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Credibility and Empowerment

By Phil Ramsey

People are often suspicious of someone who is an expert pool player. Clever shots are treated as a sign of a misspent youth, or at least they were in times gone by. While playing pool could bring one into contact with shady characters, it also provided important lessons on credibility, an essential characteristic of effective centre and school leaders. In particular, pool teaches people the value of "calling the shots".

Because pool tables are relatively small, with six places a ball can be "pocketed" luck plays a big part in many games, especially among those of average ability. Of course players with exceptional ability pull off remarkable shots involving clever judgement of angles and deflections. All of this leads to lots of banter and scepticism. Was a brilliant outcome achieved through skill and strategy, or was it just sheer luck? The one playing the shot would generally claim it was all skill, while the opponent will loudly proclaim it was a fluke.

Pool players have an established way of establishing credibility and demonstrating skill. Before hitting the cue ball they "call the shot", explaining which ball is intended to go in which pocket. There is a high degree of risk; a missed shot is obvious to all. The pay-off, though, is credibility and respect from other players when success is achieved. What does this have to do with leadership?

Calling the Shots

Leadership is about relationship rather than position. Leadership behaviour that works in one context produces terrible results in another. Why? Because the relationship between leader and follower shapes how the behaviour is interpreted and acted upon.

When someone is cynical they are inclined to believe that what they do doesn't really matter. Effort doesn't count for much. You can imagine the impact this has on work. When we rely on people to learn, create and improve we need to get beyond apathy. Leaders need credibility in order for others to really engage with the work being done.

Consider your reaction to the recent presidential election in the US. What part do you think the credibility of the candidates played? What will be the on-going impact of concerns over credibility?

Now consider the part credibility plays in your centre or school. Is it having an impact? What can be done to build credibility? If you are a leader, part of the answer lies in effectively "calling the shots".

When people are asked to describe the behaviour they use to judge credibility, they consistently refer to leaders whose actions match their words. They may use terms like "walk the talk" or "practice what you preach"; whatever way it is phrased the idea is clear, that credibility is the result of doing what you say you are going to do.

Notice that this is the same as "calling the shot" when playing pool. The first step is to say what you are going to do. The second step is to do it.

The Leadership Context

Anyone who calls the shots about their own behaviour builds personal credibility. Something more is needed with leadership. No doubt there are many people you know who are trustworthy - they do what they say - but who don't inspire you to do anything. Leadership involves making sure that "we" do what we say we are going to do. It involves engaging others so that the group as a whole matches actions to announced intentions.

That brings a degree of complexity to the mix. It will mean being thoughtful before announcing what is going to be done. Leaders need to engage in a dialogue about what is to be done and why that is the right thing. This necessarily involves clarifying the values that underpin the goal. Gaining clarity about the principles that guide the group provides a foundation for unified action.

Once the action starts, credible leaders can energise people by ensuring that principles are taken seriously, making sure that everyone, including themselves, are accountable for delivering what they have freely agreed to do.

It is empowering to work as part of a team that is united in its efforts to deliver on commitments. People appreciate the honesty of their team mates, value the competence they bring to the work, and are inspired by one another's energy. And all of this stems from a leader who is prepared to call the shots.

How is My Credibility?

By Phil Ramsey

Leadership expert Jerry Harvey used to quiz people at his lectures. He would ask: "Who agrees with the statement, 'As a leader, you occasionally have to tell lies in order to get things done?'" When I have incorporated this question into leadership workshops, typically about half the audience will indicate that they agree. They shake their heads in a way that conveys that, while they would never classify themselves as 'liars', sadly the nature of leadership work seems to demand that the truth be disguised.

Harvey has a follow up question: "Who agrees with the statement, 'I work at my best when my leaders occasionally lie to me?'" This time no hands go up. You can see the penny dropping as people bashfully realise that lies feel very different when you are on the receiving end.

The Oxford Dictionaries decided that "post-truth" was the 2016 Word of the Year, indicating that we live at a time when credibility is under threat. Whether people feel something is true is being treated by many as more important than whether it actually is true, at least according to the people at the Oxford Dictionaries.

Despite the changing context, people still yearn to trust those they work with, especially those in leadership roles. How can you determine whether the post-truth climate is affecting your credibility? How can you audit your own trustworthiness?

