

The Exploring Voices: Strengths and Dangers

	The danger, when under-used:	The strength, when well-used:	The danger, when over-used:
PROBE	Under-use of this voice may reflect an insensitivity to clues, a tendency to accept things too readily at face value, personal reserve or a more general discomfort with uncertainty. Whatever the source, insufficient probing is essentially a failure to persevere with learning in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity. Failing to probe deeply enough may leave available knowledge un-surfaced, important issues unexamined, avoidable problems unnoticed, and potential opportunities unrecognised.	You engage with uncertainty rather than shy away from it, pursuing issues through deeper exploration to get below the surface. Your process of ‘following the clues,’ posing further questions and wondering, enables gradual convergence to a point of clearer and more precise understanding. You may also be inclined to apply this approach to apparently familiar issues as well as to the unfamiliar and the unexpected.	Probing entails risk, because it is always a step into the unknown. Asking probing questions of other people carries the particular risk of crossing what they would regard as personal boundaries that should be respected. Insensitive over-probing will be experienced as intrusion and will quickly increase resistance, discourage disclosure and reduce trust. Effective probing is done step by step with close attention to reactions at each stage.
INQUIRE	Under-use of this voice may reflect excessive self-belief, a discomfort with open-endedness, or a failure to recognise, respect or engage with the potential concerns and contributions of others. Low use of Inquiry suggests insufficient and poorly framed questioning and is also likely to create a reputation for being a poor listener. Superficial or ‘polite inquiry’ does not realise the full potential of this voice for generating discovery, learning and engagement.	You bring open-mindedness and curiosity to your interactions. Your inclination is to ask and find out, and this is especially useful when matters are new, unclear, unfamiliar, puzzling, contentious or stuck. You recognise that inquiry is a necessary gateway to strategy. By opening issues and conversations up to alternative perspectives, you both express and encourage open-mindedness and a willingness to engage with others.	This is a particular trap for those who are naturally open-minded and curious, or for those who have not thought enough about the form and purpose of their own questions. Pursuing inquiry through relentless questioning feels – on the receiving end – like interrogation. The effects can be to disorientate, confuse, overwhelm or frighten others, leaving them feeling unsure, inadequate, less self-confident or even guilty about not having sufficient answers.

DIAGNOSE	<p>Under-use of this voice represents a failure to invest the attention and energy required to think things through and arrive at reliable understandings. Its absence is most serious when situations and challenges are unfamiliar, complex or open to interpretation. Insufficient diagnosis treats symptoms as if they were causes and fails to recognise implications. This increases the danger of poorly conceived actions and wasted resources, including time, reputation and trust.</p>	<p>You seek to arrive at a dependable understanding by figuring out how things really relate to one another. By questioning and hypothesising, through one or more cycles, you generate progressively more reliable and nuanced explanations. Modelling this process of iterative sense-making can assist others to distinguish between symptoms, causes and consequences, and to recognise that the rigorous definition and solving of problems takes time and careful thinking.</p>	<p>This can be a pitfall both for those who like to work with ideas, elaborating and developing them, and for those who like to be sure before proceeding. Concern for data becomes an end in itself. This over-analysis can be perceived as anxiety, reluctance to commit or simply cleverness for its own sake. There is a diminishing return from the over-analysis, as it slows down discussion and decision-making.</p>
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