

CREATIVE LEADERSHIP | PORTFOLIO PROJECT | ANNIKA BERGEN

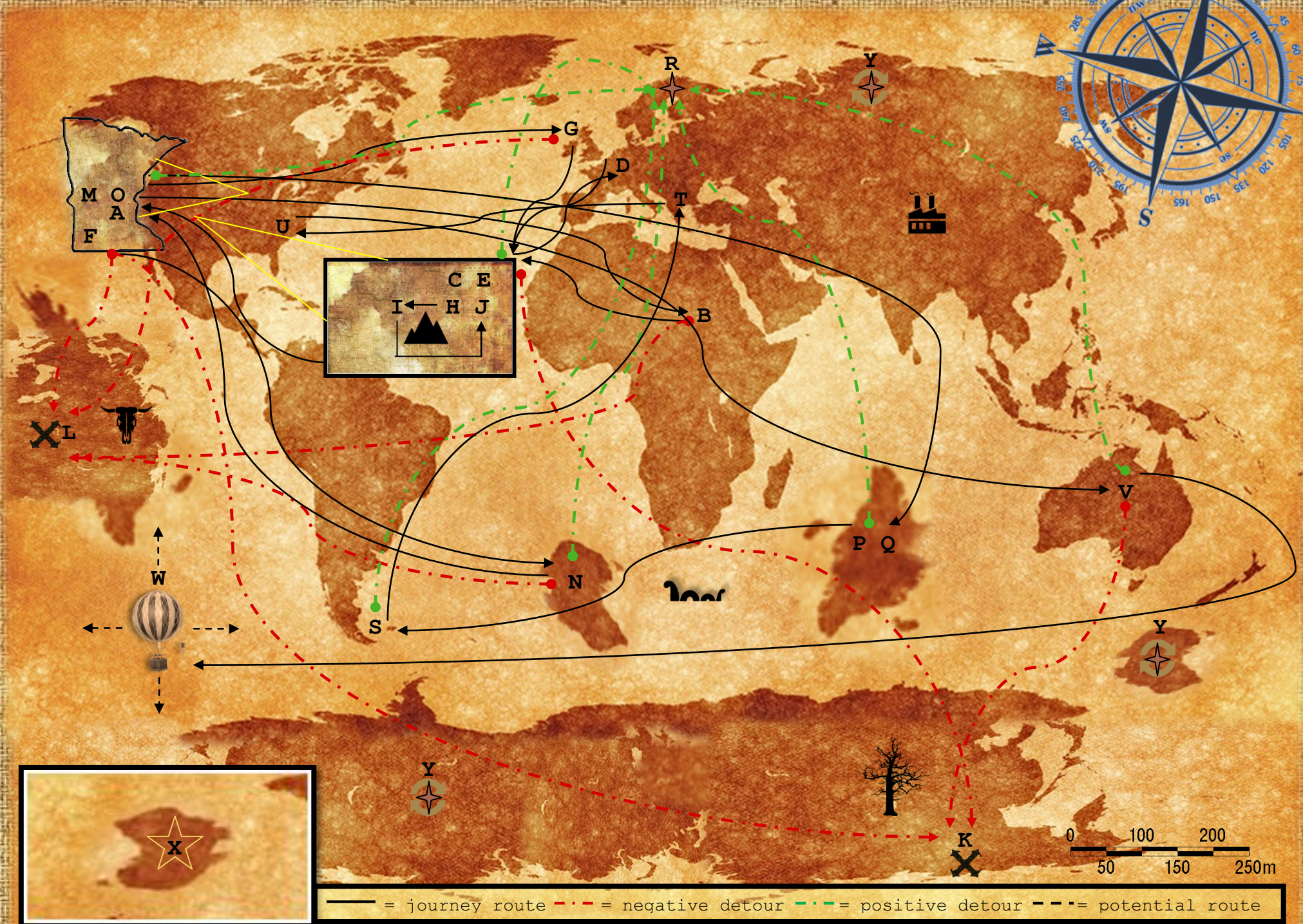
a creative leadership journey

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creative leadership map

there was nowhere to go but everywhere.



— = journey route - - - = negative detour - - - = positive detour - - - = potential route

 = places to avoid
  ,  , or
  = future explorations
  ,  ,  ,  , or  = journey obstacles

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
A	<p>A1.3b - it all starts here.</p> <p>I have been a part of a very traditional corporate setting, which maintains strong admiration for conventional leadership, is slow to innovate, and ultimately has really opened my eyes to what I personally want to strive for as a leader. Starting the MASD program at MCAD has been my first concrete move in this mental shift, and is something I have chosen to do purely because I want to and am excited about it, not because I feel I should do it.</p> <p>This is where it starts, and I am excited (and anxious) to see where this journey leads!</p>
B	<p>A2.3 - 'i'm doing the best i can.'</p> <p>Normally as adults we look for the hard facts before making a decision to act or alter behavior. But so far, hard facts delivered by scientists, by political leaders, even by religious leaders, have proven ineffective in inspiring the necessary magnitude of change. Perhaps we could use more stories like 'I will be a Hummingbird' to get the point across that there is a fire, and it's worth putting individual drops on the fire to trigger a greater response.</p>
C	<p>Horsetooth Rock - Ft. Collins, CO</p> <p>Horsetooth Rock is an important part of my journey because it is representative of my Colorado roots and my true start. I grew up in the foothills, and early and frequent access to the outdoors (hiking, skiing, etc.) set my foundation as an environmentalist.</p>
D	<p>Schönower Park - Berlin, Germany</p> <p>From age six to nine, I lived with my family in Berlin, Germany. There was a forest near our home that I walked through on my way to school. Several of my science courses brought us to this forest as well, and it was here that I started to really understand the connections and synergies between plants, animals, and humans.</p>
E	<p>Mummy Pass - Estes Park, CO</p> <p>Mummy Pass marks an important milestone for me as it was the first hike I did without my family. During a week-long youth trip, we were given the option to do activities down at the camp or hike the pass, requiring us to carry our own packs, food, and water. It was an exciting 'coming of age' experience to know that I was responsible enough to do a trek like this with peers.</p>
F	<p>A3.3 - to learn from nature.</p> <p>Corporations have such a dominant presence in society, and have the potential to really influence positive change if they choose to better account for social and sustainable practices and needs.</p> <p>As I continue on my path of learning to be a creative leader, I look forward to developing a better understanding of how to shift mindsets and structures to embrace business with and in nature.</p>
G	<p>A4.1 - making ideas happen.</p> <p>MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN = (THE IDEA) + ORGANIZATION AND EXECUTION + FORCES OF COMMUNITY + LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY</p> <p>It is often far easier for us to take on the trivial and urgent tasks, then to invest in the important things that are less urgent but require a great deal more thought. I think this statement embodies a feeling that I have all too often - a feeling that I look forward to tackling and limiting in my day-to-day thought process.</p>

H	<p>Foothills Unitarian Church - Fort Collins, CO</p> <p>My family church in Colorado is a Unitarian Universalist church that had a strong influence on many of my values and beliefs for how to be a part of the world. There are seven guiding principles that are integral for how I want to live and lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The inherent worth and dignity of every person; - Justice, equity and compassion in human relations; - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning; - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; - The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
I	<p>Chicago Basin - Needle Mountains, CO</p> <p>I spent a week in Chicago Basin with my family on a backpacking trip where we used the 'leave no trace' approach. On this trip, my dad taught me a lot about being a strong leader and travel companion, while being aware of your surroundings. Whether we encountered bad storms, difficult terrain, wildlife, etc., my dad's core message was: 'nature is unpredictable - you need to respect it.'</p>
J	<p>CSU Oval - Fort Collins, CO</p> <p>In my senior year of high school, I spent a semester volunteering for Obama's campaign in northern Colorado. I was able to see him speak at CSU and shake his hand, which still seems surreal. That day and location is a key milestone in my leadership journey because I greatly admire Obama and found/continue to find inspiration in a lot of the work that he's done during his time in office.</p>
K	<p>'Life Sucks' Mindset - Pit of Despair</p> <p>Throughout our lives it is only natural to hit lows, where we may feel lost or confused, and unsure of how best to pursue our hopes and goals. Understanding that there may be times where I feel defeated or disheartened on my journey as a Creative Leader, I want to aim to avoid traveling to the mindset of [my] life sucks. Within the world of Tribal Leadership, these two mindsets are indicative of being in Stage One (life sucks) and Stage 2 (my life sucks). Together these mindsets are representative of a dark place that is typically not a quick stop, and can steer you down pathways you would otherwise avoid. It is plagued with despairing hostility or apathetic victimization, and often results in visitors feeling alienated and/or disconnected from the rest of the world. In the mindset of 'life sucks' or 'my life sucks,' there is a chance that I might find connections with others that have made a wrong turn and ended up in this place. Yet, these connections will not be founded on trust and mutual support, but rather a shared resentment towards other individuals and our place within this world.</p> <p>In order to avoid traveling to the mindset of life sucks, I plan to maintain a strong personal and professional network of individuals that have chosen to maintain positivity despite the hurt, obstacles, and challenges present in the world. Moving with people that encourage and believe in your potential helps you stay on your planned path and not detour down to the mindset of life sucks. Solo traveling can be a valuable experience, but keeping a team nearby mitigates the risk of slipping to lower stages.</p>

