**TRAVEL LOG A1.3**  
**Growth Mindset**  
Looking at how a fixed mindset limits the possibilities and defines failure as a lack of ability.

**TRAVEL LOG A2.3**  
**Internal Compass**  
Finding your internal compass and knowing your values are essential as a creative leader.

**TRAVEL LOG A3.3**  
**Nature Inspired**  
Nature provides models for leadership that are diverse and meet various needs.

**TRAVEL LOG A4.1**  
**Ideas Into Action**  
Finding balance between idea generation and idea execution is critical with a bias toward action.

**TRAVEL LOG A7.3**  
**Ideal Creative Leader**  
Establish shared values, rely on those values for shared leadership, and build strong networks.

**TRAVEL LOG A8.3**  
**Mid-Journey Reflection**  
Build systems to sustain networking, idea execution and build up others who share values.

**TRAVEL LOG A10.2**  
**Letter From Home**  
Make small steps forward on your ideas and embrace others along the way to share it with.

**TRAVEL LOG A11.4**  
**Three’s Company**  
Creating triads create connections, grow my network, and add value to others.

**TRAVEL LOG A12.1**  
**A Socratic Discussion**  
Asking the right questions can reveal insight.

**TRAVEL LOG A13.2**  
**Creative Visualization**  
Looking forward can reveal much about where you are right now.

**TRAVEL LOG A14.3**  
**Reflecting in Nature**  
Insight comes in the form of understanding how you affect those around you.

**TRAVEL LOG A15.2**  
**Connected Journey**  
A creative leader sees interconnected systems and can use leverage points to be effective.

**TRAVEL LOG A6.1**  
**Island of Isolation**  
Insight comes in the form of understanding how you affect those around you.

**TRAVEL LOG A6.1**  
**Straight of Minimization**  
A creative leader sees interconnected systems and can use leverage points to be effective.
**Future Destinations**

**Island of Focus**  
Dec. 15, 2017  
Being re-invigorated by regular connection with nature is essential to stay sharp and focused.

**Plateau of Purpose**  
Dec. 15, 2017  
Defining values is easier said than done, but having that compass helps define purpose.

**Future Ideal Location**

**Cove of Confident Leadership**  
TRAVEL LOG A7.3  
This is a place that combines a values-based leadership style with skills and knowledge about networking and idea management to be effective in leading teams in sometimes unconventional leadership roles.

**Points of Interest**

**POINT OF INTEREST - EARLY**

**Island of Gained Knowledge**  
The beginning  
Sometimes the hardest steps are the first ones on a long journey.

**Mount Perspective**  
Gaining knowledge helps to show things that are far off and create new opportunities.

**Sea of Warped Perspectives**  
Sometimes looking at places you would like to go from a far distance can warp things about them. Maybe how much work it will take to get there or if it is someplace you would like to be at all.

**POINT OF INTEREST - LATE**

**Purpose Island**  
Being confident in defined values and pursuing purpose are at the heart of Purpose Island.

**Point of Interest - Middle**

**Point of Interest - Early**

**Point of Interest - Late**
Know what you value and measure it in order to evaluate, assess, and monitor myself as a Creative Leader.

DASHBOARD AT A GLANCE

1. “WE” VERSUS “I” LANGUAGE

2. GROW NETWORK

3. ENCOURAGE (COUNTER)

4. PUT DREAMS INTO ACTION

5. PUT IT OUT THERE (COUNTER)
1. “WE” VERSUS “I” LANGUAGE ALERT

**Meter Type:** Bubble Level

**Unit:** Balanced, unbalanced bias toward “I,” and unbalanced bias toward “We.”

**Scale:** Three states that indicate balanced or unbalanced

**Description:** Record “We” and “I” response data and compare which side they fall. “We” versus “I” to indicate stage 1-3 (typical “I” language represented) and 4-5 (typical “We” language represented) respectively. I would use Trello as a tool to capture this data. I use it for meeting follow up and back burner items anyway. Adding the response data would be relatively easy.

**How To Use:** This metric is a language test metric that can regularly be employed when having team conversations. The test would happen at a meeting with regular occurrence. It would be easy to use for a performance review or a monthly staff meeting.

Self-monitoring would be used for personal reflection. To take this a step further, I might ask questions of the group to get tribe feeling for how others are functioning. The question might be “How are things going?” or “What are the biggest challenges for you right now?”

