

# egonomics: ups↑de, downs↓de



*egonomics* have a subtle, but dramatic impact on people's talents and strengths at work. In terms of team performance, the crucial point people need to understand is **that when egonomics are working against a person or team rather than for them, it doesn't turn strengths into polar opposites—but into close counterfeits.**

That subtle modification becomes the ultimate blind spot, because weaknesses feel almost the same as the strengths we rely on in the first place. While the difference isn't discernable to us, it is clear to others and dramatically affects how we communicate, think, and make decisions.

Listed below are strengths and specific behaviors that reveal the upside of our talents and traits (collectively or individually) when we're managing team or individual egonomics effectively. Also listed are the costs when ego is subtly managing us in the absence of 1) **open minds (humility)**, 2) **intense curiosity**, and 3) **water-cooler honesty (veracity)**.

The content below can be used for **performance evaluations** to more accurately assess and communicate what individual contributions are being made, and where there is room for improvement.

The list may be used to help create **job descriptions and expectations** based on talent, in addition to technical competence. At a higher level, you can use this information to **assess a team or company's culture** given particular collective strengths in conjunction with the [team egonomics survey](#).

## dedicated

### **return**

Doesn't make excuses. Finds a way to get things done, despite obstacles. Willing to sacrifice short-term comfort for long-term gain. Consistent performer. Good at building loyalty in others.

### **counterfeit cost**

Laser focus tends to discard alternatives. Resistant to change, even if change may yield a better outcome. Won't "abandon ship" when it needs to be abandoned. Over-committed, often to the exclusion of other important goals. Cliquish and protective.

## optimistic

### **return**

Isn't frozen by the difficulty, complexity and sometimes brutal nature of reality, especially when it's negative. Good leadership ability; can help others see through difficult times by sustaining belief of better times ahead. Keeps things in perspective.

### **counterfeit cost**

Diminished ability to accurately assess situations. Planning is often inadequate. Believes a positive mental attitude can overcome anything. Won't listen to bad news. Assigns bad news as a lack of faith or vision. Doesn't hold proper accountability for poor results.

## candid

### **return**

Clear communicator. Excellent at confronting brutal realities and eliminating guessing. Someone others will follow due to respect for honesty and frankness. People know where they stand.

### **counterfeit cost**

Creates anxiety in others, uses little tact and often offends people. Shares

opinions prematurely without consideration of implications. Intimidates others unintentionally. Can polarize groups. Generates gossip. Causes fear and is often the target of vengeful repercussions.

## **diplomatic**

### **return**

Skilled at encouraging others to share diverse points of view; builds rich dialogue. Good in working with political or sensitive issues. Calms emotions and encourages all parties to stay open.

### **counterfeit cost**

Becomes a chameleon. Manipulates and erodes trust. Can be divisive and work people against each other for self benefit. Focuses more on who wins rather than letting the best idea win. Uses political power rather than legitimacy to get things done.

## **confident**

### **return**

Good leader; decisive even in the midst of complexity. Calm and courageous in the face of difficulty. Unnerved by challenges; can't be bullied. Influenced appropriately by balancing input. Not too full of themselves. Unencumbered by comparison or competition.

### **counterfeit cost**

Judgment is impaired and tends to overreach. Mistakes dominating conversations or meetings for confidence and creating value. Isn't aware of personal weaknesses that get in the way or create risk for projects or investments. Crowds others out, robbing discussions of dialogue. Can lose advantageous position due to contentment brought on by overconfidence.

## intelligent

### return

Sees beyond the obvious. Helps people see new ideas, and connections between those ideas. Cuts to the heart of difficult matters. Challenges status quo, history, sacred cows, etc. Good problem solver. Builds confidence by improving logical support for decisions.

### counterfeit cost

Doesn't listen to people with different or conflicting points of view. Intimidates. Often demeans others with lesser intellectual ability. Smothers collaboration and diversity. Creates distance between self and colleagues. Is condescending. Overvalues own talents, undervalues others' talents. Over-assesses own contribution; claims inordinate amounts of credit.

## assertive

### return

Accomplishment oriented; doesn't wait to be told what to do, and isn't content with what's already been done. Isn't easily intimidated or slowed by politics or others egos. Sets and achieves high goals. Overcomes obstacles that usually stop others in their tracks. Easy to follow as a leader.

### counterfeit cost

Tends to be pushy; runs over others. Can be closed-minded and is often selfish. Isn't diplomatic. Sacrifices long-term relationships for short-term gain. Difficult to cultivate effective working relationships. Mistakes accomplishing tasks for productivity. Infringes on people's territory or responsibilities. Impatient. Resists feedback that might improve results long-term.

