



METAPHORS FOR ALIGNMENT

Simplify, Collaborate, Motivate

By Larry Raymond

About the Author

Larry Raymond is a leading expert on the use of metaphors in business. He's the founder of the Metaphor Language Research Center LLC, based in Boulder, Colorado, USA and co-founder of The River Leadership Resources, a non-profit based in Geneva, Switzerland. He's held executive positions at IBM, Lotus Development, Digital Equipment and Union Carbide.

In addition to researching ways metaphors can help organizations, Larry consults to businesses, international agencies and governments on improving operations and developing leaders.

Larry holds both USA and Irish citizenship, lived in Switzerland for ten years and in Denmark for two, worked in more than 50 countries and published *Reinventing Communication* in 1994, the landmark book in use of visual metaphors for increasing business effectiveness.

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Introduction

Metaphors are part of our every day language. They are sometimes used for quick characterization of a situation, such as “getting the economy moving is an uphill battle”, or “my PC has a virus”.

Visual metaphors are sometimes used as signs or logos, such as the flock of geese on the cover page of this book that sends a message of self-alignment and group efficiency.



The two types of metaphors most useful to business are termed inspirational and working. Inspirational are generally the province of the CEO or leader of the organization. Their role is to send a message to or about the organization and motivate the staff.

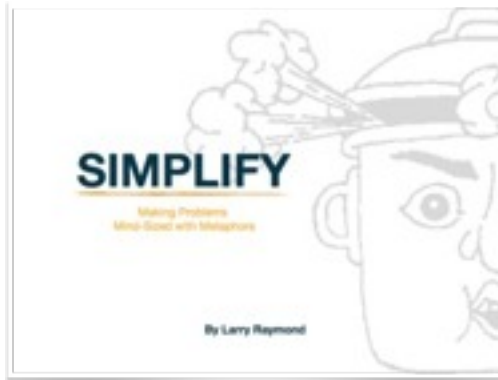
Working metaphors, the primary focus of this book, are used by groups throughout the organization. They contain a broad set of symbols that can describe and analyze a situation. A village, for example, contains roads, building swamps and other things could represent aspects of an organization.



Metaphors –
Simplify, Collaborate, Motivate

The role of working metaphors is to bring together stakeholders in an issue and help them set a strategy to resolve it. Metaphors make complex projects or processes mind-sized, ensuring collaboration and committing stakeholders to implement the solution they created themselves.

“Metaphors for Alignment” Collection



Making Problems Mind-Sized with Metaphors

Introduces the concept of building metaphoric maps to solve problems and set strategy. Examples of:

- International project coordination
- Manufacturing culture change

Pages 5-37



Collaboration through Metaphors

Project managers set strategy, collaboratively, without power, across organizations. Example:

- Creating a contract for IT, system users and a steering committee

Pages 38-57



Metaphors to Lead Enterprise Change

How senior executives can leverage metaphors. Examples of:

- Focusing organization culture
- Cascading change

Pages 58-79



SIMPLIFY

Making Problems
Mind-Sized with Metaphors

By Larry Raymond

A metaphor **compares one thing to another and suggests a likeness.** If you compare a complex business issue to something simple you know well, **your metaphor becomes a language for conversation and problem-solving.**

Suppose you compare your issue to a village and draw a map. You might show work groups as buildings, roads as connections and fires as problems. By naming the issue's parts and relationships with symbols, you've built a vocabulary to describe your mental map to others. Familiar, physical symbols make the issue quickly understandable. **It's now "Mind Sized".**

Making it Mind-Sized is critical to your success:

If you're leading others but can't describe the problem situation for them in logical and emotionally clear terms, you won't inspire the passion and determined action to solve it.

Frustration is everywhere and heads boil over when leaders exhort people to action on fuzzy issues!

(Such as, "Work smarter not harder!")



Beyond making it *Mind-Sized*, *metaphors and symbols* **engage imaginations** and lead to:

- ▶ Original thinking
- ▶ Speedy conclusions
- ▶ Cooperation on the path forward

Even though you may not have heard, they've been used hundreds of times and are always effective.



So, why not read on and learn to use them ?

You might steal a base on your competitors (to use a metaphor)

**and... your company will stand out
from the crowd!**

THE “SIMPLIFY” RECIPE:

Metaphors and Symbols



When I talk about metaphors in business, I mean **visual** metaphors.

It's a lot easier to simplify with a visual image— it makes sure the picture in your head is the same as the one in your colleague's.

(You then save time by dividing the words used by 1,000!)



Let's continue with the example of a **village as a metaphor for a process or activity.**

The village metaphor

has a big vocabulary

A building is a place **where work gets done**. A department or group. You write what the building represents on a signpost.



If there's a fire, there's a problem in the building,

A road connects buildings. It shows a relationship—*the better the road, the better the relationship.*



A tree, might fall onto a road, and *disrupt the flow of information.* It takes work to remove it.

You can build a map of your issue using these and dozens of other symbols you would find in a village.



You map it like you would map any process or strategy, but **you'll find metaphors are more nuanced and evocative than flow charts.** Since you always need several people to decide anything, **building metaphoric maps is generally a group exercise.**

Here's the **sequence:**

Building a Village Map

► Step 1

Show stakeholders



► Step 2

Show connections



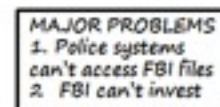
► Step 3

Show Problems or Strengths



► Step 4

Write down key points in words



Your map tells your story

and might look something like this simple example:



- ▶ The town center is well served by police
- ▶ Remote areas are at risk due to distance
- ▶ Police have good relations with court, but poor file management
- ▶ Our old technology hinders support

The metaphor pulls out the **WHOLE** story

Groups of people build metaphoric maps of situations.

By doing it **together**, they **talk** about what's going on, **agree** what symbols best represent the various parts of the issue they're working on.

By building their map, they show the big picture and include a stakeholder analysis, a relationship analysis, a process flow and its weaknesses. They may also use lots of other symbols to elaborate the story, such as:

... and many more symbols of what may go on in a village, or an organization.

Old ideas that are locking them in



Uncontrollable phenomena that may totally change the landscape



Man-made barriers that need not exist.



Timeless values that guide operations in the village...