The language choices used by me and others should provide a general gauge about which stage everyone is operating within.

Stages 1-5: “Life sucks” to “My life sucks” to “I’m great” to “We’re great” to “Life is great.”

I would record the information in a list when in Trello when working on the meeting notes and it could be compiled with other responses at a later time to show more significant trends and work that might need to happen to boost the tribe toward the upper stages.
2. GROW NETWORK

**Meter Type:** A zero to two gauge, plus graph to show data over time

**Unit:** A single one-on-one network connection (ideally through a weak link)

**Scale:** Zero through actual number of connections

**Description:** One of the things that I realized by reading this section of Scott Belsky’s “Making Ideas Happen” is that having a network to draw upon is key to making ideas happen. I’ve had various leadership academics talk about the regular practice of one-on-one interviews to grow connections and their network. It was mentioned in a different context, but this seems to be mostly the same concept, but focused on creativity and making ideas happen. This metric pushes me to make more connections and strengthen the ones I already have established.

**How To Use:** Once a month, find someone who is in my current network or who has a connection with someone in my existing network and schedule a one-on-one “interview” or coffee. Look for interests and links to other people and how you can add value to that person. In the interview or meeting, focus on the other person. Find out ways you can help the other person, especially if it is creating value through establishing other connections for that person. Keep notes about the interview afterward and put any follow-up or back burner ideas generated into Trello for safe keeping and review later.

At least once every six months, look back over time to ensure a consistent level of networking is happening. Consider increasing networking activities around special projects to share ideas and gather feedback.
3. ENCOURAGE

**Meter Type:** Click counter with weekly reset button and progress bar for each week

**Unit:** One word of encouragement to one person (professional setting)

**Scale:** Measure zero to five encounters to represent the weekly goal

**Description:** Encouraging those around you pushes out positive energy that can be contagious. It is relatively easy to be negative or not engaged. It's important to get behind key initiatives and to support the work of others. I would measure this regarding encounters per week. I would have a goal of at least five encouraging contacts per week. This might just be a “Hey; you’re doing good work” to a co-worker. The encouragement could also be a celebratory lunch or bring a treat in the morning to recognize a great team effort.

**How To Use:** This simple meter measures the progress toward a weekly goal to pass along encouragement and positive feedback to people around me. In some ways, it is like a gratitude journal because each encouragement comes from a place of noticing and acknowledging the positive work and contributions from people. This metric gets at that critical idea of building up the “we” and strengthening values and bonds for doing better work together.
Know what you value and measure it in order to evaluate, assess, and monitor myself as a Creative Leader.

4. PUT YOUR DREAMS INTO ACTION

**Meter Type:** Gauge plus graph to show time

**Unit:** One action item toward a defined goal

**Scale:** Zero to two action items per week (goal is one per week and recorded over time)

**Description:** Trying to make our ideas come to fruition can be challenging. They might be complex and need outside resources to move forward. Maybe the feeling of being overwhelmed by the task of moving forward lofty ideas and goals make taking steps toward them almost impossible. Whatever the reason, making measurable and steady progress toward goals is important. Having a regular system of taking on manageable work toward a goal will accomplish astonishing things when applied over time.

**How It Works:** To build this muscle of self-discipline and work toward defined goals, the Put Your Dreams Into Action metric helps by setting up a process to encourage, record, and provide feedback about executing action items. Hopefully, this metric can turn working on big dreams through smaller bits of work into a habit.
5. PUT IT OUT THERE

**Meter Type:** Click counter with reset button and progress bar

**Unit:** One encounter with a person who provides feedback on an idea presented

**Scale:** Zero to four contacts with four being the target for each month

**Description:** Scott Belsky makes a point in his “Making Things Happen” book that it is essential to get your ideas out in front of people to get feedback and weed out the bad ideas. It also can be a way to show commitment to an idea to others who might support your idea and help you.

**How It Works:** Belsky called it overcoming the stigma of self-marketing. Marketing matters and when the product is you, it can be hard to present your ideas without it feeling like self-aggrandizing. Another point is that many creatives have the “build it and they (clients) will come.” Instead of working on an effective marketing plan.

