



## How do you like your Coffee/People?

I am sitting at the window of a Starbucks coffee house opposite the Tesco Express, just up the hill from the New Street railway station in Birmingham (UK). When I work from home, I walk here around 06:00 to start my day by having a medium latte wet (no foam) with whole milk in my reusable cup, as that's my preference.

As I sit here, thousands of people walk up from the station at the start of their working day, and some come into the coffee shop and buy their chosen drink before going on to work.

It recently occurred to me that there is a connection between the preferences for how we have our coffee (and other drinks) and our preferences (biases) for the kind of people we communicate with, especially regarding how we may lead and manage them.

As I explored this new thinking, I found a Starbucks website listing their core beverages, including ten coffees and nine teas. For now, please note the term "Core Beverages," as I see a clear connection between Starbucks coffee shop's "Core Beverages" and an organisation's "Core Values."



Few people order plain coffee (Americano) but rather a latte, cappuccino, tea, chai tea, and many other drinks with changes or additions to suit their preferences.

So, before you make a coffee for someone, you'd surely ask them how they'd prefer their coffee. Do they prefer it with sugar, and if so, brown, white, or even a sweetener? With or without milk, semi-skimmed or whole milk, decaf and so on?

We seem so accepting that everyone likes their drinks customised to their preferences that we don't give it a second thought. Why should we? But, when it comes to people, **our most complex and priceless resource**, we don't seem to recognise their uniqueness and ask them how they would like to be managed, led, or communicated with. We seem almost oblivious to their unique needs and preferences. No one asks them the critical questions they should ask, and often, they don't ask them as they fear that this would show some sort of weakness!

This is **NOT** a weakness. It's a strength. Asking questions like the ones we recommend (happy to share) shows that you **genuinely** care about their unique needs and preferences, so **do it!** It's one of the main ingredients of Emotional Intelligence (EI), especially the ingredient of social awareness. If you know our thinking around leadership and management, you'll know our [Moccasin Approach](#)<sup>®</sup> thinking already.



You'll notice I slipped in "needs" instead of just preferences. This is because some people have literal needs around how we communicate with them and how they communicate with others. For example, I am neurodiverse (ND), as I am diagnosed as autistic. I am not focusing on neurodiversity in this document, but in the ND awareness sessions I facilitate, we focus on the importance of the Moccasin Approach as a conscious requirement for many ND people.

So, be an **ACE** person and organisation and **A**pproach with **C**are and **E**mpathy because when you get your people right, they will do the same for you. Help people be their true authentic selves and be audacious enough to **lead by your values**. I assure you, **who cares wins**.

## Approach with Care and Empathy