

# A cautionary tale demonstrating the need for Centaur in the workplace

## **How do I work out 'who' my team members are so I can get them to do the work the way I want it done?**

At our core we all share a requirement to be treated with respect and we all have the same positive response to being met and regarded in this way. However, each personality type has a specific definition of 'respect' and learning who requires what in order to feel seen and respected is a key offering of the Centaur model.

The following case study highlights this dilemma showing how a well-intentioned individual does very well with a colleague of his own personality type but unknowingly blunders in increasingly marked and spectacular modes with others who need something different from him if they are to feel respected and so, be motivated, enthused and inspired.

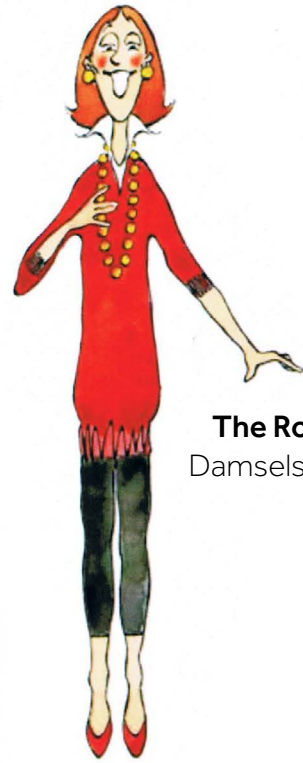
This example provides an illustration of the pitfalls of dealing with others effectively. Centaur provides a practical and effective solution to empowerment, influence, self-fulfilment and better leadership.



## The five personality types



**The Magicals**  
Sprites and Wizards



**The Romantics**  
Damsels and Poets



**The Superheroes**  
Wonder Woman  
and Superman



**The Guardians**  
Good Fathers and  
Earth Mothers



**The Heroes**  
Warrior and Huntress



## The Case

Peter is a **Hero** personality type. Hero personalities easily identify with gender designations of 'Warrior' and 'Huntress'. The orientating world view of the Hero (Warrior/Huntress) is based on the excitement of challenge and the thrill of winning. Heroes value independence and responsibility and they do not like asking others for help.

The Hero is a well-developed personality form but the following case study demonstrates what happens when a psychologically robust person operates in the frame of mind 'everybody is pretty much like me' in the daily context of a corporate setting.

## The Situation

Peter comes in on a Monday morning to a challenge. A project he is in charge of has gone awry. A complex and urgent response is necessary: clients need to be contacted and reassured. Internal resources must be mobilised and his team of project managers (PMs) needs to reprioritise their day to meet the emergency and maintain the company's good reputation for delivery.

The Hero Warrior personality loves a challenge and Peter springs energetically and optimistically into action. He calls in each of his project managers in turn and initiates his response to the emergency.

Peter greets each PM with a quick appraisal of the situation. No small talk. Even in relaxed times Peter dislikes chitchat on the job. He keeps his social and private life separate from work. In a crisis this 'no time wasting' attitude is exaggerated. Hero Warriors are logical and rational and Peter quickly devises an overall plan of action. He delegates a sizeable part of the plan to each of his PMs saying, "Here are your resources, let me know if you need anything more. If I don't hear from you, I will see you at the Wednesday meeting when I will expect to have this issue under control. Good luck!"

In the above scenario, Peter treats his project managers (PM1-PM5) in precisely the way he would want to be managed in such a situation.

The Centaur model presents five personality types each with unconscious world views that affect how they think and act. Let us use this scenario to explore these differing personality types and highlight how the Centaur lens can lead to more effective and inspirational leadership.



**PM 1** Joan is the same personality type as Peter. She is a **Hero Huntress** and holds the same unconscious world view which values independence, challenge and responsibility. The unconscious world view of the Hero type can be summarised as:

*I am an independent and capable person.  
Others are colleagues and competition.  
The world is an adventure.*

Joan is energised by the crisis and feels seen and valued when her manager wants her to take responsibility for a sizeable aspect of the solution. Joan is glad that Peter gets straight to the point avoiding time-wasting conversations about their respective weekends. She is inspired by Peter's confidence in her and is determined that she will not have to ask for help in completing her assigned part of the task.

Monday has started well for Joan and it is likely that she will deliver a quality piece of work at the meeting on Wednesday.

There is an optimal way to manage a Hero personality style – because he and Joan share the same world view – Peter has hit it exactly right. Joan will operate to her full potential. She will take responsibility and execute her remit with energy and good will. The task is likely to succeed and the organisation will be well served.



**PM 2** In terms of personality strength, a second Centaur type, called the **Guardian**, is as realistic and committed to the task as the 'Hero'. Guardians ('Good Father' and 'Earth Mother') want to get things done every bit as much as the Hero (Warrior/Huntress). However, of equal importance to them is the value of courtesy and cordial contact between people. When this sense of interpersonal regard is missing Guardians are disaffected and offended. The unconscious world view of the Guardian can be summarised as:

*I am a good person.  
Others deserve courteous acknowledgement.  
The world should be a good place for people.*

With these attitudes at the back of his mind, Guardian George has a rather different reaction to Peter's management style. He is offended by the lack of human courtesy when greeted on a Monday morning – crisis or no crisis. After all, how long does it take to say "good morning, how was your weekend?"

George dislikes the way Peter sees people as 'mechanistic parts in his success machine'. He agrees with Peter that the task is important and he will take his allocated responsibilities seriously.



George will show up on Wednesday with a good offering. However, he will fulfil these responsibilities grudgingly and stoically because it is the right thing to do.

The week has not started well for George, he leaves Peter's office in a mood of resentment and his respect for Peter as a leader – already low due to previous similar encounters – is further eroded.