One strategy for moving toward a marketing plan and practice that achieves this without much self-importance is using the strategy of putting out ideas to your network to receive feedback. This can be done on a smaller scale – which is how this metric is set up. Individuals can be engaged to test ideas and get reactions. A larger scale example might be to start a blog and present ideas and concepts that are refined, but not polished. Comments, shares, and other input can help to see which ideas resonate. In much the same way, individual reactions from one-on-one feedback sessions can help to direct efforts behind ideas.
LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #1

SELF-ISOLATION

In this situation, work has become overwhelming. A handful of large projects that mostly require solo work efforts have reduced that amount of face time with co-workers and team members. I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed and began to burn out. Also, because I have been focused on major projects – keeping up with metrics has not been a priority.

When I realize that I haven’t checked my metrics in more than a month, I take a break and do a check-in.

#1: My “we” and “I” language is even, but it was leaning toward “we” last month.

#2 & #4: I have dropped my efforts around network connections and working on action items related to significant personal projects.

#3: Encouragement has gone down because I have had fewer interactions with co-workers and others.

#5: I have made some connections around putting out some ideas for feedback, but not quite up to my goal.

ACTION: After seeing the information, I would prioritize action around getting back on track with network connections and action items for major goals.

I would also work on connecting with co-workers and others in interactive ways to encourage and to check in around “we” language. How are “we” doing? Do “we” feel valued?
LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #2

LACKING BIG DREAMS

In this situation, work has been going well. A few major projects have gone well, and the team is wrapping them up and looking forward to new challenges. The team is talking about how great “we” are and even speaking regarding the fantastic things that can be done going forward.

Then I realize that a couple of big personal dream projects have gone untouched for a few months. You had sent out some drafts to people and never heard back. Without follow up the major projects have lost momentum.

#1: My “we” language is very high.
#3: Encouragement is very high
#2: I haven’t made any new network connections in two months.
#4: I haven’t touched significant projects in a while.
#5: I have put out some feedback request, but not up to the goal.

ACTION: I can tell that even though things are going well at work, I need to take some personal time to focus on major goals. I had done some excellent work, but that work is in jeopardy of being a waste if I don’t follow up on those requests.

I decide to take a couple of personal days to do an observation and reflection. I think about what I have learned through work success and examine if my goals are still where I want to be in the long run.
LEADERSHIP SCENARIO #3

FINDING BALANCE

Things have been going well at work. Through a good strategic planning process, achievable metrics were established, and the plan is being executed with positive results. The team is working together well.

The extra energy saved from having a well-balanced work situation has translated into a regular amount of time devoted some personal projects. I also have been able to connect with some people around personal projects, and I even started a blog to share some ideas on next steps.

#1: “We” language is dominate with my work team.
#2: I have been growing network regularly.
#3: I am on track with encouraging my team.
#4: Dreams are moving forward with some action getting traction.
#5: Related to personal work, I have been putting out some ideas to test via my new blog.

ACTION: After taking a look at the dashboard metrics, I know that I have found a balance and that no action is needed right now. I understand that things will likely shift in the future. However, I see how strategic planning at work has helped me take more time to spend on personal projects to move forward ideas. I am where I want to be across the board. It’s a healthy amount of busy and keeping progress happening.
My mother ate the same lunch at work for most of her 30 years at the job she retired from a few years ago. It was predictable, and you could almost set your watch by it. A plain sandwich, a banana and Diet Coke. Yuck.

For me, this exemplifies the fixed mindset that was imprinted upon me by my parents. I don’t blame them, however, in many ways, my mother still views things that could upset her world-view and abilities as negative. There were many axioms that I grew up learning:

- Don’t attract attention.
- Don’t break the rules.
- Don’t take major risks.

I was taught that everyone had their talents. Life was about finding what they were and then using them to the best of your ability. That was the pinnacle of achievement, and it sounded good to me for much of my life. This static-mindset was about the idea that “you have what you have.”

As a leader, I want to have more of a growth-mindset. I want to see opportunities and relationships as ways to create and build new ways of doing things. I want to develop my leadership skills in a manner that builds cultures of collaboration. I want to stop being a hero at work and develop skills for leveraging other people’s potential to accomplish more.

In my systems class from last year, I looked at the seed as a system. I think it’s amazing that the seed has all of the information needed to grow a huge oak tree. It has the information to build a foundation that draws minerals and water from the soil. It has the information to create a trunk and circulation system to nourish itself. It has the information to create the leaves that turn solar energy into the food needed to sustain itself. I want to be a leader who helps to create a business system that works for everyone, which draws on the talents and perspective of everyone and is adaptable/resilient as storms challenge growth and progress.