James Kouzes and Barry Posner suggest four questions you can use to examine your everyday actions and get a measure of how others view your credibility:

1. *Is my behaviour predictable or erratic?* A personal "credo" is the basis for credibility. A credo is a set of guiding principles that shape your action. If you are guided by principle, people are going to see you as consistent and predictable; someone who can be relied upon.

2. *Do I communicate clearly or carelessly?* Many live by the adage, "How will I know what I think until I hear what I say?" It is easy for careless words to spill out of our mouths, requiring us to reverse ourselves on statements that sounded to others like they were commitments. If you are in a leadership role, people want to be able to take you seriously, and want to be clear about what you mean.

3. *Do I treat promises seriously or lightly?* Clarity around promises is at the heart of credibility. People need to be able to distinguish between a commitment or promise, and an intention. When you make a promise, do others expect you to keep it, or have they learned that you are inconsistent? People realise that sometimes circumstances intervene and promises cannot be kept: are you 'accountable', though, in the sense that you are prepared to give an account of how your actions measured up against what was promised?

4. *Am I forthright or dishonest?* When people knowingly mislead others they destroy trust. And dishonesty is pervasive: being caught in one lie casts doubt over everything you may have said. Of course there are times when you may need to be clear that some matters are confidential and cannot be discussed.

Questions such as these are challenging.

Kouzes and Posner pose them for our reflection because of the seriousness of what is at stake. Our leadership relationships thrive on our credibility.

BOOK REVIEW:
# Credibility
By Phil Ramsey

Kouzes and Posner wrote this seminal book on leadership over 20 years ago, based on extensive research that included surveys, case studies and interviews. As you might imagine, the world has moved on since its publication and the data they refer to is outdated. If anything, though, the conclusions they draw seem more solid in hindsight.

They describe a leadership context in which the pace and complexity of change is demanding; in which cynicism affects work; and where people are looking for leadership that treats them as human. The evidence of these conditions has intensified rather than diminished, making the importance of leadership credibility even greater

Because their work is based on in-depth study of some very effective leaders, they are able to draw on a rich variety of stories to illustrate the points they make. The book is clearly aimed at a business audience, yet deals with the challenges of change that you will recognise as important for your school or centre.

Credibility was one of the first books to articulate the idea that leadership needs to be defined as a relationship, and it starts by explaining the importance of this concept. The authors then establish, based on their research, the importance of credibility in forming healthy, productive relationships. That done, the rest of the book provides a practical guide for building and sustaining credibility. There are a series of chapters in which key factors for credibility are described and illustrated with examples. Each chapter also provides advice on next steps you can take to put the factor to work.

They highlight, for instance, the need to be clear about purpose, to use stories to articulate purpose and the values behind it, and the importance of demonstrating that you appreciate the diverse perspectives that are present in your team. The book introduces themes that you may recognise from more recent literature on leadership, and uses the concept of credibility to draw these together in a way that continues to be relevant and powerful.
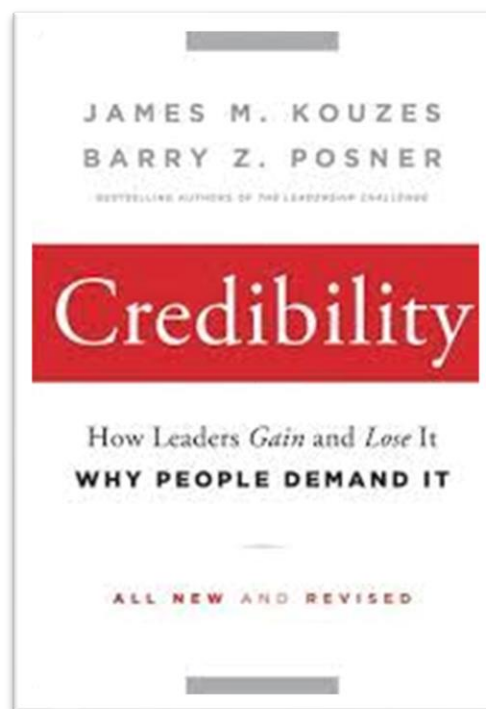
Appraisal and Systems Leadership
## By Phil Ramsey

School and Centre leaders often find appraisal a challenge. Part of the challenge is getting a quality system implemented, sometimes in the face of teacher reluctance. A further challenge is to ensure leader appraisal has a meaningful place in an appraisal system. Leader appraisal is necessarily different from teacher appraisal, causing many to wonder, "Is it worth the effort?"