There is an optimal way to manage a Guardian personality style. At their best Guardians are splendid colleagues. They are warm hearted, hard working with huge energetic resources. They typically give well beyond what is expected of them. Peter's Hero approach is off the mark with Guardian Good Father George. A valuable and trustworthy human resource is disaffected as a result.



**PM 3** Patrick is bold, talented and unpredictable. The most important thing for Patrick at work is personal impact and brand. He has the charismatic and exciting presence of the Centaur type called **Superhero**. The motivation of 'Wonder Woman' and 'Superman' has less to do with the success of the task than with personal charisma and power.

Superheroes do not like being told what to do so Patrick finds Peter's briefing style irritating and diminishing. Furthermore, the Superhero's thinking style is lateral and opportunistic so Patrick feels cramped by Peter's logical approach. He often complains that Peter never seems to understand what he has to offer. Events in the formative years of the Superhero produce an unconscious world view that can be summarised as:

*I am/should be on top.  
Others are not as good as me.  
The world is my oyster.*

Because Patrick feels irritated and unappreciated, he is unlikely to fully engage with the project and may do an off target or poor job. Any failures will typically be made the responsibility of others. Patrick leaves Peter's office uncommitted, out of sorts and on his way to do whatever will make him feel important and look good in the eyes of others, especially those in power.

There is an optimal way to manage a Superhero personality style that will reassure their self-esteem and harness their exuberance in service of the task.





Superheroes, compared to Guardians and Heroes, are high maintenance. However, when handled well they are a resource of creativity and energy within an organisation. They are frequently brilliant with clients and often inspire their own teams to remarkable success.

For a Superhero, Peter's Hero approach is a disaster. As a result, an energetic and lateral mind is set against the success of the task because a difference in world view is not taken into account. Patrick does not feel respected by Peter and no good can come from this.

---

**PM 4** Julie is a classic example of a fourth Centaur type. The **Romantic** (Poet and Damsel) is not interested in power like the Superhero. They thrive on the social and relational aspects of work and are motivated by contact with others rather than success of the task or being given positions of authority. Poets and Damsels relate to others through charm and social grace rather than charisma or logic.

The Romantics value interpersonal connection like the Good Father and Earth Mother, but unlike the Guardians, the success of the task is not at the top of their agenda.

Most important for Romantics is the social exchange between people and the fun of interpersonal relationships. The Romantic Poet/Damsel can be a real asset to the team forging valuable relationships with clients and charming difficult situations into successful outcomes. They are often brilliant at presentations where grace and ease with people are important.

Although talented in the important ways described above, Romantics are not robust. Whereas the Guardians are identified with giving to other people, Romantics unconsciously look to others to meet their needs and fuel their sometimes flagging energetic resources. This can leave colleagues feeling drained as a result. Unfortunate events early on in the formative years of a Romantic lead to a world view that can be summarised as:

*I am in need.*

*Others in charge should be looking after me.*

*The world owes me.*



With this psychological orientation, Julie has a terrible reaction to Peter's leadership style. Damsel Julie is not driven by success of the task like Huntress Joan. She feels overwhelmed by the responsibility that Peter gives her and abandoned by his assumption that she will share his attitude of independence and responsibility.

As a Romantic, Julie lacks the constitutional energetic resources of the previous three personality styles. When Peter hands her the entire responsibility for her part of the task, Julie feels lost. She will very likely find diversions that will take her away from her discomfort and then make excuses for her failure to deliver. Over time the pressure of such situations may lead her to take time off work with stress related conditions.

There is an optimal way to manage the Damsel and Poet that brings out their best qualities and helps them develop a mature work ethic. Peter thought he was treating Julie with respect. Sadly, his Hero approach leads to demotivation and distress, which eclipse Julie's qualities of charm and interpersonal ease that are the valuable contribution of this personality type to the spirit of a team or relationships with clients.



**PM 5** The **Magical** personality form is perhaps the most delicate of the five Centaur types. However, what the 'Wizard' and 'Sprite' bring to the team can be what makes the biggest difference to the product or the strategy and therefore to the survival of an organisation.

The Magicals specialise in creative and innovative thinking and frequently come up with wonderfully different perspectives and solutions. Like the Romantic or the Superhero, they need focused and mindful management if they are to give their gifts to the situation. Frightening experiences in the early formative years of the Magical lead to an unconscious world view that can be summarised as:

*I am fragile.  
Others can be hostile.  
The world is dangerous.*

Wizard Sam is shocked and strained by Peter's forthright challenge to take on this high-pressure assignment. What was a pleasure for Joan and a satisfying duty for George is a harrowing pressure for Sam. Unlike the Romantic Poet/Damsel the Magical Wizard/Sprite will not avoid the task.



They tend to over-commit, becoming perfectionist and obsessing unnecessarily over details. The task may be well done but time lines will suffer and Sam is likely to become stressed and in due course dysfunctional because of too much pressure, albeit much of his own making.

There is an optimal way to manage a Magical Wizard/Sprite that provides a sense of safety and protection within which they can give their frequently remarkable contribution.

Warrior Peter would feel offended at the thought of being protected by his manager. Assuming 'everybody is like me' it does not occur to him to provide the context Wizard Sam needs to give his brilliant best. Peter meant well, but his Hero approach puts a valuable individual under undue strain. Sam does not feel respected, he feels threatened and trapped.

The skilful and respectful approach to each of the five types forms the practical basis of the Centaur approach. An understanding that **other people can be different from me and still valid** is a key principle of Centaur work, which will help you flex your management style and interact more successfully with others.

[Return to website — www.centaurleadership.com](http://www.centaurleadership.com)

