

LASSCA 2015

LEADERSHIP IS THE EDGE

I: LEADING TEAMS

II: LEADERS AND CULTURE

III. LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

Framing the Day

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- **A Gift:** Protected time and space for thinking and dialogue. (*Downshift! Deep breath! Turn off the device!*)
- **The Purpose:** To increase leader effectiveness by examining some of the dynamics that operate under and within the daily enterprise of Lasallian education.
- **The Content:** Three contemporary leadership topics: Leading teams; Leadership and culture; Leadership succession.
- **The Process:** Three rounds of input, reflection, and application activities...a collaborative learning journey.

Flow of Sessions for Today

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- **I. Leading Teams** – Exploration of how speed and hyper-connectivity impact the psychosocial and spiritual dimensions of team leadership.
- **II. Leaders and Culture** – From among the many determinants of culture, probing the impact of leader behavior: “Remarkable, Perilous, and Toxic”.
- **III. Leadership Succession** – Unpacking the principles and methods for the most potent and prudent of talent management practices at three levels, the individual, the school, and the Lasallian network.

Can We Make A Learning Contract? (aka “Wants and Offers”)

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- **My offers:** Content input, managing the session and its process, my willingness to engage with your thoughts and questions and ideas.
- **My wants:** Your willingness to be attentive, to think, and to engage with each other and with me to further the knowledge in the room.
- **Your wants? Your offers?** (Reflect for 1 min)
 - ▣ Round-robin at tables
 - Self-introduction— name, role, location
 - Wants and Offers
 - ▣ Any observations or comments to the table

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Leading Teams: Navigating a High Velocity World

Session I



“Fortunately....

“Unfortunately...

“Fortunately....etc

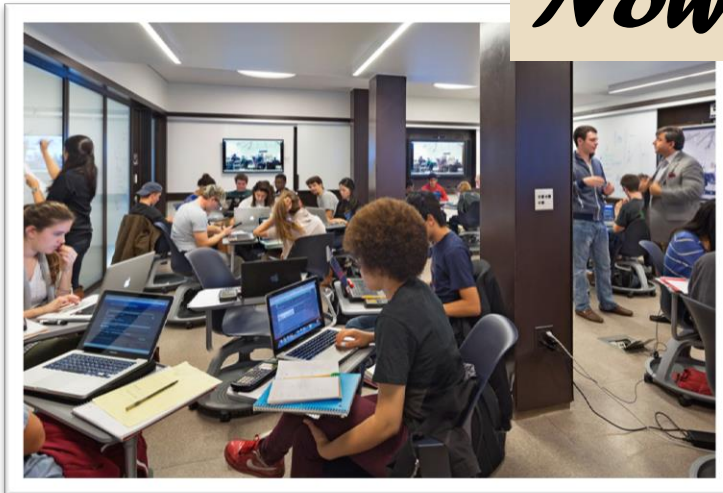
What we already know....

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Then...



Now!



- Constant universal connectivity
- Powerful data access
- Self-directed and group learning (“Minimally Invasive Education”)
- Teacher as guide
- Global events instantly at hand
- Non-linear cognition
- Inside-out education (MOOCs)
- Asynchronous learning
- Galloping technology change
- Budget pressures
- Social inequities

Social Systems are Vulnerable

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- A high velocity, hyper-connected world doesn't just profoundly impact the experience and practice of education as a professional discipline...
- ...It also impacts **the capacity of the human social system of the school** – teachers, administrators, staff, and Boards – to accomplish the mission.
- Individual people, their relationships, and their ability to collaborate well are all impacted by our revved-up world.



Two-Part Analysis:

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- First part of this session will look at PSYCHO-SOCIAL challenges inherent in our high-velocity and hyper-connected world.
- Second part of the session will address the practical ways that these challenges impact TEAMS and how to lead them.
- Within and after each part there will be opportunities for dialogue.

Part I: 5 Psycho-social Challenges:

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- Cognitive overload
- Emotional reactivity
- Shrinking time/space for thought and rest
- Stress on leader capacity
- Anxiety-fueled dysfunction

Let's unpack each of these...

“In Over Our Heads”

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- The internet provides instant access to prodigious amounts of information and wide ranges of passionate opinion about current events.
- The evident complexity of issues -- political, social, religious, economic -- is **taxing the limits of everyone’s cognitive capacity** to understand the whole¹.
- If unable to reconcile complexity, we are prone to (over-)simplify or polarize into good and bad dimensions.