Answering the question goes beyond a cost/benefit analysis. It calls on leaders to reflect on their personal concepts of leadership. How do you conceive of leadership? Is it a personal process in which you inspire others to pursue important goals? And what is "systems leadership"?

Let's take a closer look and consider how this relates to appraisal.

Leader as System Designer
Leadership expert Peter Senge has compared different approaches to roles involved in sailing a cruise ship. Some leaders, when asked, say they would like the role of captain. Others would prefer to be engineer. Some prefer to be the Chief Steward. While each of these is important, few people opt for the role that has the most influence on the success of the ship: the ship's designer.
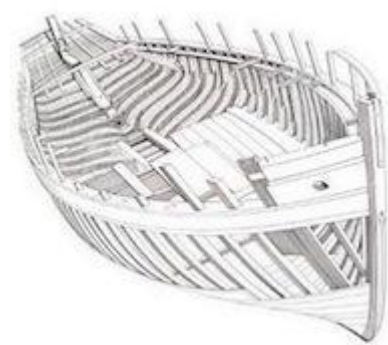
The designer's work shapes what everyone else is able to achieve. But once it is done, the design is often taken for granted. Attention gets focused on the performance of individuals with more prominent roles even if that performance is governed by how the system is designed

Appraisal is meant to be a cornerstone of managing teacher performance. A lot of elements go into the design of an effective appraisal system: there needs to be a sensible process; skilled managers; readiness to take part; good record keeping; and an improvement mind-set. Interestingly, the place doesn't fall apart if appraisal doesn't happen. Teachers still teach. They just don't learn and improve as fast as they might, and they don't get as much guidance from leaders to deal with the professional challenges they encounter.

Thus, designing and implementing an appraisal system is complex. There is a temptation for leaders to decide to concentrate on getting the administrative elements right and leave the 'human' aspects for another day. Yet the human elements - helping people develop in their work - are the real point of an appraisal. Without that developmental focus, appraisal just becomes an extra burden on people in the school or centre.

Leader Appraisal
What about appraisal of the leader? Does that need to be part of the appraisal system? Answering these questions really shines a light on a leader's thinking. Again it is easy to think, "Let's concentrate on teacher appraisal - leader appraisal can wait for another day. After all, teacher development is the priority." Yet think of the assumptions embedded in such a decision.

Firstly, it assumes that development is something to be targeted, rather than expected of, and needed by everyone. What conclusion would you draw about people who decided that they were exempt from developmental processes? If the person responsible for the design of a system chooses not to take part, people will reasonably question whether it is worthwhile.

A second assumption relates to how the leader will influence others to take part. Most leaders recognise they need to model changes they believe to be important. If they espouse development based on disciplined reflection, yet opt out of doing it for themselves, they have neglected a critical element of the system, the social influence that results from modelling. Instead, they give the impression they believe the power of their words will outweigh the quality of the system design.

At InterLEAD, we recognise that leader appraisal presents serious challenges for a school or centre. At the same time, these challenges need to be met so to ensure the quality and coherence of the total appraisal system. What can be done?

Realising You Are Human

Systems are often designed on the basis of what we think people should be like, rather than on how real humans really behave. For leaders this means facing up to the reality of your own behaviour. In particular, leaders need to recognise that while we may know the choices we should make, actions are typically shaped by forces like inertia and mindlessness. We need to create an environment that nudges us toward doing what is right *(see the book 'Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness' by Richard Thaler & Cass Sustein).*

As an example, consider daylight saving time. As adult, rational decision-makers we shouldn't really need to change our clocks. When summer approaches we could, if we wanted, just make the decision to get up earlier in the morning to take advantage of the extra daylight and to save some money on energy. The trouble is, we just wouldn't do it; there are too many forces that would get in the road. If my routine is to get out of bed at 6.30am, shower, then have breakfast while catching the 7.00am news, the idea of getting up at 5.30am just doesn't really appeal. Staying in bed is tempting when I'm not used to seeing the "5" digit on my bedside clock. Plus, no one else is awake at this ridiculous time; why should I get up!

Changing the clocks for daylight saving makes getting up earlier the "default" position for people. It doesn't take away their ability or right to choose to get up later. It just recognises the nature of being human and helps us behave in line with reasonable goals.

