Managers Forum: A Reflection on Leadership and Leading Innovation through Organizational Transitions
Webinar 12 September 2018– Post-Event Action/Discussion

Experiencing Leadership Change - Transitions can occur by helping an organization change, or through a personal transition from one organization to another.

- Living a Transition
  - Address ownership- Members of an organization often work hard and make sacrifices to improve their community. It is important to recognize their role and be respectful of their input through the transition process.
  - “New Eyes”: A new perspective can be beneficial and unlock ideas for change.
  - Recognize the new start line: Transitions will reset the baseline, allowing latitude for creativity.
  - Change can bring about a renewed sense of purpose- tap into that urgency!

- Leading a Transition
  - Recognize fear and mourning: The team may feel that their shared experience of past accomplishments is lost.
  - Acknowledge past efforts: The work of the past supports work of the future.
  - Build common language: Get familiar with the culture of the organization; meet people where they are rather than trying to force things.
  - Align capacity: Ensure that the organization’s objectives align with their abilities to do achieve them, and that proposed changes are consistent with these objectives and capabilities.

Change Drivers and Constraints - Requires particular strategy and skills

- Organizational Culture: Can be a driver or a constraint
  - Managers have a high degree of influence
  - Polarity Management: Approach change in ways that encourage sustainable behaviors
  - Larger organizations: Not everyone knows everyone
    - Manager’s actions are often public and can be seen as symbolic
  - Smaller Organizations: Everyone knows everyone
    - Social capital is more personal and actions can be seen as personality

- Perceived Barriers: Gray areas of leadership
  - External and internal political climate
    - Internal: Many local government officials are averse to change. Leaders need to reassure their teams that the change will be okay.
    - External: Determine how Council feels about the transition. Ensure that mandated changes demonstrate responsiveness
  - A great deal of finesse is required when leveraging the feelings of disruption that comes with change. Direct those feelings toward improvements.
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- **Real Barriers:** Provide a framework for designing change
  - Organized Labor, financial constraints
    - Help organizations adapt to growth with the resources it has.
- **Home Rule/Dillon Rule:** Rules can impact a city’s ability to innovate
  - Home Rule: Gives states more free range when making legislative decisions not already addressed by the state
  - Dillon Rue: Provides local governments a framework to act on only what the state allows

Next Steps

- Transitions in professions can be hard on a person’s work/life balance
- Moving to a new city can be difficult logistically, but the challenges are similar whether you move 50 miles or 5,000 miles.
- If you have a family, it is important to make considerations for them when moving. However, moving can also help children gain knowledge about how different places work and build resilience to change.

**Discussion Ideas**

Listed below are some discussion topics and/or questions that you can use to initiate conversation with team members or stakeholders if you want to explore this idea further in your organization.

*For an aspiring manager would you pursue a workplace with values that match you, or a CAO that challenges you?*

A combination of both is ideal, because value plays out in many ways. Work with people you can respect, and people that work in the same way that you do. At the same time it is beneficial to have peers that challenge the way you work. They make you see the world in different ways.

*How do you assess the values and work behaviors of an organization if you only meet someone once for an interview?*

Public professional management is a very connected community. Talk with your peer group and reach out to your network with questions about an organization’s reputation.

*How do you scale the pace of change in a way that does not cause the organization to become misaligned?*

That is potentially not knowable. Leaders generally have a clear sense of where outer limits are at, and what playing it safe looks like. It is informative for managers to debate amongst selves the risk of a change, but be willing to push the envelope. Accept that sometimes you may put too much on the fire and have to scale back efforts. Work to support change and bring it to a successful end. Recognize the opportunities you might have if you push a little harder. You don’t want to miss an opportunity because you did not
recognize it. Remember that people in the organization want to be part of success. If they feel change is imposed, they may respond negatively. So work on 'selling the change'- if people are involved in the process the ultimate effort will be a lot more successful. Do not try to prescribe a previous solution on their challenges, never begin by saying, “This is how we did it there.” Maintain an open mind and make sure things are not so clear cut so that team feels like they have room to influence.