Cognition is slower than emotion

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- Leadership work at high velocity can push us into action faster than the human capacity for thinking, reflection, and deliberation.
- Research indicates that what we believe to be our reasons for decisions are sometimes post-hoc rationalizations after lightning-fast emotional responses occur².
- This is workable in short-term crisis; problematic if chronic.

Shrinking of Transitional Space*

(*which actually means “time+place”)

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- Creativity, problem-solving, and adapting to change all require occasions for playing with ideas, muddling-through issues or talking-out feelings ...that is, “transitional (or potential) space”.
- Shrinking transitional space reduces problem solving capacity and short-circuits adaptation to change.
- Expectations of “24/7” availability to work or social networks shrink personal-family recuperative time and spiritual space.

Pressure on “Negative Capability”

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- The leader’s **negative capacity**³ is his or her ability to tolerate ambiguity / stress without escaping it compulsively in action, intellectualizing, or emotion.
- The ability of the leader to ***not-react*** but rather to stay in the place of consideration, curiosity, or patience...provides the leader and others with the transitional space to absorb and think about what is going on.
- Requires the **courage** to stay with a problem more than it requires the **expertise** to solve the problem.

Anxiety Generates Dysfunction

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- If speed and complexity heighten risk, then *unconscious* social defenses kick in to protect people from the anxiety they experience⁴.
- Under sway of *unconscious* anxiety, people in groups are prone to:
 - ▣ Exhibit dependency rather than authority
 - ▣ Flee from the actual issue by addressing peripheral issues
 - ▣ Blame, procrastinate, argue; or be overly-united and peaceful
- In the moment, this is not evident unless one learns to notice whether the group is, or is not, working at its primary task with *conscious* attention to time, participation, resources. etc.

Take-Away #1

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- Under contemporary influences of speed and hyper-connectivity, human social systems are vulnerable:
 - ▣ Complexity drives cognitive overload and regression.
 - ▣ Emotional reactivity overtakes reflection and thought.
 - ▣ There is shrinking space/time for working-through issues and personal recuperation.
 - ▣ Stress puts pressure on leader “negative capability”.
 - ▣ Anxiety-fueled workplace dysfunctions proliferate.

How do these resonate with you?

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- First reflect/write notes;
- Then share at tables:
 1. Does your experience give you evidence of one or some of these factors?
 2. What would be an example of how they play out in your own role?

Part II: Zeroing in on *TEAMS*...

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- **Teamwork** is a fundamental dynamic of a high performance organization...
- ...And it is significantly impacted by the psychosocial factors we have identified.
- Research validates **a set of specific consequences** for the experience of teams at work.
- Leaders need to understand these issues and adapt to them.

What does “Team” mean to you?

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- What do you mean when you use the word “team”?
- How would you distinguish it from “group”?
- How would you distinguish it from “network”?
- Think of a workplace team that you lead or on which you participate: is it more like a baseball team, a basketball team, a football team, or another sport? Why?

“Teams” in General Usage

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- **Team =** Group of people organized for effective collaboration in the handling of one or many tasks.
- **Team implies:** At least coordination and probably interdependence, mutual support, shared responsibility of some type, co-investment in success.
- **“Organized”** means appropriate differentiation, and likewise integration, of roles and authority according to the requirements of the work.
- Teams can be organized for many ***different levels of collaboration*** (specialists, platoons of experts, highly integrated players etc -- analogies to baseball, football, basketball...)

How is “Teamwork” Changing?

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- The changing context of speed and hyper-connectivity creates specific challenges for the traditional idea we have of teams and teamwork.
 - Membership
 - Dynamics
 - Agendas
 - Development
 - Leadership

Membership isn't what is used to be

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Team membership...is rarely fixed, more often variable according to task, or simply rapidly changing.

- ▣ Porous boundaries and contingent participation – the task drives members, not the other way around.
- ▣ Wider and looser networks, faster reconfiguration of groups according to the relevant question; more virtual teams.
- ▣ And yet – teams show higher productivity if working with trusted and known persons; this research is somewhat at odds with diversity = creativity claims.
- ▣ Fewer settings for whole persons with all their complexities.

Implications?

If team membership is fluid and changing....