It is a reasonable goal for leaders to ensure that they take part in a robust process of reflection, development and appraisal. To do that they need to give careful thought to the tools they use, the time that is set aside, and how they are held to account. Knowing you should do something is seldom enough!

Appraisal and Knowing Yourself

By Phil Ramsey

Behavioural economists Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein *(authors of 'Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness')* **have outlined a number of processes that characterise humans, as opposed to the theoretically rational decision-makers we might like to imagine ourselves to be. If you are a School or Centre leader it is worthwhile to examine yourself and your appraisal processes.**
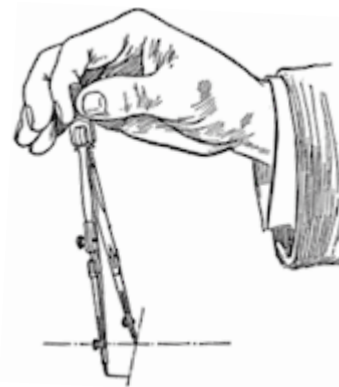
Let's consider some processes you can consider.

◖ *Unrealistic Optimism:* In surveys of how people rate their driving ability, everyone considers themselves to be "above average". People have a remarkable capacity for thinking that things will work out, assuming that they are somehow special. If you consider appraisal to be a process designed for those with performance problems, there is a clear danger that you'll assume your performance is fine and therefore you are one of the few 'special' people who don't really need appraisal; that you'll be able to get by without it. The costs of involvement won't seem to be worth the likely benefits given that, in your own mind, you are already pretty good. Of course, modesty usually prevents leaders from voicing these thoughts.

◖ *Defaults:* When people receive a new appliance or piece of software they will often simply accept default settings, rather than go to the bother of selecting personal preferences. One of the strongest influences on behaviour is inertia: the tendency to just leave things as they are. Inertia and default settings can mean that adjustments don't get made to schedules that might allow time for reflection or to look for coaching from a new source.

◖ *Aversion to Loss:* Research has revealed that we all tend to be overly averse to losing what we have, whether we have worked hard to get it or not. Imagine you are a leader, determined to establish a new routine where you complete a series of eight written reflections that will contribute to your appraisal. Getting them done will feel like a real achievement, but is that enough? You could make a deal with a colleague, perhaps from another school or centre, who has the same goal. Set specific dates by which reflections are to be completed, and then agree that when either of you misses a deadline, you'll pay $20 to the other. You are only putting $160 at risk. Yet the feelings associated with losing even one payment of $20 and seeing it go to a rival will drive many people to establish the new routine.

When it comes to appraisal, leaders need as much help as they can get to establish new routines. If you struggle to make your own appraisal work, consider the design. It may be that you can re-design your system to generate the behaviour and results that you really care about.

BOOK REVIEW:
Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness

By Phil Ramsey

Richard Thaler and Cass Sustein are key figures in the relatively new discipline of "behavioural economics". They want to see policy advice to governments that is based on how people really behave rather than how economic theory predicts they will act. According to Thaler and Sustein, economists have traditionally assumed that people are 'Econs': rational beings who consistently weigh options and select what will be best for them in the long run. The time has come to create policy for Humans rather than Econs. They advocate 'liberal paternalism', where you give people freedom to choose what they want, while nudging them toward the choice that you believe is best for them.
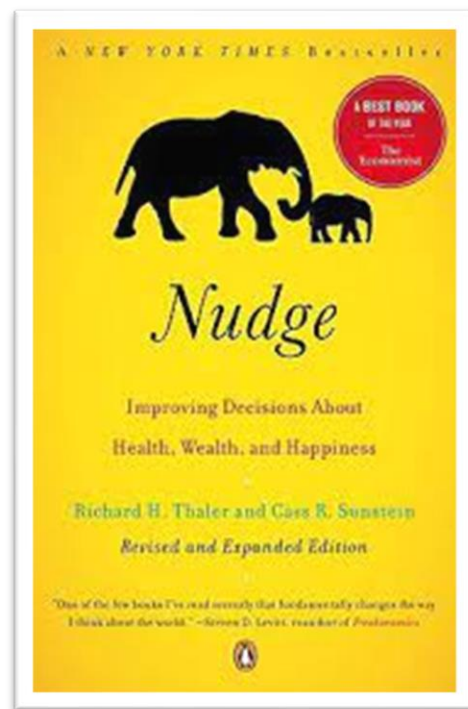
'In the Moment' Newsletter – May 2017

They make a strong case that the context will always influence decisions, often in ways that are dysfunctional. It is impossible to be neutral, so leaders have a responsibility to shape decisions in the direction we believe is desirable. They discuss how people can be nudged in areas like retirement savings, organ donations and protecting the environment.

