

## The 5 Seasons of Life & Business – 5 Elements



In other articles we've covered how the 5 Elements Communication Styles diagnostic covers the 5-step lifecycle of any project. To summarise this in brief:

- We begin by Checking what we did previously and how successful it was;
- we then move to Visioning;
- this vision leads to Planning;
- plans need Facilitating (or in other terminology: resourcing);
- penultimately, we implement all of the above (Doing!);
- then lastly we circle back around to Checking what we have done.

Now we have this basic groundwork, we can see that the 5-step lifecycle applies to a lot more than simply business projects! Because the 5-Elements is based upon, and grounded in, the five seasons of Chinese philosophy (which in turn correlate to the five elements), there is a lot more richness to this tool than might initially meet the eye because it taps into a greater truth about the universe, or, if that is too bombastic, the natural world around us.

The natural world moves in cycles. So, in all aspects of our life we move through this 5-step process: the new birth of Spring, the flourishing of Summer, the maturation of Late Summer, the decline of Autumn, and the hoarding of Winter, and around again. This applies to both the big and the small things!

For example, our entire lifespan can be mapped to these five seasons. What period of your life do you think you are in as you read this? Are you in Summer? In which case, you are likely in the Planning stage of life, trying to set things up for your future! We know this is true as, when we are in the teenage and young adult stage, our parents, teachers, and bosses all keep asking us what our plans are! Or, are you in Autumn? In this case, you may feel like you are in a decline—perhaps not able to work so many hours as before—but this is not a bad thing, it is simply a natural part of life and its cycles.

It can be difficult to be honest with ourselves about where we are, but it is important we try, because self-realisation might help us to sync up more naturally with our body and mind's rhythms. Perhaps we have been resisting what would be our natural element or stage in the lifecycle and this has led to frustration and anxiety? If we are in the Winter of our lives, it is going to be more difficult to give birth to new ideas, even if we are a single-focused Vision / Spring communication style. Unlike so

much modern thought, the aim is not to overcome, defeat, or resist the natural world, but to flow with it! That way, success lies.



To use a much smaller example, on the other end of the scale, we can observe the 5 Elements or five seasons in action in every day at work. We begin waking up with our coffee or tea, hopefully refreshed after a night's sleep. This is the Spring of our day. We then begin to plan what we will do, entering the Summer. From Summer, we move to Late Summer: likely, we have had to resource and facilitate our plans, and also socialise / communicate with the right people to get these plans moving. We begin to run out of steam towards the evening and start to wind down (our Autumn). Lastly, at the very end of the working day, we briefly check what we did, finally moving to Winter. Not everyone's plan for the day might look like this, of course, but as you can see there is a logical progression to each of these steps. Whether we literally plan our day in the morning, or the day before, is irrelevant. It is more about the overall feeling and principle that each of these "seasons" or Elements represents.

Every organisation will find itself in one of the five "seasons" or stages of the 5 Elements lifecycle. A new start-up, for example, might naturally be in the Spring phase. But an older and more established company might be in Late Summer. If we have a sense of where they are in the five-step process, we can better customise the work we do with these organisations to their needs. Of course, we have to bear in mind the communication styles preferences of the *individuals* that we are communicating with, but organisations are referred to as "corporations" for a reason. The word "corporate" literally means "body". They are legally recognised as "people" too! Each function of the corporation operates like an organ. Some functions are responsible for corporate growth, others for eliminating waste. The metaphor is not only apt but reveals a deeper truth about our world: everything in this universe is an organism made up of smaller organisms. We are human beings made up of tiny cells. Organisations are organisms made up of tiny human beings. Nations are made up of many organisations, some private, some public / governmental. And so on and so forth! Therefore, organisations will have overall traits and tendencies, just like an individual, and it is our job as coaches, trainers, or consultants to identify these traits and learn to communicate better with them.

A final thing to say is we should not underestimate or misunderstand the importance of Winter! If, for example, you believe your company is in the Winter of its life (or, more worryingly, that you yourself are in the Winter of your life), remember that Winter is not "the end", the cycle starts again. If we believe our project, company, relationship, or life is coming to an end, then we have to begin looking to the next Spring. Winter is a hibernation period that makes new growth possible. In the West, we tend to view things in straight lines. Beginning, middle, end. It's all very final. Journey and destination. However, in the East, as this tool demonstrates, the circle is more prominent. Things come around again. Winter is not a final destination but merely a stepping stone for a subsequent rebirth. This is in some ways a more optimistic view! We can harness this learning so that when our own businesses, projects, and personal affairs go through the wintry seasons, we know there is light and life on the other side.