L	<p>'I'm Great' Mindset - Wild, Wild West</p> <p>In the world of Tribal Leadership, there are instances highlighted where there is value in developing and maintaining an 'I'm great' mindset - namely people making groundbreaking discoveries that need to focus on their individual accomplishments in order to succeed in their chosen field. That being said, on my journey towards becoming a Creative Leader, I hope and plan to set a course that circumnavigates this place if possible. I respect and admire the aforementioned individuals that excel in this place during their journey, but am able to recognize that the work that I am currently doing and may do in the future does not require me to adopt this mindset. While Logan says that individuals have to 'own' Stage Three before moving onto the next phase, I feel I can be aware enough of the politics and the games tied to this phase to not need to temporarily reside in this place. My current job is heavily dominated by Stage Three mindsets, and I have experienced information hoarding, leaders taking credit for their team's work, and gossip used to undermine others' authority. The mindset of 'I'm great' is an exhausting place, tainted by everyone striving to work the system better than their peers, leaders, and followers.</p> <p>In order to avoid traveling to the wild, wild west or 'I'm great' mindset, I plan to consistently remember that I am only as great as the team that I am a part of, and recognize that by combining efforts and skill sets we can do so much more. I want to join a team of people that are working to make a difference, and enjoy doing it together and embrace values at our core (not just as meaningless targets). There is so much in the world that we can work to improve, and I don't see value in having an ego and believing I am the lone ranger that can fix it all. I know I can't, and I would love to work with a group of people that can together.</p>
M	<p>A7.3 - my role as a creative leader.</p> <p>At the core of my ethic for being a creative leader, I look to do so much more than manage and control the work and employees around me. I am one component of the team, and while I do provide direction and support as needed, we are successful because of how we collaborate and work together.</p> <p>We are only as great as the sum of our parts, and we look to emphasize and validate this sentiment continuously.</p>
N	<p>A8.3 - 'the peace of wild things.'</p> <p>When despair for the world grows in me... I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief...For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.</p>
O	<p>A10.2 - letter to self.</p> <p>Take this opportunity to reinvent approaches and accept that you may stumble a bit throughout this journey. When you start to feel stuck or trapped by structures or frameworks, shake it off and try something different. There isn't a set way to do everything, so have fun being creative and seeing what comes of it.</p>

P	<p>Running Ridge</p> <p>Running Ridge is representative of the "place" I go when I run, or rather the space my mind goes when I run. Like many others I'm sure, when I am at work, at home, running errands, spending time with friends and family, there is rarely a time when I am focused on a single thing. Compartmentalization has never been my forté, and as a result I feel that I have to juggle multiple things in order to be productive or make the best use of my time. Unsurprisingly this leads to stress and exhaustion, and makes me less productive than if I did a better job of centering.</p> <p>Running Ridge is a unique place because it is the one location where I abandon my typical balancing act. It's a remote yet liberating place, and even when I travel there with others, I am only responsible for myself and what I am doing there. While distractions are still allowed to visit Running Ridge, they maintain their distance and rarely cross my path. When they do, it is often just for a fleeting moment, because in order to remain in Running Ridge I have to keep moving and continue on my journey. There are times at Running Ridge where a distraction is too big or too powerful and upsets the typical separation. In these scenarios I am forced to leave the ridge disappointedly. However, the wonderful thing about Running Ridge is that I know that I can always return to try again, and once more leave behind the anxiety and to-do lists.</p>
Q	<p>A10.3 - log off. shut down. go run.</p> <p>I am by no means at the point where I count down the minutes until I can go on a run, but it has become an important way for me to redirect negative emotions, become rejuvenated, and feel alive!</p>
R	<p>Fearless Fjord</p> <p>Fearless Fjord is representative of the place we go when we have abandoned all fears of the unknown and ambiguity, when we have overcome our feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty, and no longer experience anxiety.</p>
S	<p>A11.4 - deeper than surface level.</p> <p>In this phase of my journey towards creative leadership, I spent time working to understand similarities between myself and my peers in order to form meaningful, triadic relationships. It was challenging, and took a great deal of time and effort, and I knew that there was so much more to discover about each of these individuals.</p>
T	<p>A12.1 - the unexamined life is not worth living.</p> <p>A Socratic inquiry doesn't have the goal of defining a final perspective or gaining complete consensus across the board. Instead, the intent is to explore topics in a meaningful and intentional way that hopefully inspires additional thought and discovery after the group has separated.</p>
U	<p>A13.2 - to whom it may concern.</p> <p>Our Nation faces its greatest challenge yet in working to address climate change, and we will only be able to make a true impact if we work together. Individuals, the private sector, and government must combine efforts to make real and lasting change, and protect the future for generations to come. Thank you, XYZ Consulting, for your continued devotion to making a difference and moving the United States forward in a positive way.</p>

V	<p>A14.3 - unless.</p> <p>'Unless someone like you care a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not.' - Dr. Seuss</p> <p>I think people do "care a whole awful lot," but they just need a little (or some need a big) push to realize that it isn't 'liberal' or an infringement of their rights to protect the natural world and try to reduce our impact.</p>
W	<p>15.3 - oh, the places you'll go!</p> <p>I by no means feel like I have achieved the ultimate goal or earned the badge of honor for becoming a creative leader. After all of our readings that discuss the ongoing transformation and development for being a creative or authentic leader, I truly believe this is something that I will continue to work on and ideally build upon with each new experience and group of people with whom I interact.</p>
X	<p>Creative Leaders Hall of Fame</p> <p>Very few individuals have the opportunity to visit this place, but those who do have undoubtedly earned it.</p>
Y	<p>Sustainable Sanctuary</p> <p>Sustainable Sanctuary isn't a single location, but rather the pockets of true sustainability that exist throughout the world. Ideally as more creative, environmentally-conscious leaders develop and travel to new regions Sustainable Sanctuaries will grow as well. For the time being, however, I would like to visit a few of these havens to learn from other individuals living with zero waste, closed loops, and biomimetic designs.</p>



creative leadership dashboard

CRAP-O-Meter



of times each week unnecessary meetings or paper work are required for followers. Target 0 (Empty)

% of daily workload that is administrative instead of work motivated by joy and interest. Target 0 - 15% (Nonexistent - Reasonable)

Administrative Overload



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% of time individuals need to repeat requests, ideas, recommendations due to poor listening. Target 0% (Attentive)