The book felt like it was covering old ground in terms of its message. Work by business and psychology writers like Arie de Gues and Irving Janis dealt with some of these issues decades ago. The field of organisational learning has emphasised the need to design systems for people rather than machines. And they draw on classic psychology research they assume will be news to their readers.

I was reminded of the story of how Adam Kahane named his first book. He wanted to call it 'Victory of the Open Heart'. But a friend who had read the manuscript wanted to share the book with someone in government and advised that, with that title, it would never be read. So Kahane called the book *Solving Tough Problems*. It seems like *Nudge* is written for policy makers by people with appropriate credentials as economists to be taken seriously.

From a leadership point of view, it is good to think about how we can shape decisions people make while still showing respect for their right to choose otherwise. *Nudge*, along with books like *Influencer*, provide strategies that can provoke new thinking on how to design for the behaviour we need from the systems we lead.

Natural Learning

By Phil Ramsey

InterLEAD's founding director, John, has walked into hundreds of school staffrooms over the years. He is used to how they look and sound, familiar with the behaviour of teachers he finds in them. So he was intrigued and excited recently when he visited a staffroom that stood out as different. Careful thought had gone into the type of furniture used and to how it was laid out. It seemed designed to encourage interaction, and that's exactly what he saw going on in the Waipahihi Staffroom.

Those who know John won't be surprised at what happened next. He started enthusiastically describing what he had seen to others, getting their views on what schools could be doing to encourage professional learning to happen more naturally amongst adults in schools and ECE centres. But the reaction of some principals and teachers to the conversation perplexed him. Not all were attracted to the idea of the staffroom as an interactive adult learning environment. Some saw it as their place to switch off. Not everyone was attracted to time spent learning or interacting with colleagues, or both.

Clearly, redesigning a staffroom is more complex than it first appears to be. If the goal is to create an environment that allows learning to happen "naturally" it has to deal with the true "nature" of the people involved. People value different things, and not all values coincide with those associated with professional learning. What might be involved in designing spaces in ways that encourage professional learning?

It is well established that learning is a social process, and in this newsletter we have often discussed how good, professional conversations are a springboard for learning. We also know that a 'good' conversation is not something that is scripted or planned; the more we try to control conversation the less engaging it becomes to everyone involved. Dee Hock—the man who established VISA cards as a business - coined the phrase "chaordic" to capture the blend of chaos and order needed in a natural process that appeals to a wide range of people.

Open Space

Since the 1980s, Harrison Owen *(author of 'Open Space Technology - A User's Guide')* has been investigating the idea of natural, chaordic conversations. As well as searching for principles based on communities that have mastered conversational processes, he has experimented with how principles can be applied for more effective meetings and symposia. Owen focuses on four key principles.

◖ *The Shape of Conversation:*
  The natural geometry of a conversation is a circle rather than a square. We don't have a 'square' of friends or admit people to our 'inner triangle'. When it comes to conversation we prefer circles. Circles put people at ease when it comes to talk, and this is something to keep in mind when designing a room layout.

◖ *Conversational Dynamics:*
A conversation is not just one thing; it needs to change over time. Owen compares conversation to the process of breathing, which alternates between inhaling and exhaling. Conversation needs to move back and forth between divergent thinking and integration; between focusing on concepts and focusing on action; between attention to the specific interests of 'parts' and attention to how the parts fit into the 'whole'; between understanding ideas to deciding on action; between talking purposefully and just 'shooting the breeze'. A key dynamic is the opportunity to split into small conversations and opportunity to come together into one large conversation.

◖ *Bulletin Boards:*
What gets talked about is often determined by an agenda. But agendas are frustrating: the things that people really want to talk about often get left off, and can even become 'undiscussable'. Communities around the world get around this by using some form of bulletin board that allows members to post topics they want discussed and invite others to join the conversation.

◖ *Market Places:*
Everyone intuitively understands how a marketplace or a shopping mall works. There are a variety of options and you get to choose which opportunity to take. Giving people choices over the conversations they join generates a marketplace feel, in which everyone can find a place that suits them.