It's best to split up if the group is **more than 5 people.**

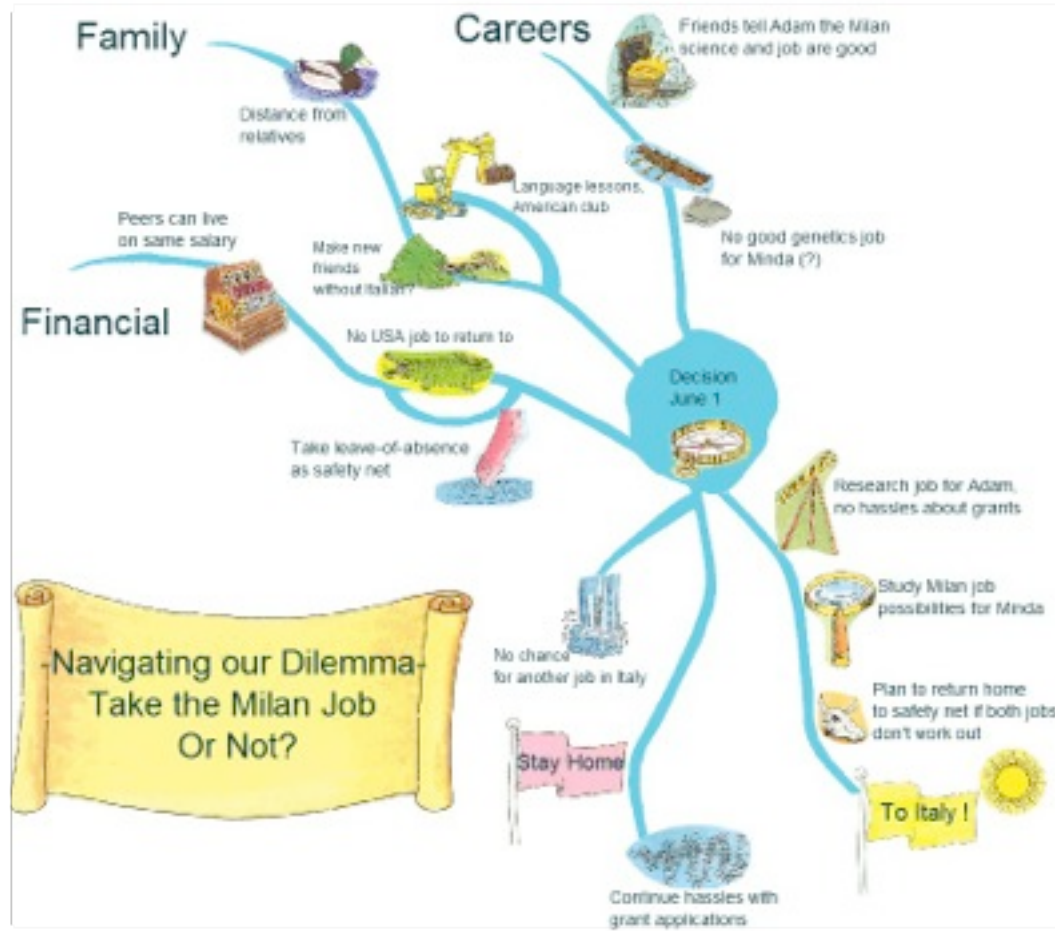
That way everyone can get around the map and **personally engage.**

They use **stickers** that
symbolize **aspects of a
village**



...and **after** maps are created, one
person presents the map to the
other groups.

A river is a good metaphor for showing the flow of time, sequence of actions, goals, obstacles and potentially un-wanted consequences:



This river map shows a family's **decision process**.

Situation: Two scientists, one with a cool job offer in Italy

Decision Factors:
Careers, Family and Finances

Goals: Fun long term assignment for Adam and, he avoids having to apply for grants each year

Concerns:

Finding a good job in her field for Minda

Make the finances work

What to do if Adam's

Milan job doesn't work?

A ZOO is a useful metaphor for surfacing the attitudes that drive behaviors. Here are a few “in your face” symbol examples that **don’t require a dictionary to understand.** These images aren’t what count. It’s the perception and discussion of “Why pick these symbols, among the dozens you could have chosen?”



TWO EXAMPLES



example 1 Metaphor Mapping for International Coordination

Marie Leyvraz is project manager for a new international system to be used in 45 countries. **She has an indirect staff of six** and works with a national lead and deputy in each country. **She needs to turn them into active, passionate drivers of program implementation.** Each country lead in turn must gain the complete support of at least 12 local directors and key staff members.

- Marie has a real coordination challenge! - *Over 500 people in 45 countries must understand, tailor and implement her system.* They have to be convinced to **put aside concerns** about how it affects their own jobs, define some details and how it will operate in their countries. They also will have to do a lot of work to **adapt and document dozens of processes in each country.** Not to mention make the program work, **measure its results and fix the root cause** of any problems that surface in the new operation.

All country leads work in a second language. They will need to drive both superiors and peers. Helping the national leads overcome those imposing barriers is a critical success factor for Marie and her director. **While seeking tools that might help, they decided to try Metaphor Mapping.** Marie planned four steps to verify it was up to the task before making part of the program.

The first step was to experiment with a Mapping exercise for her core team and a few others to get a sense if it would work on the large scale problems she faced.

In a two day workshop session, Marie, her director and eight others discussed the program's operation at a high level, built maps of how it was working in its current, initial phase and how they wanted it to ideally work.