INATTENTIVE INTERESTED ENGAGED ATTENTIVE



Listening Scale

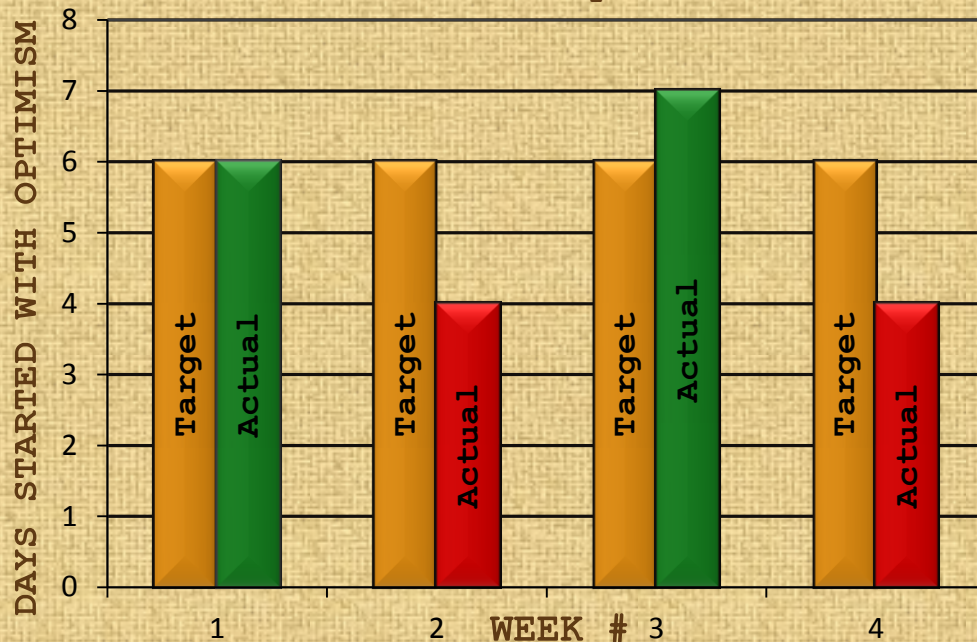
Values Gauge



% of times decisions are made while staying aligned with key values. Target 100% (Resolute)

of days started with an optimistic outlook. Target 6 / week

Measure of Optimism



CREATIVE LEADERSHIP METRICS & EVALUATION

Crap-O-Meter

Throughout many organizations, particularly large agencies and corporations, there are so many people, so many focuses, and so many interdependencies. It can be easy to lose sight of the main purpose and priorities with the daily chaos and "business as usual." In order to communicate across and engage all teams, leadership often turns to meetings and standard processes to maintain some semblance of control and consistency. However, status meetings and department updates quickly get out of control and overtake significant chunks of the day. This "crap" distracts people from the work they need and want to be doing, reducing overall productivity and frustrating individuals. Leaders need to recognize when this excess occurs and actively work to reduce it for their followers/employees.

The Crap-O-Meter measures the amount of "crap" meetings, paper work, and red tape and communicates when the organization is operating in a positive space without "crap" (Empty) and when things are out of control (Full). The target is an empty reading, but there is room for a little "crap" without setting off the meter. The point of concern is when the meter is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to 'Full,' which will begin a quiet bell that gets progressively louder as the meter continues to rise.

I have worked on many teams that haven't been aware of the difficulties that "crap" causes in an organization. While they may have noticed that teams weren't getting as much done, and heard followers complain about the number of meetings every day, they didn't understand their role in resolving it. As a leader, I want to regularly check in with followers to hear their feedback on the best ways to communicate with them and the ways that I can best support them focusing on their responsibilities. As the leader, I will know that I am doing a good job of eliminating "crap" for my followers if they feel positively about how they are using their time and if they share appreciation for simpler processes and quicker/fewer touch bases.

Values Gauge

Dave Logan identifies values as a key differentiator between Stage Three (I'm Great) leaders and Stage Four (Tribal) leaders. Prior to becoming a tribal leader, individuals will view values as their "edge in ethics and time management," instead of a something essential to their being. However, there are cases when someone truly prioritizes values, but is later faced with a dilemma after reaching a position of 'higher' leadership. Most often we see this in political leaders as compromise is a trait that is critical to the work with which they are tasked. In order to form relationships and alliances, leaders have to cooperate and negotiate on common ground. Unfortunately, all too often, compromises are made on values that are fundamental. Supporters begin to question leaders' integrity when these types of occurrences build up, and the trust that took years to build will erode just as quickly.

The Values Gauge is a warning signal intended to measure how often and how much values are compromised in a role. It indicates when values are resolute and remain firm against organizational politics (100%), and stable when there may be negotiations without threatening integrity (75%). The point of concern is when a leader's values are faltering, and they are abandoning at least half (50%) of their personal beliefs. The Values Gauge will light in between 'Faltering' and 'Abandon' to warn the leader that they have entered a dangerous low in how much integrity they maintain in their role.

This metric may be the most important to me personally, as I believe very strongly that if I am unable to make values-based decisions and prioritize ethical and purposeful approaches, then I shouldn't be in a position. Besides the readings on the Values Gauge, I will know that I am staying 'stable' or 'resolute' by follower and peer respect towards me. If they feel they can trust my judgment and advice in difficult situations, I will feel that I stayed true to this part of my personal ethic and core beliefs.

Listening Scale

In a world where multi-tasking has become the accepted, even expected, norm, an unfortunate byproduct is poor listening. All too often, people choose to type another email instead of engaging in a brainstorming session, or make a to-do list instead of fully listening to a friend's bad day. All too often, people operate in with passive or inattentive listening. As a leader, poor listening makes followers feel unappreciated or dismissed. It can also mean that a leader is unaware of what is happening within the organization or company they direct, or they miss an opportunity that could have resulted in positive and transformative change. One person's perspective is far too limited, and it is only through more empathetic and active listening that more ideas and voices are heard and incorporated.

The Listening Scale notes how well a leader is listening based on whether they are multi-tasking or distracted, whether they are engaged and asking follow-up questions, and whether they are attentive and soaking up the information being shared. The green and yellow lights will be one (both or individually) when a leader is attentive and/or engaged. If the listening techniques begin to slip even if there is interest, the orange will turn on. Ideally a leader will not reach this point, but should they become inattentive the red light will shine.

I feel that listening is one of my strengths as a friend, colleague, partner, and leader. As I continue to grow and develop, it is important to me that I maintain this part of my leadership style. I know that it is one of the most valuable ways that I learn and am aware of unique differences and changes around me. I will know that I am staying a good listener if people continue to confide in me and if they ask to share ideas with me. It will also be clear that I am listening to and accounting for outside perspectives based on how well I incorporate them into the team(s) and/or organization(s) I lead.

Administrative Overload

Many admirable individuals who have risen to formal and informal positions of leadership have done so because they possess a clear passion for and commitment to a cause. They relate well to others, inspire those around them, and also have a way of guiding people towards a common goal. When it comes to being a creative leader, it is this combination of personality traits and dedication that cause others to view them as a leader, not how well they operate in the system, complete paperwork, or track project tasks and milestones. Often times though, particularly in formal leadership positions, these individuals are assigned new responsibilities and have additional expectations set for them by the system. Leaders transition from enthusiastic and driven, to exhausted and bogged down by the technicalities and logistics of everyday administrative work. They are pushed farther and farther from the work they love and the inspiration that brought them to their position originally.

The warning signal for Administrative Overload is intended to monitor the amount of organizational work being done and how well it is being managed. It indicates when the level is nonexistent, reasonable, disproportionate, or overloaded. Between reasonable and disproportionate a light will turn on (similar to that of the gas light in a car) as this is the point when the leader is likely unable to balance the joys of their position with the administrative tasks.

Within my work, I tend to do a poor job of seeing when I hit my limit and can no longer happily and healthily juggle the work I agreed to do. I don't want to reach a point of overload in which I not only disappoint myself with a decline in my work, but also let down my peers and followers. In addition to monitoring the signal, I plan to watch how often I take work home and decide what requires immediate attention and what can wait. I also plan to delegate and work as a team when possible to balance and ensure others feel comfortable asking for help as well.

Measure of Optimism

Far too often, there is a tendency to view optimism as a form of naiveté. There is the assumption that once people reach a certain age or experience the difficulty and pain the world has to offer, they should abandon the ideals they held for more realistic understandings. Unfortunately, many leaders face this expectation as they move up in an organization or company. However, it is far too limiting. The truth is that because of the harsh realities of the world, leaders that can hold on to their optimism and foster it within their followers are far more successful. Optimism and hope allow for greater creativity instead of negative acceptance of ineffective systems and frameworks. It encourages the belief that there is always room for improvement and change, regardless of how bleak the outlook may seem going forward.

The Measure of Optimism tracks how many days in the week a leader starts with an optimistic outlook. The target is for six days out of seven in order to allow for one day of disappointment or anger. The tally for each week is marked to show the overall success in a month. For those weeks that a leader is unable to be positive for six days, the Measure of Optimism will color that week in red, and if the leader reaches six or seven, the week is colored in green. For those weeks that a leader falls short of the target, they can step back and reevaluate what may have caused their less positive outlook and try to change.