More Than Furniture

Paying attention to room layout can clearly make difference. Some of the principles depend on being able to adjust the placement of seating or make 'bulletin board' topics visible to people. Yet generating conversations in which professional learning will happen naturally involves more. School and Centre leaders need to facilitate the conversation, experimenting to find what works with their community.

Many leaders find that the greatest challenge they face isn't the furniture, the attitudes of staff, or the time available. Rather, they struggle with their own feelings when things get chaordic. You might find that you prefer to have things under control rather than allowing conversations to develop naturally.

Take time to think about the kind of conversations you want, to read about conversational processes, and to prepare yourself to act as an effective facilitator. While it may initially feel uncomfortable, the leader's role is crucial to enabling others to talk about what is on their minds in an environment they find safe and responsive.

The Conversational Marketplace

By Dr Phil Ramsey

Imagine walking into a bustling street market.
What would you be drawn to?

Some people go to market with a purpose in mind: they are looking for vegetables, and they have to be fresh. Others naturally head for the busiest stall, enjoying the energy and having learned to rely on the wisdom of crowds. And some prefer to quietly browse the out-of-the-way places. Others really enjoy being with the crowds but resist the temptation to go where it's busy because they know they really need vegetables. People exercise what Harrison Owen calls "the law of two feet": they head where they want to go. If they don't like a particular stall they leave.

People understand that this is the nature of markets, and they intuitively understand that conversations are the same. If I am passionate about a topic and think everyone needs to discuss it, I might invite people to a conversation using the community bulletin board. I am like a seller, setting up a stall. Buyers aren't obliged to come, so I try to make it inviting. When people do show up, I don't worry about those who haven't: I engage with those who are there. I'm not looking for the right people; those who show up are the right ones.

Sometimes having no-one show up to discuss the topic I am passionate about gives me important feedback. And I get to apply the law of two feet. I have shown up so maybe I am the right person for a conversation with myself! I can take the time to reflect on the issue, how I have framed it, why others don't seem to share my passion, and what I need to do next. Or, if I don't really like spending time in that sort of reflection I can go find someone else's conversation and join that.

Conversations, like marketplaces, are chaordic. They are organised but not controlled. People are exercising their ability to choose and that makes them dynamic, efficient and attractive.

BOOK REVIEW:
Open Space Technology - A User's Guide

By Phil Ramsey

Harrison Owen's book is a classic for those frustrated with the quality of conversations and seeking new ways to talk about what really matters to them. Written in the late 1990s it distils what Owen learned in the first two decades of running events based on the principles discussed in the July 2017 'In the Moment' Newsletter. And although the subject lends itself to theoretical and philosophical discussion, he does a great job of making this a practical guide for users, just as the title suggests.
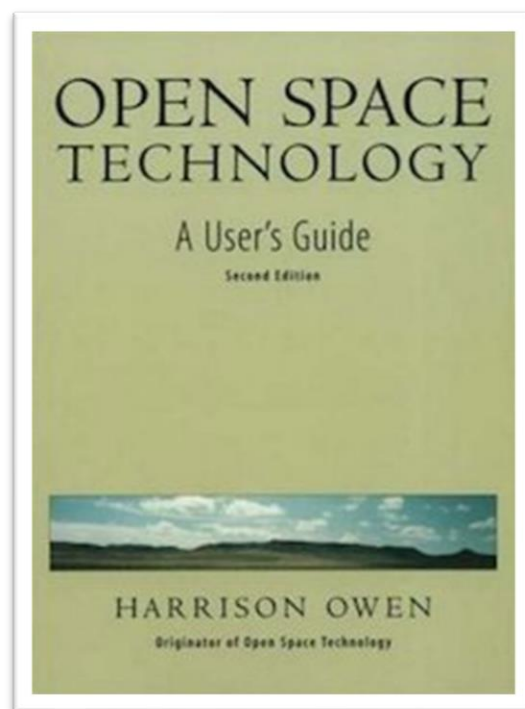
'In the Moment' Newsletter – July 2017

Owen describes the genesis of his work with Open Space conversations, relating the frustration of organising symposia where people found that coffee breaks provided the most stimulation. He claims that the initial idea for something new was discovered at the bottom of his second martini glass. Interestingly, he also explains how he drew on his experiences as a photojournalist in West African villages to clarify principles that can work.

The book gives particular attention to what is involved in running one, two or three day events, with very practical suggestions about equipment needed, timing and logistics. And he also outlines how principles of good conversation are applied, and the crucial - and easily misunderstood - role of the facilitator in making it work.