## analytical

### return

Thinks through ideas systematically and systemically. Dispassionate when considering ideas. Doesn't allow the rush of a moment to overwhelm the logic or

arguments behind ideas. Breaks things down to isolate variables that could accelerate progress or failure.

**counterfeit cost**

Looks for the negative; critiques new ideas too early and too often. Diminishes positives. Too often becomes a barrier to progress. Unable to make many decisions, especially difficult decisions with complex variables. Frustrating to work with; slow and drives out hope and enthusiasm.

## flexible

**return**

Sees more than one way to get something done. Adapts to change; change doesn't disrupt productivity or work attitude. Focuses on outcomes rather than procedures or policies. Sees change as an opportunity and creatively takes advantage. Isn't encumbered by old ways of doing things. Introduces new, innovative approaches to solve problems.

**counterfeit cost**

Loses discipline. Doesn't bring enough definition and direction to work. Difficulty making a final decision and going with it. Includes too many opinions, especially later when time for opinions is over. Execution is inconsistent. Crisis often drives work to be done, not planning or clear strategy. Changes course when obstacles arise. Abandons vision prematurely. Creates chaos and erodes trust due to constant flip-flopping.

## charismatic

**return**

Paints a vision. Inspires others, attracts talent, keeps people motivated. Persuasive. Held in high regard. Trend setter. Magnetic, able to get people to support ideas, commit capital, give up positions. Uniter.

**counterfeit cost**

Manipulates people, information, and perceptions to self benefit. Can make bad ideas sound good. Resists admitting mistakes. Stays committed to poor decisions, bad strategies, or wrong people until it's too late. Gets others to

overlook substance for style. Success is often short term or even false when facts come to light.

## decisive

### return

Doesn't let analysis paralysis hurt the momentum of a good idea. Isn't afraid to move forward without everyone's consensus. Takes responsibility for results. Action oriented.

### counterfeit cost

Moves too quickly on decisions in the name of getting things done. Doesn't take the time to think thoroughly about ideas. May "decisively" change directions too frequently. Values speed over quality. Oversimplifies ideas and strategies; misses details that hurt the decision later.

## directive

### return

Strong willed. Sets clear direction. Trailblazer. Makes sure everyone is clear on roles and responsibilities. Assignments and metrics of accountability are clearly understood ahead of time. Good at delegating. Expects others to contribute to overall goals. Motivational. Has a strong opinion about how to accomplish goals.

### counterfeit cost

Doesn't collaborate. Infringes on people's freedom to choose or forces buy-in to an idea. Has strong opinions about how things should be done; micro-manages unnecessary details. Creates unsaid, but not unfelt, resistance through being "the boss" and disregarding people's maturity, experience and intelligence. Assumes people want or care about their opinion.

## passionate

### return

Work isn't just "a job"; there is a deeper purpose or bigger picture to the work. Motivates others through passion and striving for "perfection." Doesn't stop thinking about work at five o'clock. "Inspiration" often seems to come to them. Often assumes an informal leadership role. An enemy of status quo or "good enough."

### counterfeit cost

Blind or ignorant of reality, often dismisses brutal facts (and those bringing them up). Poor judge of what will or won't work. Doesn't know when to "back off" and let events run their course. Impatient. Intimidates others, or wears them out. Doesn't create intellectual or emotional reprieve for people to "catch their breath." Loses people's attention and passion after a relatively short period of time.

## dependable

### return

Delivers consistent results. Finds a way to get things done; good problem solver. Shoulders responsibility and doesn't make excuses. Steady even in difficult times. Instills confidence in others.

### counterfeit cost

Won't budge to consider other points of view. May see others as an obstacle to accomplishing goals. Believes others should adjust to them to get things done. Doesn't consider closely enough what's being done, only that something is being done. Takes accomplishment of a task too personally to consider stopping or adjusting the task itself. Gets caught in the "sunk cost" trap too easily.

## open-minded

### return

Good listener; seeks out diversity of thoughts and opinions. Curious, doesn't

cling to only one way of doing things. Engages people in meaningful debate and conversation. Creative; doesn't prematurely narrow options. Unbiased in considering options. Unites ideas and people through creativity. Innovator.

**counterfeit cost**

Everyone's right and all truth is relative. Has difficulty making decisions; slow in moving forward. Conversely, good decisions may be abandoned impulsively. Has a hard time discerning the "one best way" to do something. Listens too long and in the process loses time to accomplish what's necessary. Has difficulty reducing the number of options and making a final decision. Sees so many upsides and downsides to everything that others get confused about direction or next steps. Doesn't have strong opinions.

## discerning

**return**

Wisdom due to the ability to read people and situations well. Observant; notices subtle changes in conversations or in a culture that reveal undercurrents. Focuses on the intent behind a discussion or idea, not just the words or the idea itself. People oriented.