Optimism is one of the areas I hope to improve upon the most. I have a tendency to set low expectations or assume a situation won't work as well as planned, perhaps in a defensive attempt to avoid disappointment. Unsurprisingly this approach is less than effective, and I don't think it is a worthwhile approach for a leader by any means. I want to monitor this closely through the Measure of Optimism but also work to share this with the people around me. I think it will be mutually beneficial, and if I see others adopting more optimistic outlooks, I can feel I am helping pay forward an important view.

LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #1 - Weekly Client Status

Context:

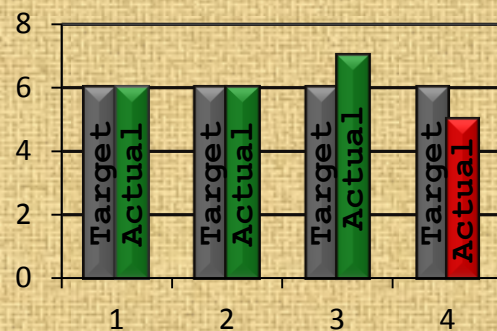
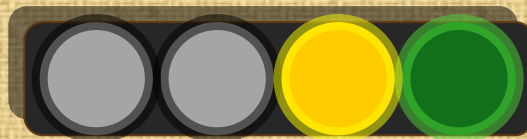
Every week, one of my clients requires that the consulting team pull together a status document to provide her an overview of the work done since Monday. One other consultant and I then present the status to her and answer any of her questions. While only two of us present to the client, all of the consultants are expected to attend.

On my creative leadership dashboard:

- the Crap-O-Meter reading shifts upwards as this status isn't a good use of the full team's time
- the Values Gauge is unchanged by this scenario as providing this information to our client doesn't threaten integrity
- the Listening Scale is shining yellow and green as I am actively listening to my client and presenting; however, it would be orange and red more likely for the other attending consultants
- the Administrative Overload shifts farther right as this type of exercise isn't driven by interest or passion but is an obligation to the client; depending on the week this could shift towards 'overloaded' if there was a lot of other administrative work needed
- the Measure of Optimism is unchanged by this scenario as it is a relatively low-key meeting and wouldn't result in a negative start to the entire day



DASHBOARD



Creative Leader Response:

Observing the changes to the meters on my dashboard, as a creative leader, I would look to discuss with my client if we could repurpose the weekly status. One change would be for the rest of the consultant team to continue working instead of halting their projects to attend. Depending on whether she feels a meeting is necessary, another way to reduce the impact to the Crap-O-Meter and Administrative Overload further is to simply send the status via email. Rather than create a full document and present it, a quick email summary could highlight the accomplishments, roadblocks, and next steps without the additional work and time for the existing process.

LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #2 – Vendor Management

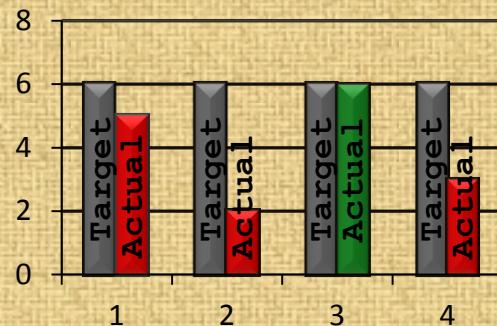
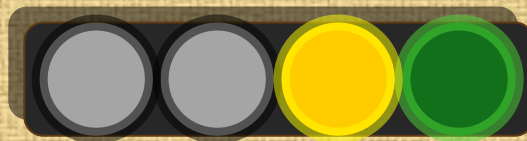
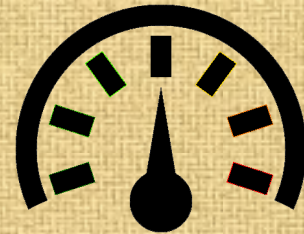
Context:

On one of my current projects I am responsible for handling the contracts and relationships with vendors that we partner with to bring in new data and functionality for our client's applications. When we are in the process of contracting a new vendor, in the final period before signing a single vendor we may be required to have a 'back-up' vendor if the timeline is rushed. During this time, we can't tell either of the vendors that we are engaging with the other for legal reasons; however, after the finalist signs, the other interaction is ended.

On my creative leadership dashboard:

- the Crap-O-Meter is unchanged by this scenario as the meetings and interaction are all vital
- the Values Gauge is shifts farther right as I personally feel uncomfortable by leading one vendor on under the pretense that they will be contracted
- the Listening Scale is shining yellow and green as I am actively listening to my client and engaging with the vendor leadership
- the Administrative Overload shifts farther right as this type of engagement as the paperwork and documentation, while necessary, is excessive
- the Measure of Optimism is changed to a negative start on the days while this back-and-forth occurs

DASHBOARD



Creative Leader Response:

Observing the changes to the meters on my dashboard, it is clear that the situation and interactions established during vendor contracting is uncomfortable. While the change in Administrative Overload isn't ideal, it is part of the process and eliminating that work would likely mean cutting important corners. However, the two meters that would be more concerning to me are the Values Gauge and Measure of Optimism. Rather than dismiss this warning, it would be important for me to speak to my client and express my concern with the lack of transparency in our communication with both vendors. While respecting that we can't share who else may be a part of the equation, I could propose ways in which it is clear that they aren't confirmed as the vendor and are aware there could be changes yet. This would help the situation feel more respectful and considerate of the time and investment of each vendor.

LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #3 - Annual Trainings

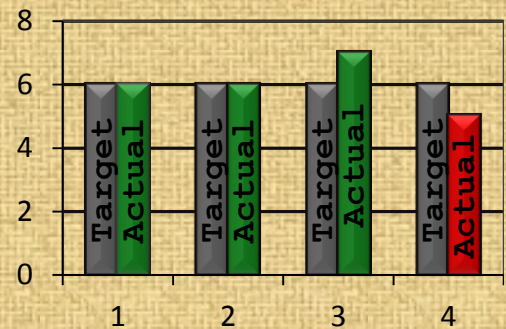
Context:

As part of our consulting practice, there are a series of different trainings that are required annually to ensure employees are aware of regulatory obligations in the industry and also to encourage positive culture within the company. Communication around these trainings is fairly positive and encouraging at the surface level, but a majority of the consultants find them frustrating to do and a waste of time. Unfortunately they are text heavy, standard trainings that provide little context and accessible examples.

On my creative leadership dashboard:

- the Crap-O-Meter reading shifts upwards as the way this information is delivered doesn't engage employees or encourage they invest in the training
- the Values Gauge is shifts right as I should be committed to these trainings given their intent and set an example for other employees
- the Listening Scale is changing between red and orange as I tend to multitask during the trainings even if I am interested in the topic
- the Administrative Overload shifts farther right as trainings are considered a box employees have to check, regardless of the value gained
- the Measure of Optimism is unchanged as the trainings typically don't require a full day investment

DASHBOARD



Creative Leader Response:

Observing the changes to the meters on my dashboard, as a creative leader, I would look to explore different ways of sharing this information and training employees. Trainings, when conducted in an engaging manner, are important ways to develop employees and show a commitment to their learning. A series of online trainings that employees click through quickly before taking a quiz doesn't accomplish this. Given all of the different presentation styles, webinars, whiteboard sketch videos, and game trainings that exist, we should consider upgrading the current techniques to be fun and interesting. Personally, I should also make an effort to stop the working I am doing, fully step back to focus on the trainings I am taking, and lead by example.

creative leadership travel log

it all starts here.