Being a classic, some of what he says is outdated. This is particularly noticeable when he talks about incorporating technology in a symposium. Consequently, today's leaders can't treat *Open Space Technology* as a blueprint for their next conversation. Rather, it is more like Swiss cheese: it provides a great structure along with lots of holes for you to fill in!

Collaboration: When Teamwork Doesn't Apply
By Phil Ramsey

We are used to thinking of working together in terms of 'teamwork'. People are team players when they sacrifice personal preferences in order to pursue shared interests. They set out to make others look good, even if they personally miss out on some of the glory. In part, teamwork is attractive because most of us have fond memories of participating on sports teams, where we experienced camaraderie and exciting victories when we joined forces against some rival.

But what if our fondness for teamwork actually limits our ability to achieve what is really important? What if being a team player prevents us from collaborating effectively?

These questions may seem counter-intuitive, yet they reflect the complex nature of the current educational landscape. For instance, rather than teaming with like-minded colleagues to battle rivals, many educators find they need to collaborate with rivals. Rather than assuming that others will reject self-centredness for the good of a team, many educators find they need to collaborate with people whose primary interest in working together is what they can get out of it personally.

Adding to the complexity, the idea that our efforts are similar to sports - where you can count on an easily defined opponent, a set of agreed rules, and a level playing field - doesn't reflect the reality of the challenges that educators face. We need to work toward important results even when things are not fair, the rules seem to keep changing, and we have to work with people we don't really like.

Stretching Ourselves

Collaborating with people who aren't team players requires that we 'stretch'. We may need to stretch how we think about working together, and we certainly need to stretch in terms of skill.

While the term 'team' is usually considered positive, 'collaborating' is a term that could be good or bad depending on the context. In our schools and EC centres, we usually prefer it when people are collaborative rather than resistant. But in France during World War II, collaborators were despised and those in the 'resistance' were heroes. Facilitator and author Adam Kahane *(author of 'Collaborating with the Enemy')* challenges us to treat collaboration as a neutral term, one that could be either positive or negative. Collaboration is just one strategy we can choose as we work to achieve what is important.

When we collaborate with others we need to realise that, while they may be joining us as part of the collaborative effort, they still have their own interests, values and will. And while it is natural to want to work together in a unified, harmonious way, it is also natural for all people to want to express their individual identity. With teamwork, we may expect that the drive for unity will take priority. In reality, it is useful to consider that everyone also wants to express their personal identity to some extent, often to the point where it will take precedence over the needs of a team.

What does it take to work with people who won't necessarily measure up to standards we expect of team players? One thing that is crucial is the need to listen carefully and aim for dialogue. We need to make an effort to empathetically see things from perspectives that are unfamiliar to us, trying to appreciate values that are very different to our own.

Further, rather than thinking that we can plan and control how we move forward, we need to embrace an experimental mindset. We are not in control of the messy environment in which we operate, nor can we control the actions and thinking of our colleagues. We need to commit ourselves to finding what works and understanding each other better as we make progress through experimentation.

Collegiality in Complexity

At times we will find ourselves adapting to others' strongly held views and at times we may need to force our preferences on our colleagues. It helps to know where responsibility lies; when it belongs to someone else we aren't in a position to force our views. Instead, we may need to negotiate to get what we need, which requires that we are clear about our interests and what we are trying to achieve.

One thing that makes us more amenable to participating fully in a situation like this is humbly realising that it is not just "them" making collaboration hard: we have our own preferences, practices and values that others find perplexing and irritating. For some in the collaboration, we will be the "them" that makes it hard to progress.

Teamwork remains a powerful force in education, and it makes sense to relish opportunities to work as part of a high performing team. Many leaders in education value teamwork and have developed what learning expert Amy Edmondson calls 'teaming': organising people so they make the most of the natural desire to unite in pursuit of a shared goal, knowing that learning together is an essential for any success. In a complex and chaotic world, leaders also need to discern when collaboration without team spirit is required to get the job done.

Who Is The Enemy?

By Dr Phil Ramsey

People around the world were shocked at the shootings in Las Vegas, where a 64-year-old Nevada resident fired hundreds of rounds at people attending a concert. One thing about the tragedy made it difficult for news agencies to cover. The shooter had no political or religious affiliations that explained his actions. He didn't belong to a disadvantaged or oppressed group. Commentators were perplexed about how to categorise him, which meant they didn't know how to explain his actions.