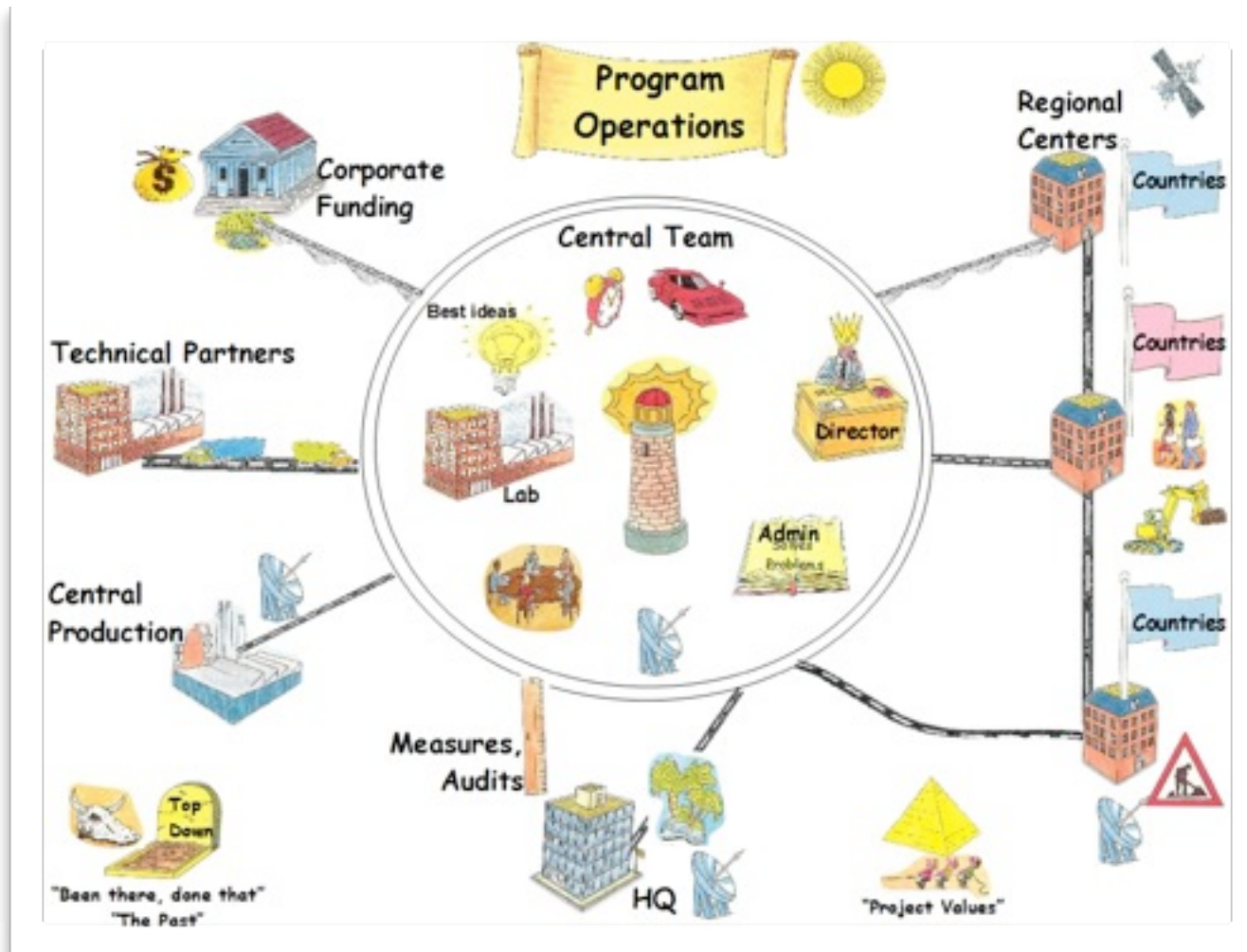
They found:

“The symbolic stickers were fun to work with and gave us a good overall picture.”

“We didn’t have to be too creative in this session since we already generally knew how we wanted the program to work, but it surprisingly made us think about some things we hadn't considered.”

“We saw right away it would get the national leaders on their feet and working together.”

The map below gives an idea of the **program's ideal operation**



The second step was the critical test:

Apply Metaphor Mapping in a thirteen country regional workshop.

Marie needed to:

- ▶ **Ensure** each national lead and deputy have a **deep understanding** of the program and **contribute insights** on how it would best work;
- ▶ **Set** a broad *implementation strategy*, **adaptable to the specifics** of each country;
- ▶ **New insights** for the Central Team on the type of **support services** they should offer to countries through regional centers.

Workshop Results -

Rave reviews from participants
A sense of unity was in the air.

*"I had a professor once who showed me the power of using metaphors to help everyone see something the same way. **This is even better because you make the metaphor yourself.**"*

*"This was good. **We know what we have to put in place now.** I got some good ideas from the others."*

*"**I enjoyed working with the others,** and it will be fun to go home and show my daughter what I did at the meeting."*

The third step will take place in the next two months.

Marie's team will provide in-country workshop support to two of the countries that requested it. **Their goals are to map the coordination process and build their teams.**

Following those sessions, **the fourth step** will be to start the program roll out to all regions and support in-country workshops as requested.

Marie: "I knew from our first trial workshop that Metaphor Mapping had potential to **make our meetings more exciting** and to **change the paradigm** from us lecturing the countries to the countries telling us what were the practicalities of implementing our program..... but **this session still surprised me**. Perhaps it was because one of my colleagues from another department attended the introduction and left just before the workshop started. He told me he couldn't imagine taking the risk of bringing thirteen countries together and trying to get them to work through all this. That made me really uneasy. But, as soon as I returned to the meeting room, **I could see it was just the greatest**. Everyone talking in their small groups. When they left after two days, it was with a lot of enthusiasm. **We made tremendous**

Her boss: *Several national leaders phoned and told me they liked Marie's approach and would give us full support. Each one said, in effect, 'That was the best meeting we've ever attended.' It's attitude that counts and we're clearly off to a good start."*

example 2 Managing **Culture Change** in a Manufacturing Company

Culture usually interests organizations only when there's a **new boss**, they're **performing poorly** or facing a **crisis**. This case is an exception. (As in the first example, this is a real case but hopefully well disguised)

Gordon Smith was VP of Manufacturing. His **organization** included **plants, engineering and client support groups in more than a dozen locations**. Gordon had been in his job for six years and had met his product delivery, inventory and quality objectives every year. His cost reductions had made corporate life pleasant. Being a bit of a hero, he had freedom from oversight and the latitude to reward his staff with incentive trips, similar to the way the sales force was treated..

Gordon had inherited a motivated group of professionals, given them lots of headroom and reduced overall costs by 8-10% in each of his six years. Much of his success was due to his personal, maniacal focus on cost, and having drilled the rallying cry of **15%!** into each of his managers. **15% was his goal of total cost to corporate gross revenue.**

So...why change?

The momentum would continue and achieving 15% , down from 29% six years earlier, was a sure thing. But, **the low hanging fruit had already been harvested**, and global commodity price reductions had ended their downward drift. In short, **there was little room left to be a hero by cutting cost.** At the same time, **his cost focus was starting to show its own downside. Client complaints were rising**, industry quality trends were outshining his and he sensed the whole organization was becoming too complacent and losing their enthusiasm.



Change wasn't forced on Gordon— he just thought it was time the ship changed course. He knew the Cost rallying cry had to change but he didn't have any sense of just which goals should replace it. **He needed some help.**



When he discussed it with his HR

leader, Gordon came to recognize he had an asset he had never considered and probably couldn't have named without HR help: **a vibrant community.** All the functions and locations worked well together and were committed to the good of the whole.

He decided to call on his community to help him sort out new priorities and guide changes that would be needed in the culture. As for a new rallying cry, why not ask them for that too?



Gordon asked his HR lead, Laura, to call together the 50 top people from all sites and structure a workshop to set a changed course. Gordon would make final decisions but wanted his community to **collectively think out the options**, make cases and advocate them.

After checking with colleagues, Laura **recommended Metaphor Mapping** as the vehicle for the workshop. She liked what she heard about its **ability to generate serious results** but with a **lighter touch than some other methods**. Since thirty of the fifty participants would be traveling, she wanted it to be a fun and rewarding experience that would lead to good future teamwork as well as address Gordon's main concerns. **She wanted culture to be addressed in the context of the group's work to fulfill its core mission. Optimizing processes and managing cost would always be a fundamental part of their mission,** even if they took on an additional, customer-related, revenue promoting role.

