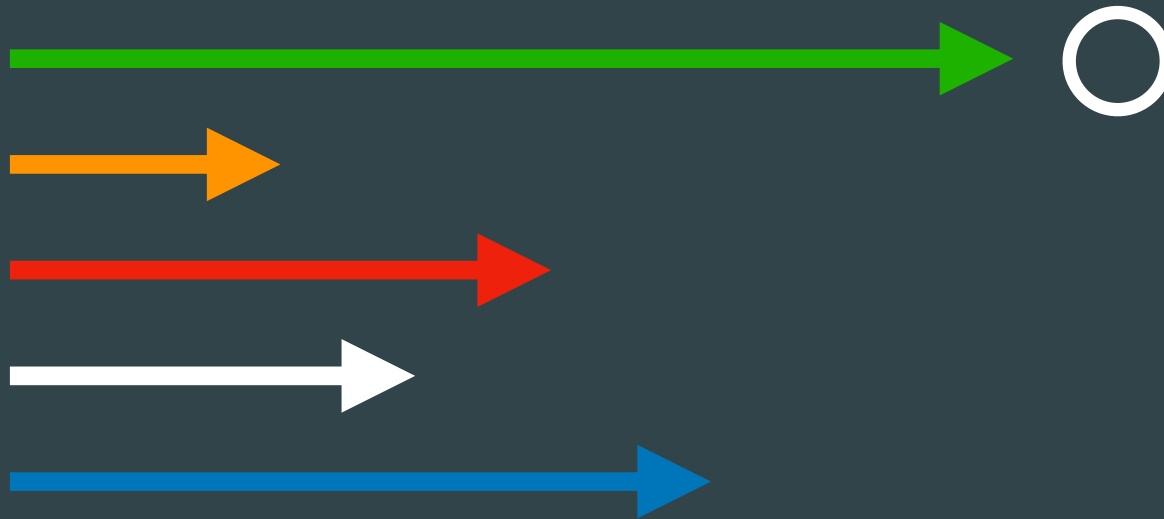
This environment is a high energy, challenging, interdependent culture of problem solving.

Highly tolerant of debate and exploration, this culture can often be confused with “cognitive chaos” except in its tenacious focus on outcomes. It needs a clear and supportive leadership environment to thrive and benefits from frequent external inputs.

*Strong task interdependence and supportive coordination mechanisms can lead to 25% improvement in performance outcomes.**

COGNITIVE CO-CREATION

{ *fig. H* }



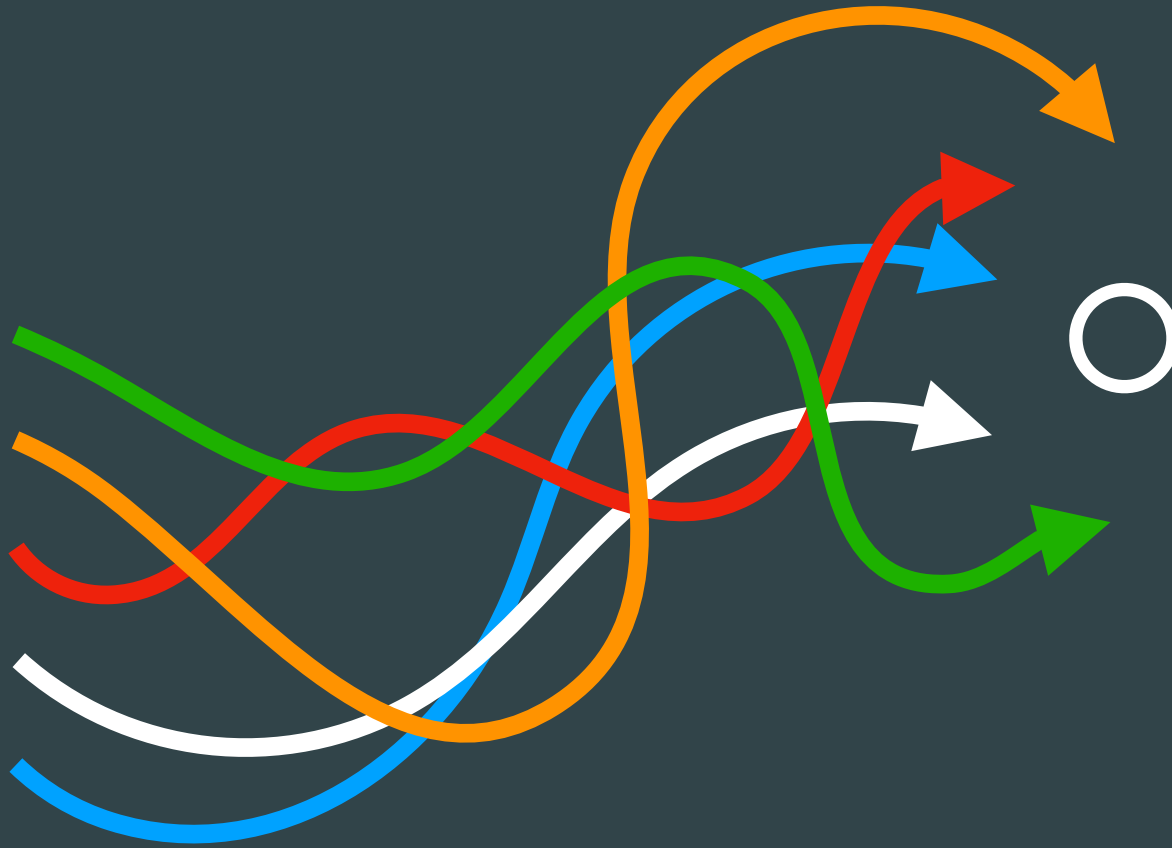
This is a rare variant of “cognitive stepping” and is rarely spotted in the wild.

It combines the characteristics of “temporal diversity” with 5 distinct factors:

1. **Critical Thinking:** making sense of complexity in a logical way.
2. **Creative Thinking:** generating new ideas, concepts, and insights.
3. **Analytical Thinking:** simplifying complex problems to understand the underlying structure.
4. **Strategic Thinking:** developing long-term plans and the steps needed to achieve them.
5. **Metacognitive Thinking:** reflecting on one's own thoughts, knowledge, and cognitive processes.

COGNITIVE FRAMING

{ fig. 1 }



The most rare of cognitive beasts, this variant is hard to capture and even harder to maintain. It doesn't thrive in captivity and requires a very particular leadership effort.

Combining forms of diversity that stem from lived experience and temporal framing through to "cognitive co-creation" and the five factors of "cognitive framing" this thinking process characterises the complex problem solving attitude of exceptional teams.

It is precious, delicate and powerful, needing diligent and agile leadership maintenance in order to flourish.

COGNITIVE **STRETCH**

**Harnessing cognitive
diversity isn't easy.**

**But it is an important
leadership act.**

If you would value some insights and ideas
about how to go about it,

we are ready when you are.

Let's start a conversation:

mark@people-create.co.uk