Until the last couple years, I had a subconsciously divided view of leadership and what made someone a leader. The individuals I admired and respected most aligned more with the 'creative' or 'host' leader we are learning about in this course; however, what I defined as leadership trended more towards the 'conventional' or 'heroic' leader. I believed that in order to make a big impact, influence others, and be considered successful, you needed to:

- be extroverted and independent
- be a powerhouse and plow through situations, people, etc. with ease
- have a specific title and be higher in the hierarchy (obviously make more money as a result)
- work nonstop and always have the answer

Upon reflection, I'm not entirely sure why I held this view for so long, but I maintained it throughout college and worked extremely hard to try and establish an academic foundation that would help me get closer to becoming this type of leader. I took my first 'real' job (my current position) for similar reasons, as I was accepted into Optum's Leadership Acceleration Program, and it seemed like the most responsible and prestigious option for a recent grad. I want to make sure that I don't come across as negative about my position as I do feel very grateful for the opportunities I have had through my job, and have met many great people and leaders in the process. However, I have also been a part of a very traditional corporate setting, which maintains strong admiration for conventional leadership, is slow to innovate, and ultimately has really opened my eyes to what I personally want to strive for as a leader. Starting the MASD program at MCAD has been my first concrete move in this mental shift, and is something I have chosen to do purely because I want to and am excited about it, not because I feel I should do it. I now believe that in order to make a big impact, influence others, and be considered successful, you need to:

- be ~~extroverted and independent~~ confident and engaging
- be a ~~powerhouse and plow through situations, people, etc. with ease~~ strong in your values and actively work to create positive change
- ~~have a specific title and be higher in the hierarchy (obviously make more money as a result)~~ be a part of a strong team and work with people who share similar passions and beliefs (feel like you make a difference - obviously it's always nice/necessary to make money in the process)
- ~~work nonstop and always have the answer~~ maintain balance mentally and physically, and always keep learning

At this point, I feel there are some metrics on my dashboard that I have developed further. I currently work with a team of 13 individuals, so the opportunities or need for **collaboration** aren't lacking, and I actively try to be **empathetic** by building connections with each team member to understand their priorities and preferences. However, I would like to continue improving on my **patience, positivity, and transparency** when engaging with individuals personally and professionally. From an **organizational** perspective, I tend to be quite thorough when planning, documenting, and tracking items, and also diligently uphold the **commitments** I make. While I believe these are essential traits for leadership, I think they are enhanced by one's ability to be **flexible** and accept unpredictability, and **resourceful** by working towards others' strengths as well as your own. The latter two metrics are ones that I look forward to learning about more on this journey. Finally, one of the areas I would like to develop the most is my ability to more **holistically understand** and view my role as a human and leader. I tend to be bogged down by the details and processes, without stepping back to see the greater system and the big picture.

This is where it starts, and I am excited (and anxious) to see where this journey leads!

'i'm doing the best i can.'



When children are young, we use stories to entertain as well as teach lessons in a way that is easily understood. Within western culture, as we grow older the stories are substituted out for more 'grown-up' materials. That is not to say lessons aren't still learned, but the simple means of depicting what is 'right' and 'wrong' is muddled by other complexities and opinions. A clear moral is often not included within our news articles, blogs, or mystery novels.

'I will be a hummingbird,' told by Wangari Maathai was a wonderful surprise in the resources for my Creative Leadership course this week. The motif in this story is not unique in its depiction of a single individual working to make a difference, regardless of the seemingly small impact of his/her work and the criticism directed towards him/her. Yet in every form and narrative, this message does not lose its value. When faced with a huge, destructive fire consuming the forest home of countless creatures, the hummingbird immediately begins to try and put out the flames. It is only able to transport one drop of water at a time, but it continues to try and 'do the best that it can.' It would be easy to side with the other animals and say the hummingbird will never be able to stop the fire, but the hope that the hummingbird's message inspires is infectious in my opinion.

On a regular basis, I wonder how the actions I take can make any difference in a world of over 7 billion people. They seem like single droplets of water on a towering forest fire, and I frequently question everything I have worked for and continue to value. But what I think this short story lacked is the next stage in the hummingbird's experience. I believe that while it is accurate that the hummingbird cannot put the fire out alone, the unwavering hope and resolve inspires others to also try once the shock factor runs out. Together all of the animals have the ability to put out the forest fire. The forest will still have considerable damage and it will take years to recover (in fact it will never be exactly the same), but it won't disappear completely.

Normally as adults we look for the hard facts before making a decision to act or alter behavior. But so far, hard facts delivered by scientists, by political leaders, even by religious leaders, have proven ineffective in inspiring the necessary magnitude of change. Perhaps we could use more stories like 'I will be a Hummingbird' to get the point across that there is a fire, and it's worth putting individual drops on the fire to trigger a greater response.

to learn from nature.



During my undergraduate, I majored in environmental studies and economics, working towards the goal to be in corporate sustainability. This remains a strong interest in my professional journey, so this week's theme of Tomorrow's Natural Business and sustainable economies was particularly exciting! Corporations have such a dominant presence in society, and have the potential to really influence positive change if they choose to better account for social and sustainable practices

and needs.

An unfortunate stance by many corporations is their business doesn't impact the environment, or sustainability won't have any value for their services/products. There is a clear knowledge gap when it comes to individual and corporate understanding around the natural world and human activity's ability to harm and destroy it. For this reason, reading multiple articles that outline the importance of transforming businesses and incorporating natural leadership reinforces my interest in supporting this change. As McFetridge and Williamson state, tomorrow's businesses need to thrive with limited resources and sudden shocks if they want to succeed.

One concept I really love in theory, but struggle with and question in practice is spending more time in nature to learn from it and adopt similar techniques/models within businesses. There is so much value in watching systems flourish and drawing from their success- I agree that the only way to do this in nature is obviously being in it. I do try to have walking meetings with clients, and during the summer we can go outside, but having this ingrained more deeply in broader company culture seems rather unattainable. As I continue on my path of learning to be a creative leader, I look forward to developing a better understanding of how to shift mindsets and structures to embrace business with and in nature.

making ideas happen.



MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN = (THE IDEA) + ORGANIZATION AND EXECUTION + FORCES OF COMMUNITY + LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY

When it comes to creative ideation and implementation, I think I operate in two rather conflicting modes based on the mindsets outlined by [John Cleese](#) in his talk on creativity, and the creative personalities described by Scott Belsky in his introduction for *Making Ideas Happen*.

More often than not I fall prey to the 'closed mindset' trap that Cleese notes is the more typical mode that we operate in at work. I find my need for concrete planning, organizing, and (excessively) discussing the details around an idea limit my ability to be spontaneous and playful when approaching problems. In those times, I do have ideas pop up on how to improve a process or engage team members better, but more often than not I tend to shift these ideas aside. Part of my reason for breezing past these thoughts is that I let myself be overwhelmed by the tasks at hand and accept the mentality of 'it will be more work to make people adopt a new methodology than continue to plow through or in spite of inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.' What's more, I think I tend towards the characteristics Belsky aligns to Rita because of this closed mindset, not taking the time to share with a friend or colleague, assuming they will hold a similar frame of mind. It's a vicious cycle in which my choice to not share perpetuates the existing attitude that restricts the space for others to be creative and curious, and so I am less confident in bringing up future ideas, etc. etc. etc.

Alternatively, in the fleeting moments that I do find myself breaking free of these personal restrictions and obstacles, I seem to drift too far in the opposite direction. My 'open mindset,' particularly when I was younger, has few bounds. Growing up, my older sister and I spent entire afternoons playing a game we called 'Imagine,' where we would choose any random topic and come up with ideas for it. Some topics were more straightforward and revolved around planning our futures, while others were more obscure and we would design new planets and creatures. The beauty of this game was that we were limitless in our plans and designs. When I can reach my creative oasis today, glimmers of my old self appear, and my ideas can quickly leave reality behind. I rarely lose my organizational tendencies like Belsky's character, Chad, but my check on what is feasible and practical will slip. When this starts to happen, my closed mindset will immediately kick into gear, locking away the long lists of ideas, plans, designs, and hopes I made, dismissing them for their impracticalities.

In order to better harness all of the components that Belsky identifies as key to making ideas happen, I'd like to start by getting to a place where I can reach an open mindset more easily. I find that I usually complete Cleese's first two steps of creating space where I can be on my own and also making time to work towards an open mindset, but the process usually stops there. I want

to improve my transition to the next step of actually having enough time to be in a creative space. It feels next to impossible for me to turn off the other thoughts and 'to-do's' long enough to enter the next timeframe of maximum pondering. Additionally, I hope throughout this learning process that I can allow more opportunities for limitless thinking, setting judgment and insecurities aside to just be playful and enjoy the creative process. Even more so, I hope to then merge that creativity more purposefully with organizational skills and actionable outcomes.