The workshop was scheduled for April in a large room of a local hotel. Workshop agenda was planned and small group tasks defined in the areas of business process improvement, and culture change.

► The Community-Driven Culture Workshop

Three process optimization challenges were assigned to six groups of 5 or 6 and the culture change challenge was assigned to two groups of 6. Breakout sessions were followed by plenary presentation sessions and then the next tasks assigned.

The interspersing of process improvement with culture analysis was energizing. It quickly was obvious that the values, attitudes and behaviors of team members were critically relevant to their success. The image below is the output of the small group work session related to the R&D Interface group. Here's what it "Says":

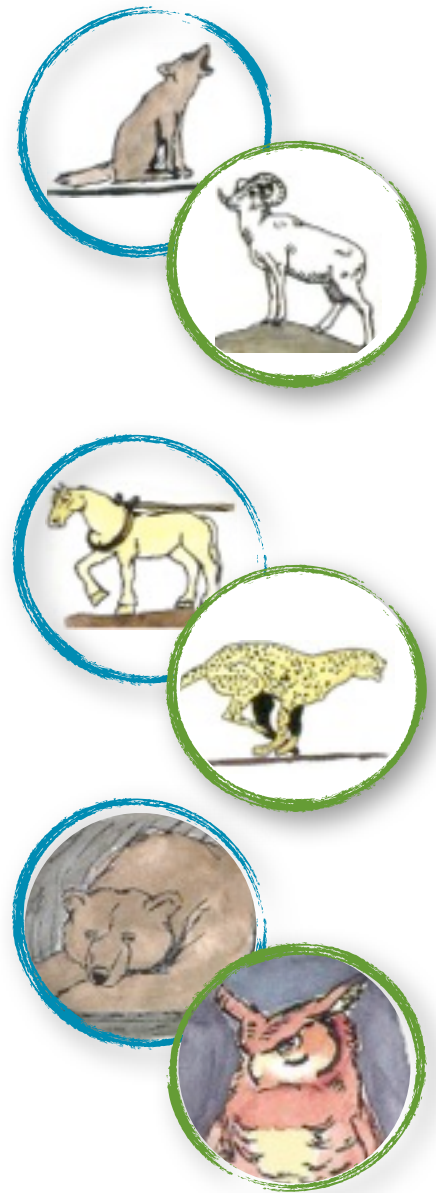
The R&D Interface group consider themselves a bit **naive and a little lost, today.** They did what they were told and were at a loss of how they could **add any further value.** The symbols they chose for themselves was a fawn lost in the woods. In future, with support of Gordon, they said *they wanted an aggressive role and right to eliminate product features known to cause difficulties.* Customers (as well as the company) wanted **fast delivery and products that could be immediately put into production,** without the customizing that was often built-in by Research — **They would be "tigers about it!"**



The group thought of **Engineering as coyotes**, howling at the moon. The engineers **complain** to themselves **about** the **designs** from Development but **didn't** put in extra analysis of their own or take the risk of making alternate proposals. In future, they wanted the engineers to act like big horn sheep-- **Agile, sure-footed** with a high vantage point to defend the interests of both manufacturing and customers.

They saw the **shop floor team as workhorses today**. They did the job well but **didn't take on risk** when unique circumstances arose. In future, they wanted them more fleet of foot, **like a cheetah**, with **bursts of speed** when needed

Finance was a hibernating bear. They did a great job on the 15% challenge but showed **no interest in looking beyond the borders of manufacturing** to see the greater cost picture that included the impact of design flaws on manufacturing re-work or customer returns. They wanted them to be **wise owls** and address total company end-to-end product cost.



Group



- ▶ **R&D Interface staff** are **lost today** and need to be **bolder in future**
- ▶ **Engineering complain today.** They need to **make their own proposals**
- ▶ **Shop Floor staff** get the job done but need to **be faster in future**
- ▶ **Finance** have great capability but need to **address end-to-end**

Workshop Results

The teams focused on **business processes** come up with **valuable innovations**. Their work won them a lot of **applause and approval to implement the immediately**.

The culture change teams came up with the real block buster. When they presented their ideas to the full fifty, there was animated discussion and a lot of laughing. The management team agreed the need to **change the core objective**. **The focus on Cost would be replaced by Customer Satisfaction.** The group was ready and resolved to change. **They embraced their new “mascots” and the tiger, goat, cheetah and owl were all saluted!**

The most senior managers then started a dialog about how to make sure the culture change would stick... how to make sure it reached the world-wide organization at all levels... and how it would be sustained. They named a project leader to bring together volunteer representatives to set up a communications plan and to try to find a way to measure the culture, so it could be represented in managers' performance objectives.

Culture had been addressed for the first time in the organization's history.

Its **importance** as a force for meeting goals had been **recognized**. Many frank discussions of group behavior took place in the workshop and after-hours gatherings.

The animal symbols were a big hit every time they were presented and they **generated interesting and pointed side discussions**.

Feedback from attendees who were not English mother-tongue was exceptionally high because of the way it **simplified the issues** and **brought clarity** to inter-personal communication and presentations.

CLOSING MESSAGES ABOUT METAPHORS



Visual metaphors do amazing things for **group effectiveness**. They get groups **talking, sharing, listening** and **building** on one another's **ideas**. Groups **solve** the **toughest problems** with them. Setting direction and achieving change, in just a few hours!



The examples of establishing coordination and changing culture are only two of the over three hundred workshops run in corporations and governments. Workshop subjects have included **operations process improvement, team building, strategy planning, quality, sales and others**. Results are always great! If there's an important issue, get the right people together, use visual metaphors to simplify the issue and just stand back!

The **steps** for a leader are **simple**:

- 1 Make sure you know what you want to solve
- 2 Think about which people should attend and be grouped together
 - Make sure they are respected formal or informal leaders in their units
- 3 Pick a metaphor and get some symbol stickers. **Try it!**
- 4 Get them together, give a few minutes intro and then turn them loose

OK, there's a bit more to it than that, but it's not a big challenge for a facilitator to **become expert with metaphor languages**. Managers have even run small sessions themselves after having participated in one with a facilitator.

The best part is the ownership and commitment to results that follows the session. **It's their idea. They'll overcome all obstacles and get it done!**



LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE

Collaboration through Metaphors

By Larry Raymond



Introduction

This short ebook is part two of the collection “**Metaphors for Alignment**”. Its target audience includes project managers, middle level managers and professionals in all fields who aspire to lead but don’t have manager titles. It addresses the problem of how to improve an organization when you see a need, have the will but don’t have power.