The metrics I chose in 1.3a are areas where I see opportunities for personal improvement. I know that I am the type of person who takes on too much. I try to be the hero. I lose focus on projects and tasks sometimes. I don’t put enough attention on relationships, and I don’t always look for ways to build up others to help achieve the larger goal. I hope to work on these things through this course.
Travel Log – Internal Compass

September 10, 2017
W2_A2.3

One of the things that struck me about the content this week was how leaders established their sense of purpose. I see several examples of how having this meaning establishes their resolve, their connection with followers, their ability to navigate obstacles and distractions.

When Barack Obama had to address the massive economic crisis early in his presidency, he didn’t let his advisers convince him to drop the healthcare initiative. It was something he was passionate about. It was something he believed got him elected. It was a connection to his followers. He was able to achieve his goal to pass healthcare legislation because he was flexible about how he got there but certain in his destination. He dealt with the economic crisis, but didn’t take healthcare off the table for discussion.

You can find many examples of this kind of strong internal compass.

I think Maggie Doyne (video link) showed great maturity when she started to search for her purpose at 18 years old. She didn’t try to find her purpose in a classroom. She went into the world. What she found was a non-traditional education, profound experiences, and connections that shaped who she is and will be for her life.

I have been reading the book “True to Yourself” by Mark Albion. Mark has been a supporter of value-based leadership for many years, and he is a business teacher and entrepreneur. What I find interesting in all of his many examples is how necessary it is to have the internal compass to make the hard choices. And sometimes the hard choices means not growing a company too fast. Which means putting profits behind people or growing the right way. Many hard decisions need to be made to be successful in the business world -- or almost anywhere. Having your values and focus on your main goal means the real difference between success and failure. A balance sheet doesn’t show success when you have established your own view of success.
Travel Log – Nature Inspired

September 17, 2017
W3_A3.3

For me this week brought together some good connections. Last year, I learned a lot about biomimicry and using nature as a road map for design. It seems very tangible to use that as a way to inform products. Looking at natural things to advise how to build other physical things makes a lot of sense. How does nature create its homes and workplaces? How does nature build materials using water-based chemistry? How does nature gather renewable energy from the environment for use by living things?

These questions I feel are easy to tie to the manufacturing process of a product, but it wasn’t something I tried to the ideas of leadership. How does nature lead? How do purpose and vision get communicated? How are individuals incorporated into a larger view of goals and needs?

We looked at lions, birds, fish, and insects. All of them had different ways to adapt to their environment — to find a niche for survival. Some shared leadership. Some had no leader.

One conclusion that I found myself at was that a natural leader doesn’t necessarily need to be at the top or have authority to lead. For me, that’s important. I’m not the top boss. I’m not sure I want to be the top boss. However, it’s important for me to realize that I lead. And, if I’m not purposeful about leading and developing those leadership skills, I won’t be ready or as effective in my leadership to help my organization, my community and myself achieve my vision and goals.
Travel Log – Ideas Into Action

September 17, 2017
W4_A4.1

Turning ideas into action. Easier said than done in many cases.

I have never been trained in personal organization methods and I haven’t adopted many best practices around my personal goals and ideas. I do know project management and methods for creative groups. I’ve worked as part of in-house creative teams for about 15 years. I feel like I know a thing or two about managing creative work. Having said that, I don’t think I have had creative work framed like Scott Belsky and John Clease did in their book introduction and video respectively.

PROFESSIONALLY
One of the major struggles facing an in-house marketing team is staying focused on high-level goals and initiatives of the department while serving various parts of the organization. As an in-house creative, you have in-depth knowledge of the organization you serve. Usually, you are also invested in the mission or business and want to help make it successful. I might have many ideas about how to improve work process, create better designs, and improve effectiveness. However, the in-house marketing teams I have been part of are always balancing the requests of various constituents across the organization with department priorities. What typically ends up happening is focusing on the requests that come into the department (via email and request forms) because it feels good in the short-term to be a hero and a problem-solver. Because of this hero-high, it’s hard to work on the big ideas that have the potential to deliver more value for the organization. After reading some of the book and watching Clease talk about creativity, I see that this work needs structure to happen effectively.