Why was this inability to categorise such a challenge for the news media? Adam Kahane *(author of 'Collaborating with the Enemy')* explains a process that seems to be operating, a process that can directly affect our ability to work with others.

Kahane has coined the term "enemyfying" to describe the process where people get mobilised for action by identifying someone else as an enemy. Being able to clearly identify someone or some group as "the enemy" is a great way to explain why we are experiencing problems, and gives us a basis for teaming up with others who share concerns about the same enemy. Certainly in sports we are mobilised and energised by rivalry against our opponents on the other team. Perhaps the news media would have been better able to respond to the Las Vegas tragedy if they could name which known enemy group needed to be condemned.

Enemyfying turns out to be a powerful way to get people excited and motivated, so what is the problem with it?

It turns out to be a challenge when we need to work with those we have previously identified as enemies. By calling someone an enemy - or being called an enemy by others - naturally limits our ability to work together. It leads to polarised views, destroying the middle ground where people with different interests might work together. I won't be inclined to see things from your point of view if I have decided in advance you represent an evil, enemy force.

To what extent are we affected by enemyfying? Any question like this is best directed to our own attitudes and behaviour. We might create more enemies by holding others responsible for enemyfying! Better to pay attention to whether we have a tendency to do it ourselves, and to challenge ourselves to listen to divergent views while trying to understand and appreciate the values that they represent.

BOOK REVIEW:
Collaborating With The Enemy
By Phil Ramsey

Collaborating with the Enemy is the latest in an excellent series of books by Adam Kahane. He has been involved in the facilitation of some remarkably challenging conversations amongst people in conflict. In his books, we see how his understanding of conversation has deepened as he reflects on both successes and failures, and makes sense of a range of experiences, particularly when he recognised he personally fell short of what was needed. As the title of his book suggests, he has found it hard to work with people he doesn't trust or like, yet this is often the situation for which we need to be prepared.
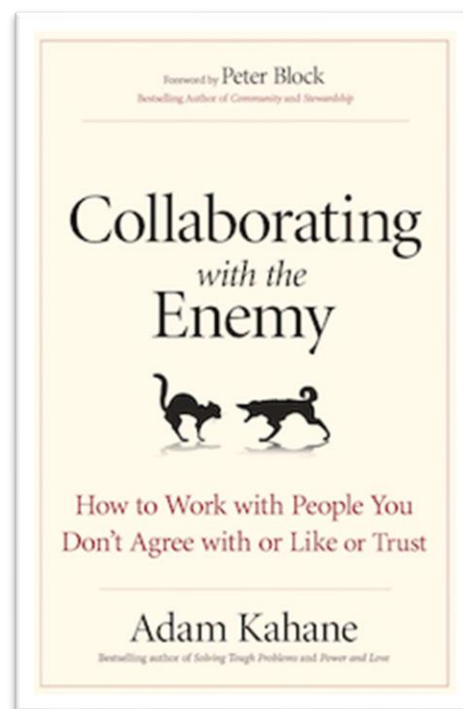
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One thing that has become apparent to Kahane is that he has a preference for collaboration that has sometimes led him into trouble. At times when he should have used a different strategy, he chose to collaborate ineffectually. He suggests we all may have preferences that limit us; the more we can get to know our 'default' approach and learn some alternatives, the greater skill we can bring to complex work.

When working with others we have at least four options available to us. We can collaborate, finding a way to jointly agree on shared interests. We can adapt, submitting ourselves to the preference of someone who is not going to take our interests into account. We can force our point of view on others, taking advantage of the power we have to get our own way. Or we might decide to exit the situation so we no longer have to work together.

While we might prefer to collaborate (or to force, to adapt, or to exit) it would be wise to have all options open, to exercise discernment in working out which strategy is most appropriate and having skills that enable each strategy to be adopted with success. Sometimes one or more options are not available: for instance, many people strongly object to the policies of their country's government but are not in a position to leave (the exit strategy). Even so, knowing what our options are, gives us greater confidence and freedom to act.

Collaborating with the Enemy is a fascinating book, particularly when read as a sequel to *Solving Tough Problems and Power and Love*. These books provide a practical insight into how we can work with people of all sorts, treating them with dignity and respect even when we disagree dramatically with the views they hold.