Cleese notes that it is often far easier for us to take on the trivial and urgent tasks, then to invest in the important things that are less urgent but require a great deal more thought. I think this statement embodies a feeling that I have all too often - a feeling that I look forward to tackling and limiting in my day-to-day thought process.

my role as a creative leader.



Throughout history, across different industries and companies, and based on different personalities, a wide variety of leadership types have been developed. We have all experienced these variances, and noticed what we dislike and what we appreciate in a leader. There isn't a single form of leadership that can be broadly identified as the 'best' version, but I have found that creative leadership is the approach that I admire the most and have striven to use as a result. At the core of my ethic for being a creative leader, I look to do so much more than manage and control the work and employees around me. I am one component of the team, and while I do provide direction and support as needed, we are successful because of how we collaborate and work together.

There are three aspects of my leadership style that set the foundation of our team dynamic. To start, we have put a great deal of effort into establishing a positive and fun workplace culture. Similar to what Zappos.com has encouraged, we want every person to enjoy being a part of our organization. We are very proud of the fact that employees want to stay at our organization, love the work that they are doing and the teams with which they engage, and are not clocking in and out every day. Mimicking the model that Tony Hsieh (Zappos' CEO) implemented, we start employees out with an orientation period where they learn about our organization and are exposed to the atmosphere we have cultivated. At the end of that period, we allow them the opportunity to leave without negative repercussions or concerns if they feel they are not the right fit for our teams. It is invaluable when people love what they do, and this is something I believe sets us apart.

The second element of my creative leadership style is giving equal voice to all employees regardless of their position, experience, or educational background. The greatest ideas do not automatically come from me or other individuals that have reached higher positions in the company. We all benefit from fresh and innovative ideas, and those can unquestionably come from someone with less experience or understanding of our typical approaches. As an organization, we have an open and inviting communication policy. If an intern sees a better approach, or someone in a different department has an idea for a project, we encourage they share it. I want everyone to feel like they have an important role in the company, and all opinions are valued.

The final creative leadership technique I have incorporated within the organization is striving for a greater purpose. This concept is best articulated in Dave Logan's Tribal Leadership when he writes about the Stage Five tribal leadership. While every employee at our organization may not feel this way, we actively work to foster a mentality of 'life is great.' Every day we work towards outcomes that some may believe can't be done, and that is far more important than generating profits or beating out competitors for a bid. Not to say that people and companies haven't experienced success with this

mindset, but such goals feel empty to me. We have a shared purpose or noble cause that we work towards together every day when we come to work, and we recognize each person's role in the process. We feel fortunate to be making a difference in the world and in peoples' lives, and grateful to have team members that make it possible.

What allows this organization to make a difference and gives me the opportunity to be a creative leader is the employee network. We are only as great as the sum of our parts, and we look to emphasize and validate this sentiment continuously.

'the peace of wild things.'



After a busy weekend and a frazzled afternoon, I grabbed my notebook and hurried outside to do my O&R (observation and reflection) session for class. I was feeling quite stressed, and was concerned that I wouldn't find the perfect spot in nature to spend thirty minutes considering nature and thinking about lessons from the semester thus far. I was frustrated that I hadn't had time (made time) to do this earlier in the week, and I walked briskly, not really appreciating my surroundings, but actively searching as though I was on a scavenger hunt. I found a couple spots, but soon after getting situated, a group of runners would pass by or I would hear the roar of a nearby motor. Irritated, I would get back up and continue my search with rising levels of exasperation.

There is a small lake by my house that I run around sometimes, and I headed this direction almost on auto-pilot. It's by no means isolated completely from the noise of busy urban living, but there is older tree growth that creates a reasonable visual barrier. I headed down a hill that leads to a slightly more secluded spot, and I started to slow down and take several deep breaths. Finding a spot to sit, I began the first stage of the O&R session - closing my eyes and pushing away thoughts as best I could. In order to avoid my usual racing thoughts, I found myself taking similar approaches to what I do in yoga and tried to just 'be.' It's a space where I focus on not focusing on anything, and feel as though I'm drawing myself inward and downward. It sounds ridiculous even as I'm writing it, but it is an approach that has proven successful when I try to still my mind and is unquestionably more effective outside. Not a big surprise for other nature lovers, I'm sure.

After a little time, a feeling of calm sets in - and as I moved to the second phase of O&R, opening my eyes and taking in the trees, lake, wind... wonder soon followed. This emotional response and disbelief with the natural world is something that never ceases to amaze and surprise me. I love living in cities because everything is closer and more accessible, but any time I distance myself from it, I am able to escape most of the stress and anxiety that often builds throughout the week. It's a grounding feeling, and, while it sounds a bit cliché, often the best way for me to reprioritize and reconnect with the things that matter the most to me. Today was no different, and as I considered how this relates back to what I have learned in the past couple months of Creative Leadership, one word came up: faith. Not in the religious sense, but faith in processes, faith in nature, and cautious faith in humanity. In nature we see countless examples of cycles and regrowth, processes that restore and heal areas, plants, and creatures. While we have had disastrous impacts on the natural world, I continue to hope and believe that the cycles that exist will continue to adapt and repair. Creative Leadership has strengthened the faith I feel for humanity as well. Being in a class where other people are taking the time to pursue an MA in sustainable design (on top of jobs, families, friends, travel, and more) is inspiring. We read books and watch videos of other people

around the world rethinking methods of leadership, sharing how we can improve to account for more people and systems, support greater innovation and diversity, and allow for more balance overall. I find myself believing that we (not just our class, but people in general) are finally on the right track to make drastic and important changes. Maybe not in the next 5 or 10 years, maybe not in my lifetime, but as these concepts and ideals continue to spread, I think we'll come to a better understanding of how humans are just one small piece of the larger equation. One piece that needs to reduce its impact and learn to better integrate and coexist with the rest of the world. One of my favorite poems is by Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things," and it was top of mind as I completed my O&R session and headed back home.

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

letter to self.

There is little doubt as to why we have the phrase "you are your own worst critic." Without some distance from our thoughts or work, we see every flaw, every incomplete notion, and we quickly use everyone else as the preferred standard. For that reason, it is invaluable to take a step back and attempt to consider yourself from an outsider's perspective. You may be surprised at what you see.

For this blog I am writing myself a letter as an outsider, exploring my journey thus far in this course and in becoming an authentic leader.



Dear Annika,

In reviewing your work, it is clear that the topics being covered in this course are sparking a lot of deep thought and questions for you. Assignments you completed at the start of the course are a little more cautious and don't share as many of your own opinions, but you are showing progress each week in thinking more critically and exploring topics with a more personal lens. Being relatively early in your career, it seems that you are still trying to wrap your head around the type of leader you want to be and how best to accomplish it. Even so, your responses show an appetite for the concepts that align with being a creative leader, and moving away from more traditionally accepted ideals.

Some of the themes I see reoccurring in your work center on the value of balance and community when leading others and also promoting sustainability. While you still struggle with how to incorporate these three elements personally, you demonstrate an understanding of why they are important and how they create a positive impact. Teams that operate with equal consideration of each member's ideas have the greatest potential, and a leader that offers guidance without the need to control creates the space for everyone to succeed together. You continue to consider and add more tangible means or steps towards advancing these areas in your writing, which will help you with your own development moving forward. Theory is important, but until you are able to adopt it into practice, it holds less traction in your work. Keep looking for opportunities to become more balanced personally and professionally, and cultivate relationships with individuals and groups that share your interests.

When you are feeling motivated and excited by a topic or new discovery, the hope you communicate is a unique quality. It has the potential to set you apart as an emerging leader, as hope or faith are less common in conventional leadership models. Hope allows you to believe in progress and change, both of which are essential for encouraging followers to grow and also for supporting the environmental movement today. Other people will question optimism in light of the challenges present in our society (in fact you have expressed doubts yourself), but use that as an opportunity to revisit the things that ground you and share them with others.

The advice I would like to offer you at this stage of your experience is to be open and willing to take some risks. Unlearn some of the concepts and processes you have spent the past twenty-four years trying to perfect. Take this opportunity to reinvent approaches and accept that you may stumble a bit throughout this journey. When you start to feel stuck or trapped by structures or frameworks, shake it off and try something different. There isn't a set way to do everything, so have fun being creative and seeing what comes of it.

All the best!

log off. shut down. go run.