PERSONALLY
Of the three creative types that were discussed in the book Making Ideas Happen, I relate with Risa the most. I didn’t have strong mentors in my early career that showed me how to develop personal ideas into action. I haven’t done the best job self-identifying my passions and letting my instincts take me on a journey to create and connect. I have always looked for the well-worn paths of others who have come before me. I also felt like I had to wait for others to recognize my ideas to move them forward. I realize that I need to be strategic and focus on what I want to make happen. Starting to read this book and watching John Clease’s talk (video link) about creativity has made me realize that, in order to make those ideas happen, I need to build skills around my creativity and process around my ideas. Like Clease said, “Creativity is not a talent, it’s a way of operating.”

At the core of all of this is building capacity to make ideas happen. I recognize that I am relatively weak at doing this kind of work, especially when it comes to personal goals and ideas. As for the tools identified by Belsky, I think I am best at organizing and pushing ideas “onto paper.” I can focus on one idea and get it into a form I can share with others to then open discussion. I am not as good about using my community to leverage opportunities, though. I don’t instinctively see connections and pathways that I can use to grow my ideas. Finally, I see leadership as a necessity. I don’t have a lot of confidence in my ability to lead a team. I have been in charge of creative teams. I know that I can do it, but it’s not in my comfort zone. I see the last tool as an opportunity to grow confidence around my leadership.
As a creative leader, I see three main attributes that help me be the best for my team and my organization. I rely on our core articulated values to establish expectations for myself and others. I cultivate a culture through reliance on those values for guidance to everyday decision making and expect others to do the same. Finally, I keep my team healthy by creating strong networks and seeking out relationships that nourish me and provide opportunities for my team.

Establishing the core values of a group is a foundational exercise in building a cohesive team. Identifying core values lays out the guideposts for everyone in the team. This process should be a way for everyone to show commitment to the team and build shared expectations enforceable by everyone in the group. The time spent looking at those values can seem like an unproductive process, but it helps to uncap the potential of the group with exponential rewards in the future. As new team members come on board, a process for hiring based on these values will ensure that their potency is not diluted over time and that, if anything, there is a strengthening of the commitment to the values and the group.

After the value system has been established and articulated, the group should become the enforcers of the values. This reduces my role as value police or conflict sheriff. I should be removing myself from specific conflicts and allowing the value system dictate resolutions. This also empowers my team to make decisions knowing that they matter and can make decisions in-line with the group’s direction. This empowerment bolsters commitment to the group and allows me, as a leader, to focus on high-level opportunities and avoid burnout because I’m trying to manage all relationships within the team.

Finally, I need to help my team grow their networks. I can accomplish this work because I’m free to focus on building my network and being a facilitator for others (making connections to others in my team). I am creating future business opportunities and feeding my team with new ideas that help us work better and create even more business opportunities. I make sure that I’m spend much of my time making connections with people inside and outside the company. I don’t want to manage those relationships, but I can be a powerful force in bringing people and ideas together.

These are the three main attributes that I focus on as a leader. I create a solid foundation of shared values for my team. I empower them to self-enforce the values as a guide for day-to-day operations and managing relationships. Finally, I focus on building my network and subsequently help build connections for my team to gain access to expertise and ideas that ultimately help the team grow beyond itself.
This week I went through an observation and reflection session in nature as part of the mid-course review and reflection process. For the session, I went outside in my backyard. It was a beautiful fall day. The sun was out and I had to shade my eyes from the strong rays. The wind was playing with the leaves. The trees were in various states of green, red, yellow, and brown. Nature was obviously making changes and preparing for colder weather. With the sun on my face, I could still imagine a summer day.

This was my first connection, that change is a constant and not something that visits periodically. Often it comes in the form of a persistent force — movement of the earth around the sun, gravity pulling things toward earth, the wind or water moving over surfaces. These forces shape the world around us. As creative leaders, there are many persistent forces that push, distract, entice, and motivate. Even if we aren’t actively navigating that change, we are still affected by these types of forces. It is important for a leader to understand that any current condition is temporary. Navigating and using group forces to accomplish goals can be a tricky thing to master, but practice can make better.

Green leaves turning to red and yellow all around me made me consider the changing seasons. Warm fall days are final gifts before colder weather makes indoor activities more enjoyable. This made me consider how important it is to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. We might not act on ideas or goals because we convince ourselves that a better time will come and that conditions aren’t good enough to push forward. However, not pushing forward limits opportunities for the future. It’s also important to understand that there will never be a perfect situation for moving forward on an idea or dream.