Although collaboration has long been seen as the most promising style for leading across functions and organizations, there’s a distinct shortage of how-to guidance available.

This book aims to contribute by describing how aspiring collaborative leaders can employ metaphors to quickly engage stakeholders in problem areas and set improvement strategies.

Inclusive workshops aided by metaphoric techniques create an environment for openness, clear communication and creative group thinking. They provide a natural, intuitive process that doesn’t require facilitator-intensive support and leads to a high degree of ownership for solutions.

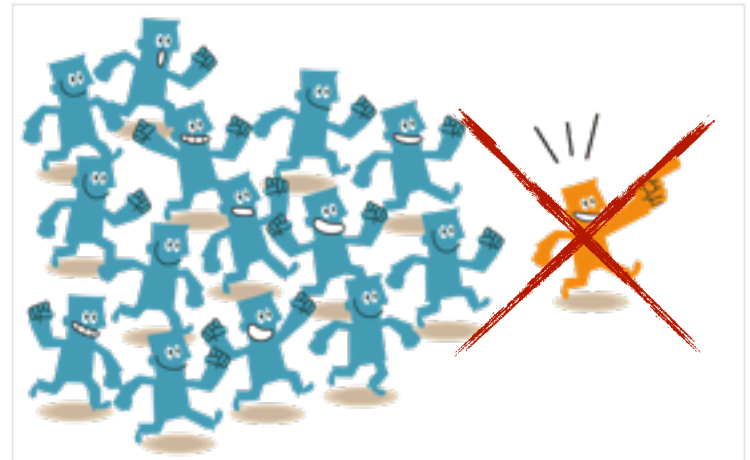
On Leading

“A leader need **not** be on top, but must be ahead.”

The only style of leadership that delivers results across organizations is collaboration. That means cooperating and building together with others.

When you're a collaborative leader, being "ahead" means you monitor the environment, look to the future, recognize a need and engage the collective know-how of all stakeholders in addressing it.

Unless you're the boss, being "ahead" does **not** mean jumping into the spotlight and aiming to inspire everyone to follow you.



On Being in the Middle

When you don't control everyone's paycheck, you're in the middle.

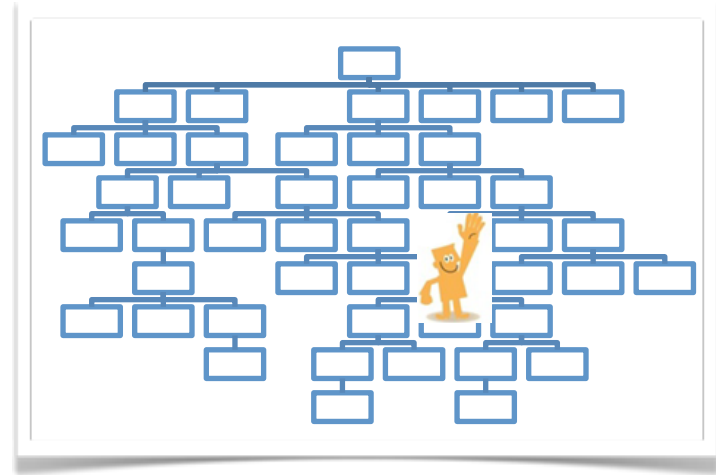
You might be on the top of some org chart, but you depend on others for the heavy lifting, achieving the big things on your plate.

Commanding and controlling is no longer best leadership practice.

Anyone aspiring to leadership needs to be visible and set goals, but, to succeed at collaborative leadership, get some humility from all you don't know and think of yourself as being in the middle, at best.



When your demeanor is one of **being among equals** and the main currencies you exchange are facts and reasoning, **you'll find relationships are easy to build and people are happy to share their ideas.**



Focus on the process, the flow of activities and information underlying the need you identified. That will ground the discussion in reality.

Respect everyone's views.

Test any assumptions.

Your behavior will be reciprocated and passion to excel will fill the room.

Peer Relationships

To lead from the middle you must have passion for the cause, be process-oriented and think “ahead”.

But, it's understanding the pre-eminent role of peer relationships and building them that will make you successful.

To build strong peer relationships:

First understand and respect the ideas and know-how of others.

You're not the only one who wants to be part of setting the strategies that affect you.

When you're in the middle and aspire to lead, being open yourself and drawing on the abilities of others is a requirement, not an option.

Second be trust-worthy.

Open, honest and predictable. Motivated by the best interests of the whole. The basics. Don't violate them in self-interest. If you're a wolf, don't put on the clothes of collaboration.



On Collaborating

Respect and openness can allow a group to productively work together, but collaboration develops only when a **shared view of the world** emerges from the different perspectives each person walked in with.

When talking or even writing, differences between individuals' mental models can be wide but not obvious until after long, contentious debate, often ending in sense of hopelessness.

When people spend careers in different functions, their frames of reference are very different.

You have to work to fully understand your colleagues' mental models, but that's the entry point for collaboration.



Hidden mental models create an Illusion of agreement.
When it bursts, there's acrimony.

Address mental models quickly or forget
about setting strategy collaboratively-- Your
momentum and leadership position will be lost.

Metaphors promote staying on point,
communication clarity and a big picture
outlook.

They help perspectives converge.

Trust can then take root and start a virtuous
cycle. Openness leads to agreement on
objectives that becomes the base for creative
problem solving, visioning and planning.



Same words,
different meanings

On the Critical Role of Metaphors in Collaboration



Visual metaphors open up group communication

Symbols remove defensiveness

When you build your thinking
into **Metaphor Maps**
You take Pride and

Make a commitment !



What's a Metaphor Map?

It's an image you build with symbols to show how something works
- It takes about 45 minutes

You might equate your operation to a Village,
where buildings are groups, roads are
relationships.

Then add other symbols to show problems

Or, equate your project to a River,
row your boat through time.

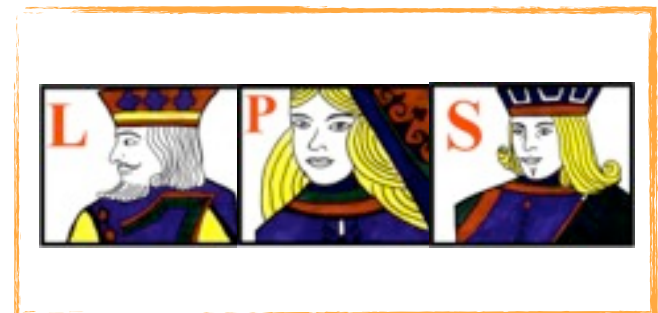
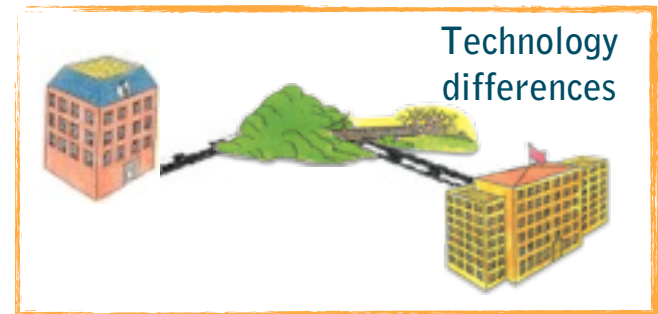
Take actions and avoid obstacles

Or, you might equate your roles and
responsibilities to a deck of cards.