I grew up in a very active family, and have many fun memories of cheering both of my parents on at races over the years. While I participated in other physical and outdoor activities with my family, I never quite got on board with running. I joined the track team at school for a few years, did an odd race here and there, but it just felt like a lot of work. Every couple of years I would try again, but each time I would *maybe* last for one or two 30 minute outings before giving up. I was told many times that I just needed to power through the side aches, embrace the sweat, and enjoy doing something that was good for me. It just didn't happen for me.

A little over two years ago, my sister (also a running drop-out) and I decided we were going to try *again*. We both spent our entire days at work inside, and my job in particular kept me strapped to my desk and computer. We were feeling like we were slowly wasting away, and were ready to make a change. For several months we slowly trudged around nearby neighborhoods, tracking our progress in one of the hundreds of running apps. To be perfectly honest, we hated every second of it and we were making very little improvement. On a whim we decided to sign up for the Thanksgiving Turkey Trot 10k (~6 months in advance) and made it our goal to work up to that distance.

It's difficult to say when we finally started to hit a stride, but somewhere along the way something did click. Running didn't randomly become easy (it's still hard...), but we started noticing that we were making it farther, stopping less, and actually felt energized by it. I hated to admit it, but what I had been told by family and friends for so long was true, and I noticed that I felt better physically, mentally, and emotionally after running. Running took so much effort that I had to focus on it, which helped (forced? ☺) me to set aside other stressors in my life. It opened up a new and consistent way for me to get outside, something that is always positive for me. I am by no means at the point where I count down the minutes until I can go on a run, but it has become an important way for me to redirect negative emotions, become rejuvenated, and feel alive!

to be fearless.



Fearless Fjord is representative of the place we go when we have abandoned all fears of the unknown and ambiguity, when we have overcome our feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty, and no longer experience anxiety. There is beauty in this space as fear so often prevents us from taking risks or chances in the pursuit of our next great adventure. There is also a great danger if someone reaches the very bottom of the fjord, because fear also supports our instinctual responses of fight or flight (literally and metaphorically) when we need it. For this reason, Fearless Fjord is typically a quick stop along the way as we journey towards a final destination, giving us the confidence to leave a negative work environment in favor of another job, or share a design that is a little far-fetched. We will typically only stand on the edge or take a short swim, and then carry on to the next place before we have slipped too far into the fjord. Fearless Fjord is never that far away, it just takes a little extra navigation and sometimes outside motivation from family and friends to find.

As I continue on my journey towards becoming a creative leader, I look forward to visiting Fearless Fjord. Whether the visit is the result of a split-second decision and I really need inspiration and support, or just the desire for a new adventure and exploration, I anticipate a spectacular experience. Like any aspect of nature, Fearless Fjord has treacherous elements to it, but you simply need to treat it with respect. Don't visit with greedy ambition to immediately abandon all fears, and don't shy away from showing confidence and interest. I plan to learn from the experience that presents itself, and incorporate the wisdom I gain into my own leadership style.

deeper than surface level.



I would wager that most individuals who consider themselves [classic] leaders would tell you that they understand their employees and/or followers. They understand the needs of their employees, which is why they offer salaries and sick leave, and they understand the motivations of their employees, which is why they offer bonuses and promotions. Sound familiar? However, what continues to become increasingly evident is this is just the peak of the iceberg or a surface level understanding. Applying it to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, [classic] leaders appear to understand the first two hierarchies decently well, but it stops there.

Salaries and bonuses allow individuals to satisfy their physical needs as they can buy food and water, and their security needs as they can pay for rent/mortgages and medical services. One might argue that promotions support the fourth level of 'esteem,' but if a leader fails to recognize the third tier - emotional needs - he/she isn't engaging at the correct level. Skipping the hierarchical flow detailed in this model, ignores the psychological processes it represents entirely.

In this phase of my journey towards creative leadership, I spent time working to understand similarities between myself and my peers in order to form meaningful, triadic relationships. It was challenging, and took a great deal of time and effort, and I knew that there was so much more to discover about each of these individuals. That reinforced the opinion noted above and something most of us personally experience on a regular basis - most [classic] leaders don't really understand their followers at all because doing so is not considered a priority. They typically don't take the time to look for common ground or learn specific interests for each person they are supposed to support and guide. Strategy and bottom lines take precedence.

"The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us" supports this fact as well, noting that as a society our default is to offer financial incentives even though research shows they result in declined outcomes. Yet financial incentives have been the norm for so long, and since 'money makes the world go round,' it has to be the only thing that makes people work, right? RIGHT? Wrong. The motivators that show the greatest results are autonomy, mastery, and purpose. This can mean different things for different people - the work that is meaningful to me is likely different from the work that gives you a sense of purpose. Until leaders take the time to understand those differences, engage directly with their followers, foster a network of relationships between themselves and others, and establish trust, we will remain stuck in a broken system. In the end, we need to 'treat people like people,' valuing more than their productivity and encouraging them with more than money. It will not only benefit followers, but the leaders and organizations they support.

the unexamined life is not worth living.



Every day we learn new skills, engage in a variety of conversations, and pursue greater understanding of the world. This naturally occurs as we move through our routines and interact with other people, and often once we have left formal education settings, there isn't a lot of structure to this experience. Socratic seminars are one way to introduce a more defined and deliberate approach for bringing people together to interact and dialogue about a specific topic or set of topics. It is a very collaborative process in which a group of people begin by brainstorming questions that they would like to discuss, and selecting one or many to consider. There is a main facilitator in most cases that helps direct the conversation in a 'Socratic way,' which can be beneficial if there are participants that are less familiar with the process of a Socratic inquiry. As questions are asked and discussions take place, the group actively and openly listens to each voice and opinion that is shared. A Socratic inquiry doesn't have the goal of defining a final perspective or gaining complete consensus across the board. Instead, the intent is to explore topics in a meaningful and intentional way that hopefully inspires additional thought and discovery after the group has separated.

This weekend, I held my own Socratic inquiry with a thoughtful group of friends at small, local brewery in Minneapolis. We had the fortune of being outdoors on the patio and a beautiful afternoon that allowed for a relaxed and extended interaction. I wanted each person to feel equally involved in contributing to the discussions, so we started by each taking time to think about two topics/questions that we feel are meaningful or feel we personally struggle with understanding. All of these questions were written down on slips of paper and piled together. Despite staying at the brewery for a little over two hours, we didn't end up getting through all the topics as we ended up building off of the first three during our inquiry. Topics were all quite different and varied in their specificity, but we found that each could be tweaked slightly to articulate a higher-level philosophical question -

1. What is the broader impact of majority demographics' representations in film and social media?
(This question stemmed from one team member sharing her experience being blocked by Steven Moffat on social media after expressing her opinions about representation of women in shows he for which he has written.)
2. How do we use external signifiers to promote self expressions?
(This question was originally around clothing and how our choice of dress impacts how others view us.)
3. Who enforces broader societal rules and what is the motivation behind enforcing them?
(This question started with a more specific focus on the hot-button topic of law enforcement and positions of authority in our communities).

Findings

- As the facilitator, I think my greatest challenge was trying to maintain a neutral stance on topics that I feel very strongly about. In situations where I did find myself feeling more fired up, it was actually quite helpful to remind myself of my "responsibility" as a facilitator and try

to think of another question to consider a different point or perspective. Doing so was almost like a reset for me, and was also beneficial when I could sense the group was settling into agreement or was feeling tense (usually this would only happen between two people and not the full group).

- Going into the inquiry, I did try to set the tone that this was not intended to be a debate of any sorts, but there were several occasions where the conversation steered in that direction. This didn't surprise me as the group of people that were able to attend my inquiry is close and comfortable with contradicting each other. My assumption is that had I merged two different groups or facilitated with people that were newly acquainted the interaction would have adhered more closely to the structure of a classic Socratic seminar. That being said, I also wondered if that would result in people feeling less comfortable sharing openly than if I had a group that I knew were well-acquainted.
- At the end of the inquiry I asked that each person share how they felt the discussions went and if it went how they expected or took them by surprise. A couple people said they were less appreciative of the structure and design of a Socratic inquiry and preferred "regular" discussions because this felt rather limiting. Another opinion that one friend felt very strongly about was that she didn't like not having a distinct conclusion after each topic. She said it almost made her feel "uneasy" or "unsettled" to have a(n) open question(s) instead of everyone coming to one or a couple final opinions. Overall, everyone said they would be open to another Socratic inquiry, but that it might need to be a little less formal and perhaps just discuss one question with other "regular" conversations bookending the session.

to whom in may concern.