I continued to look around me. I noticed that it was quieter than usual. It seemed like there weren’t any bugs, birds or animals in our usually busy backyard. However, as I sat there looking and listening, I started to notice that there were birds flying around the trees and bushes. Then a squirrel ran down the fence line. Nature was present and working. Within this activity, I was trying to find natural leadership. What I eventually saw was a complex symphony of interconnected systems. The trees are habitat for birds and squirrels and bugs. Water nourishes and shapes the landscape. People work to shape and control nature by mowing, weeding, building, and burning. As a leader, I think it is important to pay attention to what is happening around you and they connected systems of people, nature, power, culture, and money. We can find many answers to problems by better understanding how we are all connected.

These were some of the ideas that my natural surroundings inspired. I also thought about what I have learned so far in class and I came up with a few things that I want to work on for myself moving forward. (1) I need to build my personal network and be bold in asking others for help/ideas/critique. (2) I need to build systems to organize ideas and find focus on what I need to accomplish. (3) I need to work toward building tribes by using “we” language and building up others who share my values.

I look forward to the second half of the course. Cheers!
Travel Log –
Letter From Home

November 5, 2017
W10_A10.2

Dear Mark,

I hope this letter finds you well. I have noticed that you have been taking on some significant challenges recently and doing some self-reflection — trying to understand where you go from here. I think there are some things to remember as you move forward into next stages of your life.

First, I know that fitting in, finding the “right” kind of success, and doing things the “right” way has been part of who you were brought up to be from a young age. Social groups (i.e., family, school, and friends) all imprinted on you the appropriate ways of being you. If you fell in line with those expectations, you were rewarded with praise and acceptance. If you didn’t, you were punished with disapproval.

However, I can see that you are becoming more aware of these thought patterns that were imprinted on you a long time ago. Personal patterns of emotion and logic can be identified and dealt with if they can be understood. Otherwise, they can end up being behavioral quicksand—trapping ideas and stealing energy. With this awareness comes the opportunity to change. Several years ago, you would have waited for opportunities to come to you at work. Now, you are capable of taking more risks and making significant headway with your ideas. You can imagine beyond barriers and the current landscapes in front of you.

Warren Bennis in his book “On Becoming A Leader” looked at the how family, school, and friend influence us. If we let people and groups determine who we are, then you are being designed by your experience. Bennis suggests, instead, to insert yourself into the equation as a way to become your own designer. Take hold of your thoughts. Work to be more aware of how your mind works, what you know, and how you what you feel affects you.

I would encourage you to remember to make your life your own by understanding it.

Second, remember that failure is always an option and it can yield better long-term results and more opportunities than success. A life without failure is a life not lived to the fullest.

If you have an idea and you start to think of all the ways you could fail. Don’t let that way of thinking take over to the point that you don’t move forward. Even if you don’t end up where you initially thought you would, that’s not failure. If you end up exactly where you started because you never began, that’s real failure.

Make small steps forward on your ideas and embrace others along the way to share it with you.

Third, don’t look to others to determine your path forward. It’s good to learn from others and to share the journey with others. However, not doing something because there isn’t a model to follow can be a terrible mistake and a lost opportunity.

One example of this is when you feel like you can’t do something because you don’t feel like an expert in something. As Bennis writes, “you can learn anything you want to learn.” Be bold in trying new things and embracing new connections that might not have been thought of before.

Before I let you go, I want to encourage you to connect with yourself and listen to what you need on a regular basis. Don’t be shy about saying “no” to outside demands when you need some time to be healthier and connected to those around you. Set parameters and barriers to protect that time and energy for yourself.

Best,
Mark
Travel Log – Three’s Company

November 12, 2017
W11_A11.4

One of my metrics that I wrote about previously in my Dashboard was the “Grow Network” metric. I wrote, “One of the things that I realized by reading this section of Scott Belsky’s “Making Ideas Happen” is that having a network to draw upon is key to making ideas happen.”

I still think that this is a key skill and regular practice for successful people. The exercise to create triads was another step at finding ways to make connections with others, grow my network, and add value to others. I still believe that this is a key metric for my leadership dashboard.

