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After Session Reflection #2  
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I went into the in-class consulting project hoping to practice my skills using organizational culture tools and instead found the project very useful in developing my own leadership skills. I don't feel like I learned a great deal about applying OCAI from what I already knew. Had we spent some time as a cohort working on changing our own culture and applying some of the tools ourselves, that would have sharpened my skills. In the end, we only partially used the tool by asking Severene, the incoming CEO, to answer the OCAI questions. The tool proved helpful to visualize the amount of change she wanted, but it felt limiting given only one person filled out the survey.

The greater learning for me on this project came from how I decided to "show up" as a leader and my radical experimentation with directive leadership. Some background: I'm normally a very collaborative leader and often shy away from directing people what to do, even in situations when it is needed because I fear not being liked.

A pivotable event occurred for me on the second day when I pulled Jeb in for a mini-coaching session to discuss some of my reluctance around leadership. He pointed out to me different leadership styles exist and are needed at different times/ contexts: Collaborative leadership, participative leadership and directive leadership. In that moment, I decided I would use the safe space of our consulting group to experiment with being directive for everything, all the time (without directly communicating that to my consulting group members until we debriefed after we completed the project).

In the process, I both got things done and generated resistance to my actions. We completed our goals and used a mixture of methods. We worked together as a large group and also split the project up into smaller pieces for us to work on in pairs or

individually. We achieved an outcome our client expressed enthusiastic appreciation for. While Severene and my other consulting group members thought our outcome was excellent, I feel like we missed an opportunity to create a space for real insight for her. Something came up in the meeting that related to a difficult conversation she needed to have regarding her leadership transition. I felt like we could have used the space for her to gain clarity for how she wanted to approach this.

I debriefed this with my learning group after and shared with them these “nuggets” that came up in our presentation to her that I felt like we could have gone deeper into. Instead, our time with her to me felt like a superficial run through of multiple slides as opposed to a Peter Block-like insightful meeting with a client. Members in my group pushed back and made a case for why they felt like the project made a great impact. Part of the challenge for me was that I was not the designated leader for the presentation and part of that included contracting prior to the presentation to have the lead really direct the conversation. This was challenging for me because I’m always the lead with the clients I serve in presentation/ dialog situations like this.

The key learning for me from this project came more from my experimentations with my own leadership style in a small group setting (I served as Project Lead for our team of four - in my consulting practice, I usually work alone). My key insight: it’s not the end of the world for me if people I lead don’t like and appreciate everything I do. Instead, there are times where I need to be more directive to get things done, even if they don’t like it. The experience helped me overcome my fear and ultimately increased my leadership toolbox. As multiple interactions happened where they expressed a dislike for the choice I made as a leader, their resistance didn’t debilitate me. Instead, I accepted it as part of the process for moving forward.

I exhibited numerous behaviors that I often shy away from: making clear decisions fast, holding someone accountable when they didn't complete their agreed upon task, working a group past our agreed deadline time to ensure we completed a task, bringing in outside accountability in the form of professors to proof our work and not worrying if people didn't like my approach. At one point, I was called a "Slave Driver" and it didn't phase me. I did find the work exhausting, but that might also be due to the fact we worked almost non-stop from 9am to 9:30pm one day. We did take several short breaks and I used this time to rest and regain composure.

Ultimately, the experience helped me understand I don't always need to come to situations from only the collaborative leadership point of view. Instead, there are times when being directive is needed. On a related note, as an OD practitioner, I recognize I don't always need to be the "nice guy". There are times when I shy away from having difficult conversations with clients, feeling like it would just be easier to ignore it rather than engage with them on it. In the future, I'm more inclined to challenge clients to grow when they need it, as opposed to my normal positive, affirming self. This consulting group experience built my capacity to truly lead, which means me accepting that people will not always be happy with my leadership.