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- The concept of “member of the team” or “I have a seat at the table” might be less important than “Who needs to be here now for this conversation?”
- Member identity might need to be gained from a larger horizon of the school’s mission, not a tight “in-group vs outer-circle”.
- It will take more conscious effort to create relationships of trust and interdependence if the team membership boundary is not stable.
- (Others?)_____

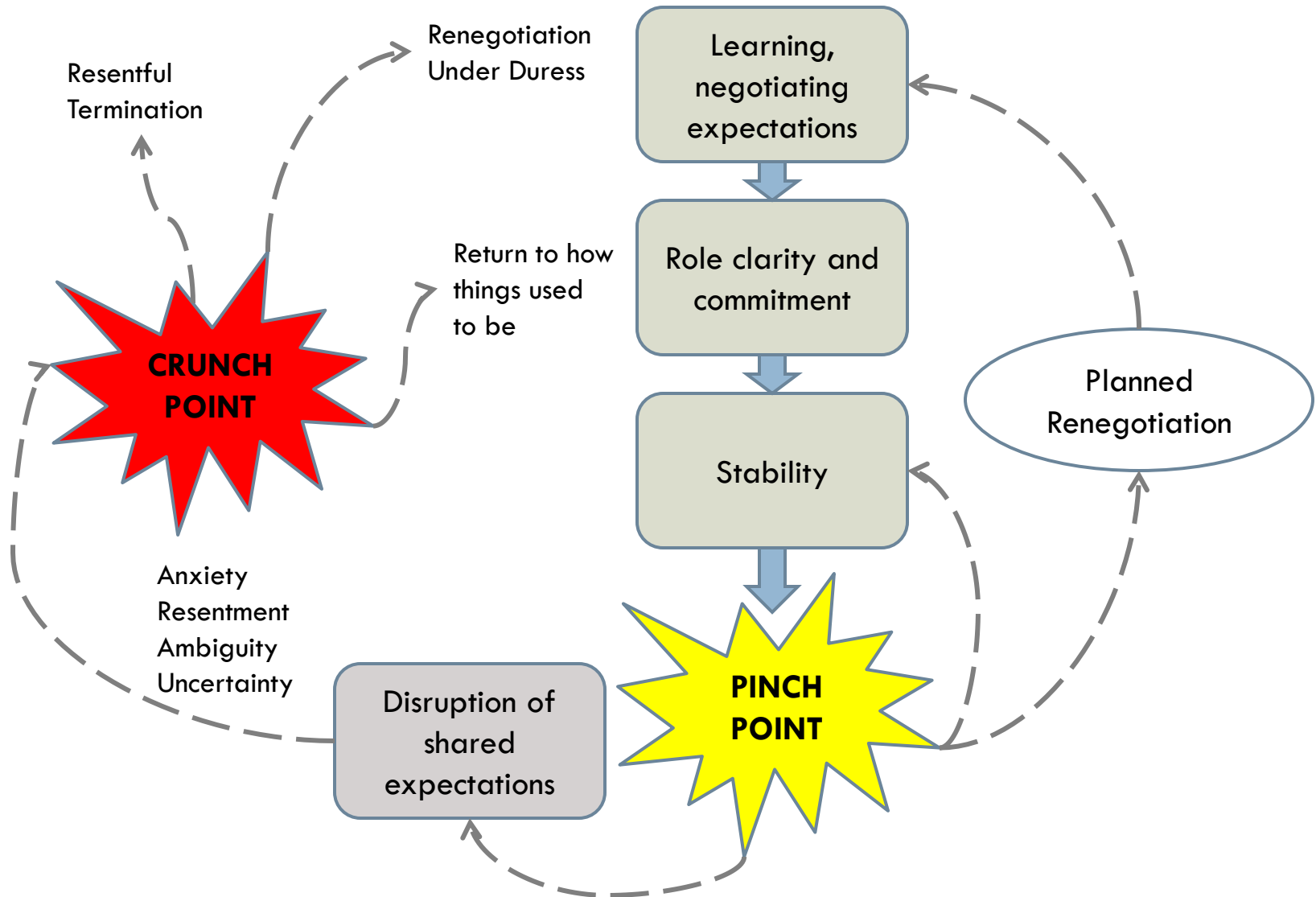
Dynamics are not simple

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Team dynamics...carry the individual and group level stressors coming from overload and anxiety.

- ▣ The more pressure, the more likely the intrusion of socially defensive dysfunctions...i.e. dependency, fight/flight, etc.
- ▣ In virtual or asynchronous teams, task and transactional functions are accentuated while relationship, bonding, and creativity are attenuated.
- ▣ Faster transactions leave less time for understanding the deeper meanings or individual context.
- ▣ Teams more likely to experience “pinch points”, but less likely to manage conflict effectively.

Planned Renegotiation (Pinch-Crunch Model)



Implications?

If team dynamics are even more complex than they have always been....

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- It might be necessary to re-think group norms or set new process agreements for team interactions.
- It can be helpful to refrain from interpreting problem behavior in a team as *personal*, and think instead of its meaning for the group or system. Are you seeing signs of unconscious *group* behavior?
- Learn more about and adjust your expectations of teams that work virtually and asynchronously over large geographies.
- Expect “pinch points”, teach team members to address them.
- (Others?)_____

Agendas Need Care

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Team meeting agendas... i.e. the definers of “time+place”, are among the most important structures for functional work. The drivers of success happen in advance.

