

Introduction

- A paradox captures two realities that seem like they cannot coexist at the same time.
- We call the ends of the paradox the poles, and we wrestle with the pressure to push towards both at the same time.

Paradoxes in business

- Leaders constantly face paradoxes in business. For example:
 - Should we embrace change or stability within the company?
 - Should we customize our products and services to local environment, or should we create standardized global products and services?
 - Should we invest in R&D and innovation? Or, in improving our operational efficiency?
 - Should we obey current regulations or challenge them?
- Pursuing any one of these paradox poles could lead us to sacrifice the other.
- A paradox mindset pushes us to shift from an either-or mentality to a both-and mentality.
- Rather than accepting the apparent trade offs between the different poles of the paradox, we challenge them and seek to embrace them.
- Thus, we develop nuanced decisions to understand when to embrace one or the other pole.
- For example:
 - Rather than always emphasizing innovation over production, or always production over innovation, we made develop a richer approach.
 - We may allow our innovation to suffer when we need to generate more cash or allow our production to suffer when we sense that the market may be shifting.
 - Thus, rather than emphasizing which pole to embrace overall, we learn to embrace both poles simultaneously and occasionally allow our organizations to drift slightly towards one side or the other.

Conclusion

- Great strategists learn how to embrace the both ends of business.
- They look carefully for the embedded paradoxes that they might be ignoring.
- They seek to find these paradoxes, clearly define the opposing poles and then reprogram their brains to capture the benefits of both ends of the paradox at the same time.