I still find this hard to do because it’s not something I’m comfortable doing. It takes a fair amount of my energy to push myself to reach out. In my head, I’m thinking about all of the reasons why this is pointless, how it’s going to fail, how I won’t get any response and I’ll just be annoying the people I’m sending an email to or connecting with. This further makes me want to find ways to create a regular habit of doing this kind of work. As I do it more often, I think it should become easier. I will also be building my networking muscles and have more experience with finding ways to add value to others and also myself.
For this week’s Socratic Cafe exercise, I attempted to bring together some family and friends early in the week, but it fell apart because of illness. After a quick pivot, I pulled together a group of co-workers over lunch to engage in some hard-hitting inquiry.

The suspects: Alex, Rachel, Stefanie, Laurel, and Annamarie

We met in a conference room. It was comfortable and quiet. Most of us had lunches. We talked a bit about the question we wanted to discuss. I had some ideas prepared, but I wanted to get consensus around the question to move forward. Since we all embrace “nerd” culture, we settled on a question that we felt was broad enough, but firmly rooted in the comic worlds that we love to talk about.

The question: Is a superhero a moral person?

Not surprising, in the pursuit of the question above we ended up getting into the discussion and establishing some sub-points and embedded concepts. Before we had the question, we asked things like, “Is the Marvel universe better than DC?” But, I moved the discussion to a wider scope to make it more relevant to a larger philosophical discussion. However, it was an interesting thread that we pulled forward because we talked about how a hero’s origin story helps to build their ethos, how they react to conflict and how they develop their morality. We talked about how many classic comic book characters had their origins in the 19th Century shortly before or after World War II (Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel) and how this rooted their morality in American values and culture at the time.

We also talked about the rise of anti-heroes (Wolverine, Punisher, and Daredevil). We talked about how this class of hero defines their morality differently than more traditional characters.

Finally, we talked about how comic storylines offer cultural lessons and challenge our status quos about violence, crime, loss, revenge, redemption and search for meaning.

Looking back, I think we all had fun and enjoyed the process. It helped that we all like comic books, movies, and video games. This meant we had something to draw from to inform the conversation. We were also all under age 40, so we grew up in the “modern” age of comics and had those experiences to share. Even if someone had only seen movies like X-MEN, Captain America, Batman or Thor — they could participate just as well as someone who read comics or plays video or board games.

The main thing I took away from this experience as a Creative Leader was that it was easy leading and engaging with groups when we are doing something I am passionate about or truly enjoyed. I think this might be similar to getting in the groove or flow when working on a project. For me, I need that when working with groups because people interaction typically drains me and I need that energy keep me moving forward.
Travel Log –
Creative Visualization

December 3, 2017
W13_A13.2

The Scenario:
It is 3 years from today. You’re in bed and it’s almost dawn. You are just beginning to hear the birds starting to sing, and it makes you smile. You’re incredibly comfortable lying there, but you are also very excited about the day ahead and decide pop up before the alarm goes off. You are thinking about how much has happened since you finished your SDO program and/or took that Creative Leadership course — so much more than you ever imagined would have happened. You are particularly pleased because you know, deep inside, that all this has happened because of your unique and devoted creative leadership efforts. You’re excited today because you’ve been waiting eagerly for an announcement that you know is going to come in your email today. So, even before you make coffee, you scamper over to your laptop, open your email, and there it is – the announcement you’ve been waiting for. What does it say?

The Setting:
After completing my MA in Sustainable Design two years ago, I found myself searching for ways to grow and push myself. I had several ideas that I thought I wanted to explore after completing the program. I was interested in teaching a sustainable graphic design class at a college or university. I wanted to explore consulting work or partnerships with sustainable design firms. I was interested in helping to establish a green graphic design certification.

Beyond professional ideas, I wanted to explore ways to change how I live my life to align my values with my lifestyle.

Before the MASD program, I approached my career progression as looking for well-defined career roles with prescribed paths to obtain those roles. I have found that this doesn’t work well for me. I was inspired by Meg Lobb and her story about her “Year of Saying ‘Yes’”. Watch her video. I decided to do more “yes”.

With the help of my well-worked networking muscles, I have made a habit of pursuing ideas and connections to make those ideas happen. I am Embracing the failure of ideas when they happen, but not dwelling on them. I am learning and growing through this process.

Announcement:
After reconnecting with a past co-worker who had started a small construction business in Minneapolis, I proposed a way to leverage their unique market position by specializing in creating sustainable home improvement. I had suggested making changes to the business plan that would allow under-served populations to afford sustainable improvement to existing homes. I also had proposed that I become a business partner with focus on business development, marketing, and sustainability.

