

Thinking Styles



We are all predisposed to lean towards one of two distinct thinking styles; **convergent** thinking and **divergent** thinking.

Divergent thinkers are open to new possibilities, offer alternative approaches to problems, and come up with a variety of solutions for consideration. They are often creative, visionary, and less rule-driven.

Convergent thinkers are practical-minded. They will often consider realistic possibilities, the details of a problem, and assess the viability of certain approaches. They are highly analytical, and love to find solutions and answers.

For teams to be at their most effective, we need to leverage the talents of both divergent and convergent thinkers to solve problems and find solutions.



Divergent thinkers are great for:

- Ideation sessions.
- Unblocking problems.
- Making connections.



Convergent thinkers are great for:

- Project planning.
- Identifying feasible solutions.
- Considering the details.



Some people make the mistake of valuing analytical thinking (present in more convergent thinkers) over divergent thinkers, who can seem disruptive to plans and processes. The truth is, divergent thinkers are necessary to **create choices**, so that convergent thinkers can then **make choices**.

FINDING BALANCE:

To encourage contributions from both types of thinkers on your team, there are a few strategies you can use:

- 1 During ideation sessions, make sure no cards are off the table. No matter how impossible some ideas might seem, get them down, and block in time to analyse them after the session.
- 2 Minimise the amount of process or admin work needed from team members to allow them more time to think divergently and convergently about ideas or problems.
- 3 Find new ways for the team to collaborate. Use digital platforms that streamline communications and can be used to share ideas quickly and easily.



REFLECTION:

- 1 Can you think of any instances when divergent thinking would have or did benefit you?

- 2 Can you think of any instances when convergent thinking would have or did benefit you?

- 3 Would you regard yourself as more of a divergent or convergent thinker?

- 4 Think about others in your team. Who are the divergent and who are the convergent thinkers?

Divergent thinkers	Convergent thinkers

- 5 How can you work together more effectively?