The King makes decisions

The Queen is a decision partner

The Jack does what he's told



Leading from the Middle

– Where to Begin?

First, find something that is burning, maybe slowly, maybe fast.



Maybe a weakness in your operational process or a new market or industry trend not being addressed.

Define it.

Then—Start leading— take initiative, bring attention to the issue, and after gaining agreement to address it, bring together the stakeholders.

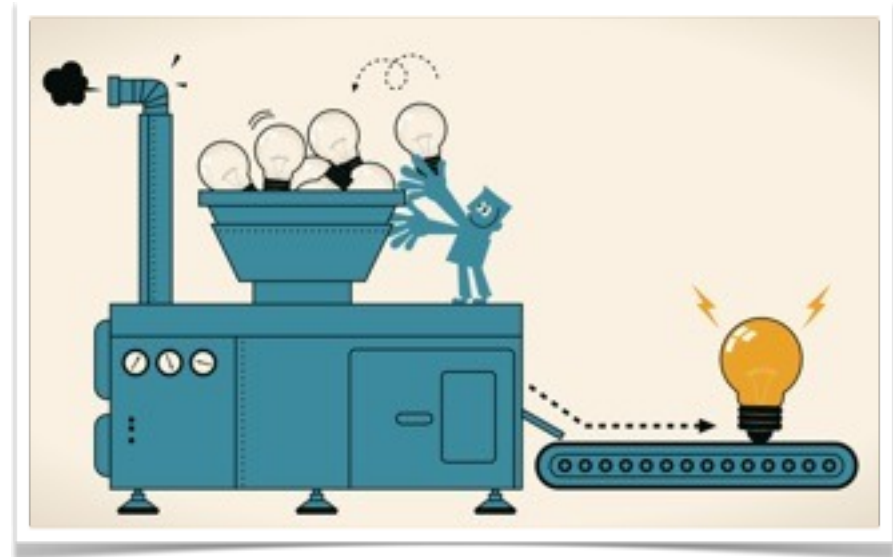
With Metaphor Mapping, you cover a lot of ground in a short time. In less than a day, group can map the weaknesses in the current operation, create an ideal operations vision and an action plan. Metaphors are that powerful!

If your problem is important and urgent,
Metaphor Mapping will ensure a solid strategy, built
collaboratively.

There'll be clear understanding of who does what-- driven by symbols
that communicate to the gut and can't be forgotten.

You can then bring together
the stakeholders. The
metaphors will draw out
their ideas and the mapping
process will help them build
on the best ones.

**You'll find the solution
you've been seeking.**



Example:

Initiating an I.T. Project

Imagine you're a project manager. You control the performance appraisals of your team members, if not the paychecks. But, **you depend on peers to deliver parts of the project.** And, internal clients who set the requirements and judge you. And further, a steering committee controls your budget and makes the big decisions.

Your project is installing a new IT system: The project's just a dream until there's agreement with the Users about how the new system will work.

You're the project manager.

You need to lead.

- and you're in the middle!

If the Users and Technology team don't collaborate, you're toast.

The need you've identified is for a "contract" on how the new system will work for the Users.



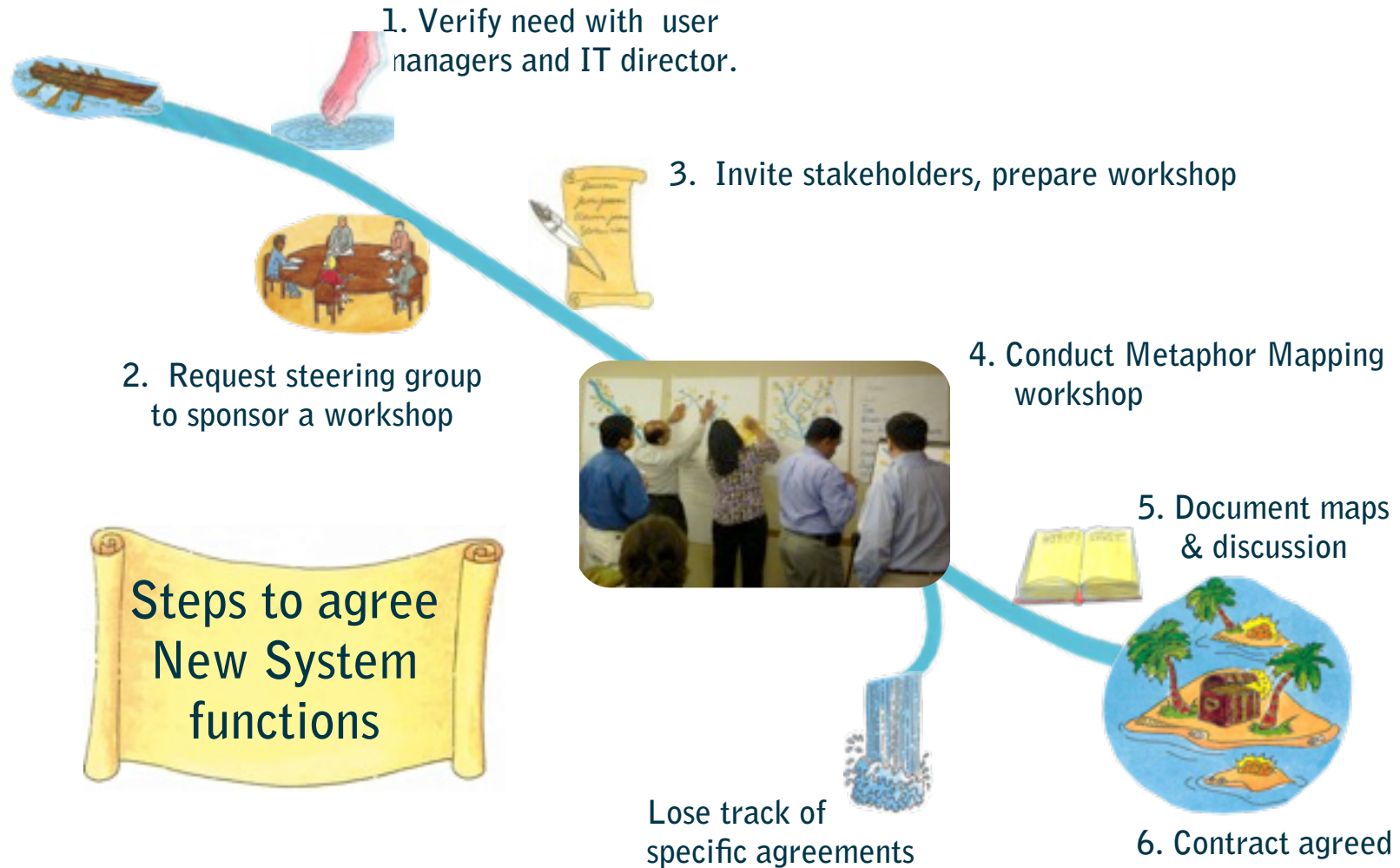
First of all, Relax. You can do this.