The email that I was eagerly awaiting confirmed my hopes. I was offered a partnership in the business. It offered many new challenges and uncertainty, but I was excited to be making a difference and saying “yes” to new paths and opportunities to grow and stretch myself.
For this last O&R session I went to the General Mills Research Nature Area in Golden Valley, MN. It’s a wooded area with a small lake and walking trails. I found a bench that was out of the way and proceeded to go through the activity.

After taking time to clear my mind on a cold, but beautiful day, I was able to find satisfaction on where I have traveled during the course of the Creative Leadership class. As I listened to nature around me making the best of a winter day, I realized that I am more than what I am — I am what I make myself. To me, this means finding my own purpose and value and then sharing that with others who can find shared value in those things.

Major changes in my life and uncertainty are things that can cause worry and anxiety. However, without focus on today and what is around me I can’t listen and understand enough to engage in the work that needs to happen to build relationships and build on my ideas. Listening is also important. Listening allows for understanding others experiences and feelings. This can make my leadership more effective. If I don’t see a situation in the proper light I might insult or reduce my ability to lead and be trusted.

Over the semester, I have learned more than I thought I would. I don’t naturally consider myself a leader. However, I see my leadership ability in different ways. I see how I influence others and create progress behind shared purpose and value. I have a toolkit that empowers me to fail and build and share and grow to create and empower others.
One of the profound things that I have come to realize through the MASD program is that everything is connected through systems (nature, people, economics, politics, success, and failure). That isn’t meant to be a spiritual axiom. Even if we don’t believe or understand how everything is connected — it is still true.

In our political, business, social, and cultural systems we try to make the world easy to understand by making their components binary. Good/bad. Right/wrong. Anything more complex is often just rejected. To combat the gray in the world and gain a feeling of control, we dissect the world around us and classify it into neat categories and expect things to act a certain way. Life on Spaceship Earth doesn’t work that way.

So, how does this view of systems relate to creative leadership? Good question. I’m getting there.

For me, it means that a creative leader sees interconnected systems and can use leverage points (many learned in this class) to get results in sometimes unconventional ways. It means that a creative leader can:

- be informed by different perspectives;
- be wrong and still be right;
- be stronger by putting the needs of others before their own;
- lead through values;
- offer unequivocal support;
- see that failure does NOT equal a lack of ability;
- see the value in play;
- see the power of saying “Yes”;
- relax and have fun.

Thanks to Denise and fellow students for a great semester.

My parting quote …

“Society must recognize that ecological principles apply to human survival and that if we are to long endure as a world culture, or as a group of cultures, we will have to incorporate ecological thinking into every aspect of our mores, patterns of living, and most particularly our economic institutions.” – Paul Hawken, “The Ecology of Commerce”
Future Destinations – Island of Focus

Being burnt out in a job or a volunteer position can destroy many years of work. It tends to ruin that relationship and positive work done can be undone in a relatively short period.

Because of this, it is essential to have regular check-ins with yourself to see if you are feeling overwhelmed, disengaged, unhappy, or unsatisfied. Feeling a certain way can have several causes – one of which might be overworking.

To address these issues, create several regular opportunities to practice mindfulness and be aware of feelings, emotions, and frustration. Address issues with specific people who are connected with those frustrations. Perhaps, through miscommunication, expectations were not clear.

To augment the mindfulness practice, using an observation and reflection technique in nature is an effective way to center, gain clarity, and find focus.

Future Destinations – Plateau of Purpose

The Plateau of Purpose is a place that many strive to find. They ask questions like, “What is my purpose/vocation/passion?”

Being on the plateau, for me, means a balance between searching for a purpose that fits neatly on a business card and doing good work that is satisfying. If you search for a purpose and miss focusing on the connections along the journey, you have missed the point.

When looking for purpose, use well-established personal values as a gut-check and then take chances, test ideas, and be bold.

The feeling of accomplishment and a job well done is the sense of purpose that I ultimately want.

Creative Leadership Ideal – Cove of Confident Leadership

This is a place that combines a values-based leadership style with skills and knowledge about networking and idea management to be useful in leading teams in sometimes unconventional leadership roles.

Someone at the cove will exhibit a growth mindset. They don’t see ability as fixed in themselves or in those they lead.
THANK YOU!