This week in my course we were given an assignment in 'Creative Visualization.' Using the description below, we considered the scenario for 30 minutes before capturing what we imagined. In my 'dream' scenario, Obama is still president (third term!), and the organization I am a part of (XYZ Consulting) and the team I creatively lead receive this recognition. Have to dream big, right? 😊

The Scenario:

It is 3 years from today and it's almost dawn. You hear the birds singing, and it makes you smile. You are thinking about how much has happened since you completed your course in Creative Leadership. You are particularly pleased because you know that everything has happened because of your unique and devoted creative leadership efforts. You're excited because an announcement you've been awaiting is coming today. Even before you make coffee, you run to your laptop, open your email, and there it is - the announcement you've been anticipating. What does it say?



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

It is with great pleasure that I partner with the Environmental Protection Agency in awarding XYZ Consulting the Organizational Leadership Award category for the Climate Leadership Award program. The Climate Leadership Awards is a national awards program that recognizes exemplary corporate, organizational, and individual efforts in sustainability. It honors and highlights leadership in addressing climate change by reducing carbon pollution and implementing adaptation planning initiatives.

XYZ Consulting actively measures and reduces its internal environmental impact with an office built to LEED Platinum standards and operating solely through renewable energy. Employees also have access to bike fleet for personal and work-related commutes, and weekly summer and fall CSA shares from the farm hosted on the building's rooftop. XYZ Consulting also diverts 99% of its employee waste from landfills by removing trash cans in personal workspaces and public spaces, and only offering recycling and composting options.

The efforts shown by this team go far beyond internal efforts through its business consulting. XYZ Consulting works with companies across a variety of industries to promote innovation and efficiency in order to drive sustainable, profitable outcomes. The results they have generated are unparalleled as they have worked within small businesses and corporations alike. It is through the efforts of organizations like XYZ Consulting that we are able to more confidently affirm the United States' progress towards meeting the targets and adhering to the agreements of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Our Nation faces its greatest challenge yet in working to address climate change, and we will only be able to make a true impact if we work together. Individuals, the private sector, and government must combine efforts to make real and lasting change, and protect the future for generations to come. Thank you, XYZ Consulting, for your continued devotion to making a difference and moving the United States forward in a positive way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barack Obama'.

unless.



**'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not.'**

- Dr. Seuss

Yesterday afternoon we hosted a Dr. Seuss-themed baby shower for two of our friends, which was an exciting and joyful occasion. However, as I sit outside this evening following my O&R (observation and reflection) session, two thoughts have been heavy on my mind.

I'll start with the one I find most challenging... it is no secret that the world's population and current means of existence are more than the earth and its resources can sustain. We are working to improve technology, mimic nature, and reduce our impact, ideally reversing some of the harms that have already been done. We recognize that approximately 200,000 new babies are born each day, adding to the existing 7.4 billion people. What is rarely discussed though is whether environmental conservation should actively be taken into consideration when deciding how many babies to have or choosing to reproduce at all. In one of my undergrad courses we briefly touched on the idea of reducing families to replacement size (two children for two parents, one child for single parents), but is that enough?

Unquestionably it is a difficult topic to consider as it is a far more emotionally charged discussion than replacing the use of nonrenewable resources with solar or wind power. On the couple of occasions that I have cautiously asked the question, it is usually quickly dismissed because not having children is a hard concept for many people to face. I think that as we continue to progress in moving towards more sustainable business, food production, and manufacturing, we also need to have conversations around personal changes, like family planning. As creative leaders, how can we approach topics like this in a meaningful way when they are private and meaningful decisions for people?

On a slightly different note, during the baby shower we had 'The Lorax' movie playing in the background. Believe it or not, *The Lorax* was published in 1971! I found this surprising when I looked it up yesterday. So often mainstream conversations address the environmental movement as though it is a recent thing; however, it is an important (albeit disappointing) reminder that people have been aware of environmental harms and degradation for quite some time. One of the things that drew me to this program was my desire to learn ways to better share and communicate with different people, organizations, and businesses about climate change and environmentalism. Even today there is clearly a gap in how we talk about these issues, and that unfortunately helps fuel the resistance that is still actively present. *The Lorax* is written in a way that is very accessible, and despite being an older book, it is just as relevant today as it was in 1971. As this course highlights, we need to recognize how each person operates and processes a little differently, and our ability to be flexible is important when working to catalyze change. Whether we share more scientific research or publish children's books, we need to continue to raise awareness in a variety of ways to support the greatest dispersal.

What surprises me most when talking to individuals that don't believe in climate change or at least don't believe in its severity, rarely do they say something like "I don't like nature and want to destroy all of it!" There's an

unnecessary stigma that has been assigned to the sustainability movement, even though most of the population would likely agree they enjoy and appreciate being outdoors. Honestly, I think people do "care a whole awful lot," but they just need a little (or some need a big) push to realize that it isn't 'liberal' or an infringement of their rights to protect the natural world and try to reduce our impact.

oh, the places you'll go!



On several occasions in my life when a major change occurred (both positive and negative), I have been given the Dr. Seuss book *Oh, the Place You'll Go!*. I actually have three different copies as a result, and while the story never changes, the situations have been so different that each of the three books holds an entirely different meaning. This story has been influential for me as I enter new stages of my life, take risks, move to new places, start a new job, etc. Unsurprisingly, as we wrap up our Creative Leadership class and reflect on where we have come and where our journeys may lead, the lines of this children's book are top of mind once again.

I by no means feel like I have achieved the ultimate goal or earned the badge of honor for becoming a creative leader. After all of our readings that discuss the ongoing transformation and development for being a creative or authentic leader, I truly believe this is something that I will continue to work on and ideally build upon with each new experience and group of people with whom I interact. Way off in the distance I can spot the 'Creative Leaders Hall of Fame,' but for now I feel like I have reached a new crossroads. I am at the point in *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, where it reads:

*On and on you will hike,
And I know you'll hike far
and face up to your problems
whatever they are.*

*You'll get mixed up, of course,
as you already know.
You'll get mixed up
with many strange birds as you go.
So be sure when you step.
Step with care and great tact
and remember that Life's
a Great Balancing Act.
Just never forget to be dexterous and deft.
And never mix up your right foot with your left.*

*And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed!
(98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)*

KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

*So...
be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray
or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea,
You're off the Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting.
So...get on your way!*

creative leaders hall of fame



Very few individuals have the opportunity to visit the Creative Leaders Hall of Fame, but those who do have undoubtedly earned it. The Creative Leaders Hall of Fame can only be reached when someone has not only successfully maintained a Stage 5 Tribal Leadership life style, but also managed to go beyond that in terms of the ways they engage others, guide follower and peer journeys, and make a positive impact on the world. It is a place that we can all strive to see one day, and in doing so, continue to improve our own leadership

abilities and make a difference in some way or another.

At this point in my creative leadership journey, I don't even have a specific plan on how, when, or if I will have the chance to visit this location. As I keep moving forward and meeting new challenges, I find it comforting to see the star on my map that marks this special space. It reminds me of important creative leaders like Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama, Desmond Tutu, Richard Brandson, and Madeline Albright. It also helps me remember the techniques and tools I have learned on my own journey that help me be a creative leader - maintain an open mindset, be authentic, know yourself, have a party every day, dare to improvise!

During the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it is easy to get sucked into the stress and revert to old habits of traditional (classical) leadership. When that happens, I plan to pause and consider the Creative Leaders Hall of Fame. It is rarely an easy task to try and inspire change, but we have to continue to try and strive to make an impact!

A circular wooden plaque with a natural wood grain finish is centered on a light-colored, textured fabric background. The plaque features a small, stylized tree silhouette at the top center. Below the tree, the text "AND SO... THE" is written in a simple, uppercase sans-serif font. Underneath this, the word "Adventure" is written in a large, elegant, cursive script. Finally, the word "BEGINS" is written in a simple, uppercase sans-serif font at the bottom. The entire text is arranged in a slightly curved path following the shape of the plaque.

AND SO... THE
Adventure
BEGINS