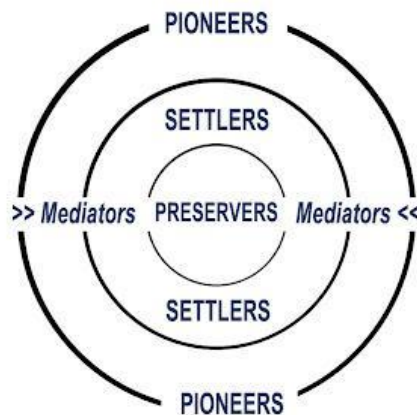


Knit Together by Differences



Whether as citizens of a nation or members of organizations or congregations, we tend to feel uneasy about people with opposing opinions, and may even see them as dangerous.

Here are the main players in this model:

Preservers: All groups need a stable group of members committed to preserving its core values. Around some issues any of us may find ourselves resisting change and working to preserve the “old order” of things. When conservative minded folks begin to feel their concerns are no longer heard or respected, they may feel strongly enough to leave as a group to form their own separate community.

Pioneers: Healthy groups also need innovators who advocate for change, lest a group become ingrown and stagnant. These folks tend to operate on the outer fringe of the community and are often viewed with suspicion and fear. When these innovators no longer feel heard or respected they may likewise form another group or simply drift off one by one.

Settlers: These folks are the more or less silent majority in the group in a given conflict, and are not as strongly aligned with either the pioneers or preservers on a particular issue, but may have varying degrees of sympathy for one or the other--or both.

Note: In a healthy group, individuals are able to change roles depending on the issue. And depending on the issue and on the makeup of the group, we will find ourselves at different places--and therefore aligned with different persons--which is as it should be. This kind of dynamic reshuffling has the effect of bonding us to a variety of different people and tends to have an interlacing quality that makes a group stronger and more division proof.

Mediators: Each of us, whenever possible, needs to serve in intermediary roles within the group. Sometimes we may serve in the role of interpreter for the preservers, promoting good conversation between them and the pioneers and between them and the rank and file middle. At other times we may advocate for the innovators, to help make sure they are clearly understood and their ideas are being respectfully considered.

Final Note: When we see differences as normal, and as actually having potential for making the group healthier and stronger, and when each member feels valued and needed, everyone is better off, and the health and effectiveness of the group is enhanced.

Conclusion: Whenever human beings associate together, conflicts and disagreements are inevitable, but combat and divisions are optional.

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https://harvyoder.blogspot.com/2012/09/knit-together-by-differences_7.html