Leading collaboratively
is not hard.

If you bring together
knowledgeable people and
some tools, they'll take
ownership of the task,
do all the work and deliver
a great result!



The stream of project manager actions to establish a contract



The action stream



6. Contract for new system function

Start with the end in mind. What will success look like?

As an experienced project manager, you know that unless the project objectives are well understood by user managers and staff, you can't succeed. The workshop goal is a full discussion and agreement on how the organization will operate, the sequence of activities, flows of information and how business controls will be addressed. You need a contract based on this big picture understanding and want to further agree on the mechanisms for steering and managing changes. The detailed specifications will be developed as a next step in the project but this is the moment to get the senior people fully on board.

The first step toward that goal is to test the water with other stakeholders and gain their agreement on the value of a workshop.

This is your opportunity to build or improve relationships that will be of great value throughout the project. Agreement on priorities is the beginning of trust. The bond of common understanding and aspirations will carry you through future problems with schedule or deliverables.



1. Verify need with User managers and IT director

Down stream

Now armed with your colleagues' agreement, you want the project steering committee to confirm the need and insist on the workshop. While you might have been able to sponsor it yourself, it's far better that **those paying for the project require it and take ownership of the resulting contract.**



2. Ask steering committee to sponsor the workshop



3. Invite stakeholders, prepare the workshop

You can take personal responsibility for organizing the workshop or may invite one or more of the user managers to collaborate with you. You want participants to include the formal and informal leaders of all the stakeholder areas. Keep in mind that all who build the contract are signatories to it. **Anyone not in the room is a potential obstacle.**

You'll need to draft an invitation for the steering committee chair to send. It must include a formal workshop purpose statement and make clear the invitees are expected to reserve a full day for this critical task.

Tell them to bring an open mind and readiness to contribute their ideas. Nothing of consequence to the welfare of the project should go un-said.

Planning the workshop flow falls to you and any colleagues you've invited to collaborate.

An important part of your planning is defining the small groups that will build maps. Mix the functions to both include different perspectives and encourage building of new relationships.

The workshop and contract

Since you're to be a full time participant, you'll want to have someone else manage the facilitation. The sequence moves from introduction by the sponsor to small groups mapping and documenting today's operation to presenting maps to the full group.



4. Conduct Metaphor Mapping workshop

Then the mapping groups are mixed again and given the task of defining how the organization will work, once the new system is in place. You'll want the map-builders to provide enough specifics so they and the others can 'feel themselves walking around' in the changed operation. The next task is to lay out the major change steps needed. This action plan emphasizes **identifying obstacles – "What will make this difficult?" – and showing how they can be overcome.**

The full group presentations will have already brought agreement on the current operation, the vision and change process. But, re-confirm by consolidating the small group maps and narratives and reviewing again.

Arrange for the full steering committee to join the end of the workshop for a presentation of the consolidated maps and narratives. **That's the contract!**

Protect and draw value from your contract

Watch out for an unanticipated consequence! This waterfall can still bring havoc to your project. The workshop will have brought out a tremendous number of ideas, some small and some critical agreements. You want to make sure these have all been captured in detail, rather than a short-hand on a flip chart that is subject to later misinterpretation. **Elaborate the contract with some rigor.**



Lose track of specific agreements



5. Document maps & discussion

Your contract is a tremendous asset for all parties and your company.

One way to draw added value from it is to present it to a wide set of people, especially those who will be affected by the new system. While they may not have been direct collaborators in this project, they and the project will benefit from deeper understanding of how it will proceed.

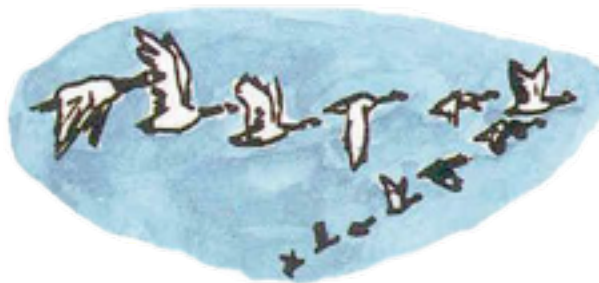
In preparation for your “road show”, **capture the maps in digital form.** You can take photos but better, build the maps in a presentation software package where you can record detailed descriptions of what the group intended when it chose certain symbols. Solicit feedback on the contract and consider any suggestions or additional ideas. Who knows? That may lead to the next fire you want to put out!

Closing Messages

The old adage “there’s no limit to what you can achieve if you don’t ask for credit” is relevant today in all complex situations. The easiest way to make things work better is to engage others, listen and build a solution together. You’ll solve the problem and your solution will endure.

Metaphors are powerful tools for organization development and change projects. They’re perfect for collaborative leaders because they make it easy for a group to see things differently, communicate clearly and address tough subjects.

Next time you’re “in the middle”,
lead collaboratively,
with metaphors!



ALPHAS DON'T BARK

Metaphors Motivate Enterprise Change



By Larry Raymond

Symbols and Metaphors are Leadership Tools



Each senior leader holds the **ultimate responsibility** to chart the terrain for his or her organization, set its goals and shape its character. This ebook explores how inspirational and working metaphors can help senior leaders find their way. And, since every pioneer knows it's best to not go it alone, the book shows how symbols and metaphors can also keep morale high among all expedition team members.