- ❑ Meeting purpose and scope are critical – agenda shapes who should attend as well as how to use the time.
- ❑ If change-coping, problem-solving, or creativity are needed, “transitional space” is required, not just efficiency.
- ❑ Reflection, prayer, spirituality provide transitional spaces.
- ❑ Allocate of time to agenda topics must be realistic and reflect priorities; do not simply divide time available by laundry list of issues pressing.

Implications?

If team agendas are critical structural supports....

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- Processes such as discussion, brainstorming, presentations, small group work, etc. must be tailored to the task that needs doing and time it will take to do it well.
- Fewer topics fully-handled will provide more satisfaction and quality of teamwork. Be realistic about pre-work assignments.
- Don't delegate the task of putting the agenda together to an admin support person.
- Standing time+place appointments for team meetings realistically provide for unexpected priorities.
- (Others?)_____

Teams Don't Get to Mature

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Team development....doesn't actually occur as often as it used to.

- ❑ Without member stability and interpersonal experience over time, groups don't achieve maturation and self-regulation.
- ❑ This shifts responsibility for group management to leaders, who in turn can perpetuate dependency dynamics without intending to do so.
- ❑ High performance from teams depends either on self-regulation ability, or good leadership. If not one, then the other is necessary.

Implications?

If teams don't have the chance to mature....

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- Effective collaborative energy will require more advance preparation and thoughtful facilitation of team processes.
- Sub-groups with experience and mutual trust may take, or be given, the de-facto dominant role in the team, limiting the contributions of newer or more diverse members.
- Governance or administrative leaders must take the time to set outcome and milestone parameters for team projects to enable team members to get to the core work.
- (Others?)_____

Team leadership is real work

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Team leadership....depends on a sophisticated blend of executive function, facilitation skill, and negative capability. The first two can be delegated; the third stays with the actual authorized leader.

- ❑ Executive function = The capacities of a good “meeting chair”, needed to manage team boundaries, especially time and task.
- ❑ Facilitation skill = ability to focus the work, draw in participants, attend to dynamics.
- ❑ Negative capability = able to keep calm, pay attention, and stay at the helm at difficult moments.

Implications?

If team leadership is a job in itself....

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- Leaders with authority must come to terms with holding and using their authority to provide necessary ballast for high velocity workplaces.
- Emotional intelligence (ability to manage self and relationships with others) is as important to team leadership as strategic vision or professional knowledge.
- Leaders with gaps in the necessary skill sets can delegate some – but not all – of the leadership work. There are “potential leaders in every chair”.
- (Others?)_____

Take Away #2

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- The psycho-social challenges of hyper-connected, high velocity workplaces directly impact key aspects of effective teamwork:
 - ▣ Membership and inclusion assumptions change.
 - ▣ Functional/dysfunctional dynamics are system signals.
 - ▣ Agenda design is worthy of careful planning.
 - ▣ Team development levels shift leadership burdens.
 - ▣ Team leadership requirements are multiple.

Application Laboratory

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- Reflect on and then share at tables some aspect of team or teamwork that is relevant for your role in the world of Lasallian education:
 - How are the psycho-social consequences of high velocity impacting teams you work with?
(What's your diagnosis?)
 - What ideas do you have about how leaders – and members – of the team could increase its effectiveness?
(What's your treatment plan?)
 - How might others at your table add to your thinking?

Recap of Session 1

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- ☑ A global world that is increasingly connected in real time is both a wonderful educational opportunity, and a genuine challenge to human cognitive and emotional coping mechanisms.
- ☑ Under compression of time and increased complexity, people at work face new psychological and social challenges.
 - Cognitive overload, emotional reactivity, shrinking space, leader stress and anxiety-fueled dysfunctions.
- ☑ Teams and teamwork remain extremely important for mission effectiveness, but are also impacted by these psychological and social pressures in significant dimensions.
 - Team membership, dynamics, agenda, development, and leadership.
- ☑ Leadership courage, skills, and practical responses to these pressures are key supports for successful teams.

....and Preview of Sessions 2 and 3

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- Session 2: The world and technology environment is accompanied by the Church and vocations environment in Lasallian schools, increasingly lay-led. How do these leaders impact the culture of the school?
- Session 3: Leadership Succession Planning is arguably the most potent talent management practice to master. What practices work? Can the Lasallian community leverage its size?

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