

Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right...or a Profit



With offices in 15 different countries, Spandex is a world supplier to the sign-making and graphic industries.

To provide supplies on a global scale, Spandex has to be efficient, organized, and extremely high-functioning. To do this, they need to possess an outward mindset.

Here's how they learned to be outward-minded.

[Watch the Spandex case study.](#)

Two Wrongs

Spandex and a manufacturing division of the same multinational corporation found themselves embroiled in an adversarial relationship—to the point that they acted much more like competitors than divisions working for a shared profit.

Mistrust developed between Spandex and this manufacturing division. They even withheld important information—such as new product plans and market intelligence—that would have helped the other unit operate more effectively, better serve the company's customers, and increase sales.

The mistrust escalated to the point that the units not only

withheld information but even provided each other with *misinformation*.

Each unit suffered from an inward mindset.

With an inward mindset, we focus only on ourselves. Our own objectives are more important than those of the organization. We also fail to see how we might be contributing to the problems around us. Instead, we rationalize why we behave as we do and blame others.

In the case of Spandex, their own mistrust of their sister division mattered more to them than the company's sales. By acting out their mistrust, Spandex didn't just hurt themselves and their sister division, but the entire company.

One Right

During this conflict, Arbinger was brought in to help Spandex. One of the first steps Arbinger took was to teach about outward mindset.

With an outward mindset, we realize that people matter like we matter. We shift our focus to center on our impact on others and organizational results (rather than just our personal results). In seeking the best for the whole organization, we assess what we can do. We become more accountable. We also make changes that would be beneficial to the organization—for example, changes in process, attitude, or behavior.

The Arbinger Institute also taught a second principle: In conflicts, it's enough if only one party adopts an outward mindset. When one party does, the conflict may not be resolved immediately or completely, but it's still a step in the right direction.

Two wrongs don't make a right. But one right is enough to change the equation.

Changing the Equation

Once Spandex learned these crucial Arbinger principles, they began changing how they perceived and addressed the problem.

They decided to start with shifting their mindsets. They began to see themselves and their sister division differently.

Managers at Spandex recognized how they were contributing to the conflict with their sister division. In fact, they realized that they were unwittingly inviting the very behaviors they disliked within that division!

Spandex's shift in mindset also changed their behaviors. They stopped blaming their sister division. They became more cooperative and respectful.

Soon, the sister division began to note the difference. The transformation was so stark that the president of the sister division said to Spandex leader, Rod Larson, "We don't know what you're doing over there, but whatever it is, it's working."

It didn't take long before the sister division began to mirror Spandex's transformation. Without any training in the Arbinger principles, they nevertheless began adopting an outward mindset.

Today, both Spandex and its sister division work collaboratively to their benefit and that of the overall company.