**counterfeit cost**

Sees life and work through the lens of absolutes; rights and wrongs. Judges too quickly without enough—or the right—information. Over-reads or misinterprets situations based on what they personally are experiencing.

## trusting

**return**

Assumes positive intentions of others. Open and easy to be around. Others don't feel obligated to "prove" trustworthiness and act accordingly. Helps others feel more valuable and willing to work harder and sacrifice. Builds strong relationships.

**counterfeit cost**

Hasty in making decisions; doesn't ask enough questions about details or competence. Careless; trusts too quickly without enough information. Favors

people on the basis of character and honesty to the exclusion of competence. Abandons people and leaves them to perform without needed direction. Doesn't require enough proof before assigning a task or investing time or money into an opportunity.

## **strong-willed**

### **return**

Doesn't allow setbacks to defeat them. Gives hope to those around them that things will get better and goals will be accomplished, even in the face of obstacles. Doesn't allow difficulty to be used as an excuse. Used to hard work and long hours.

### **counterfeit cost**

Won't give up even when they should. Unwilling to be open to feedback. Takes defeats too personally. Won't accept legitimate reasons to change or excuses when they make sense. Inflexible and stubborn.

## **pragmatic**

### **return**

Grounded. Connects ideas (products, policies, procedures, etc.) to reality. Makes sure ideas are relevant and doable, and that there is a practical way to implement those ideas. Keeps meetings and conversations productive and pushes for measured results. Pays attention to details.

### **counterfeit cost**

Gets caught in the "that's the way things are done" trap. Doesn't allow enough free time for open-ended discussion or innovation. Too rigid and methodical; heavy on process and rules, not enough on interaction and change. Routine and mechanical. Predictable and maybe even boring.

## alert

### **return**

Spots trends in the market or in the company before others. Quick to notice new ideas or theories that would move the business forward. Very proactive; doesn't wait for warning signs to wake people or the business up. Information hungry.

### **counterfeit cost**

Too suspicious and overreacts to situations. Paranoid; worries about too many "threats" and possible downsides to trying something new. Creates unnecessary anxiety and political undercurrents. Mistrusting of others' intentions. Nit-picky over unimportant details.

## courageous

### **return**

Is a catalyst for removing the fear of the unknown when trying new strategies or changing direction. Doesn't let tradition or the fear of failure limit possibilities or opportunities. Doesn't allow politics, positions or policies to hinder honest conversation or the freedom to attempt bold, new things. Inspires others.

### **counterfeit cost**

Can be seen as aggressive, pushy, and threatening. Loses necessary caution; candor comes without enough respect and consideration. Divisive. Reality ignored in the name of blind ambition. Takes unnecessary risks instead of prioritizing where risks should be taken. Sees others as weak or not committed. Values results over relationships.

## innovative

### **return**

Constructively discontent. Always looking for new ways of doing things; markets, products, projects, ideas, strategies, etc. Initiates conversations that lead to new insights. Intensely curious and visionary. Focused on what's next versus

what's been accomplished. Drives growth.

**counterfeit cost**

Loses pragmatics. Mistakes new or different for progress. Breaks what works for the sake of doing something new. Creates anxiety in others due to constant challenge of things that provide stability. Uninterested in details; execution is usually poor. Creates confusion by jumping from one idea or strategy to the next. Loses interest quickly.

## disciplined

**return**

Unafraid of paying the price to accomplish goals. Isn't easily discouraged. Sacrifices short-term satisfaction for long-term performance. Doesn't get distracted by "short cuts" that aren't. Keeps things controlled and in order when chaos could push efforts or energy off track and distract people. Good at holding self and others accountable.

**counterfeit cost**

Rigid and inflexible. Loses spontaneity. Too locked into routines. Task oriented to the exclusion of working on the right goals. Sees change as unnecessary and disruptive. Unresponsive to changes in market or culture that need to be addressed in the name of "focus." Too harsh in judgments of others. Uncomfortable and impatient with ambiguity.

## independent

**return**

Doesn't need to be told what to do. Efforts and performance don't hinge on whether others do their job or not. No excuses. Excitement comes from freedom to perform, not acclaim from others. Shuns bureaucracy. Willing to stand for beliefs regardless of popularity or alignment with others. Doesn't need the encouragement of others to accomplish tasks or others' endorsement to feel good about their accomplishments. Brings a unique, non-traditional perspective to discussions.

**counterfeit cost**

Detached, careless or unaware of others. Isolated by others. Doesn't allow others to influence them. Undervalues the progress that only comes from collaboration. Rebels against norms, rules, ideas or trends for the sake of rebellion. "Rebel without a cause." Can be overly negative and removed from the elevated thought that comes from debate and the esteem that comes from appropriate praise from others.