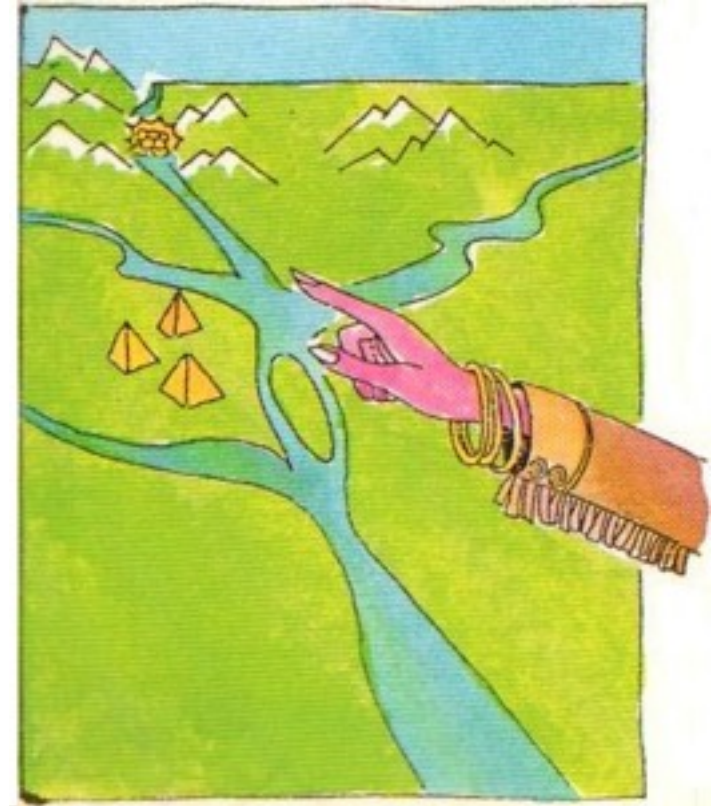
Visual metaphors transcend conventional language in their ability to quickly establish a new perspective or attitude by equating it to an existing, well understood one.

“There be dragons” in enterprise change.

You can't see them, especially when you're focused on your goals, but beware. Those dragons threaten performance and morale through uncertainty, disenfranchisement and conflict.

Pioneers can avoid them by leveraging symbols and metaphors when the mission is:

- ☀ Culture change
- ☀ Business process change
- ☀ Coordination across functions and regions



Inspirational Metaphors

They're visual images that distill a set of circumstances and send an action message.

The resulting perspective makes it easier to comprehend a complex and emotional issue, quickly identify alternatives and set a course of action.

A multinational company executive knew that optimization efforts under way would mean cutting 600 jobs in the Spanish subsidiary. She wanted to **avoid layoffs** by convincing the staff to immediately start building new skills and moving to other internal jobs and careers.

The **staff resented** the move and **resisted** her ideas. Only a few saw an improvement opportunity. *She needed to inspire them!*

These images formed the heart of her message of how they would look back at themselves and their careers next year, if they took action now.



Give every mission an inspirational metaphor.

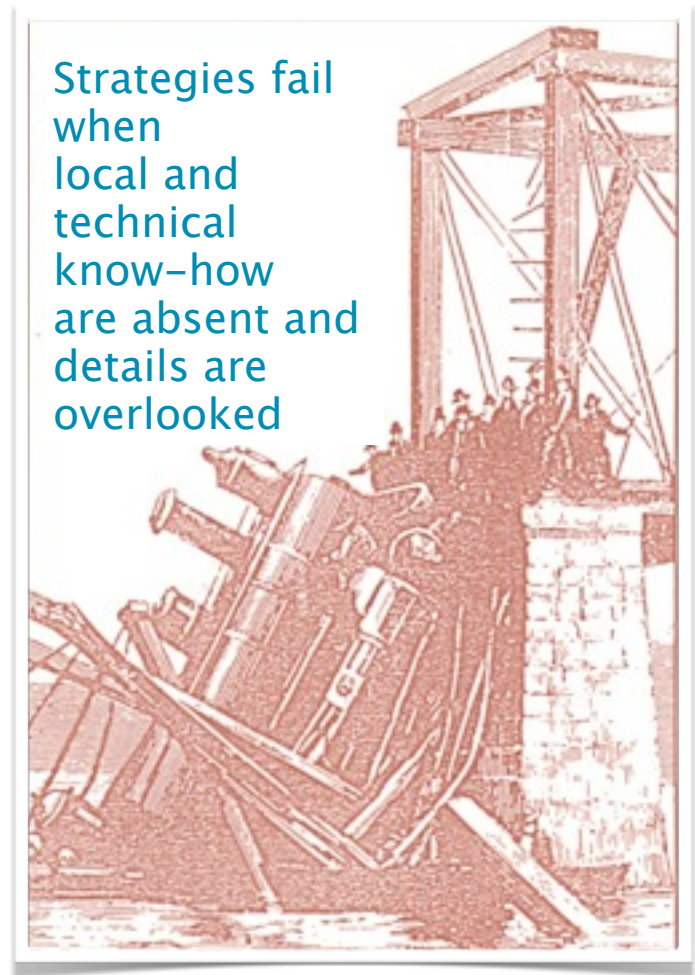
Reach for a metaphor and tell a story your staff can relate to.
Position your organization to confront change.

Working Metaphors

Working metaphors are those where the symbols implicit within the metaphor are used by groups to describe and analyze a situation.

They may be used to explore a business process (a village), strategy (a river), attitudes/behaviors (animal caricatures), roles and responsibilities (playing cards) and other aspects of organizational life.

Working metaphors are useful tools for **promoting open conversation** when addressing those problems only a group can solve.



Metaphors make it practical for larger groups to **set strategies collaboratively** because they create the environment for creative group thinking and a high degree of ownership, while still being very fast.

A three step strategy, including current state assessment, vision and action plan typically is completed in a day by a cross-function group of 25.

Enterprise or division-level strategies can be adapted and deployed top to bottom by different functions or locations by **cascading workshops**– aided by metaphors and symbols that apply regardless of function, geography or culture.

This combination of speed and collaboration is a powerful mechanism senior leaders can use to strengthen the organization and move it forward.

Move the Organization without barking

Your organization is not a flock of sheep and you're not a sheepdog but, hopefully you get the message from this strained metaphor:

There are better ways to move the organization than barking orders.

The strength of a leader is not measured in decibels, it's whether the right things are done in the right way.



Broad change programs are the province of the senior leader

They are typically addressed in one of three ways:

1. Top Down

- For example, a software company wants to establish new vision, mission and values
- Senior leaders map the big picture of how operations will function in the future
- Cascading workshops adapt the vision to functional and regional circumstances

2. Evolve & Interlock

- Chemical company supply chain senior leaders map an architecture
- Dozens of projects then optimize and interlock operations under the architecture

3. Distributed Ownership

- A central team defines regional and international standards and communication needs
- 40 small countries refine their homeland security method and coordinate with others

Collaboration ensures a successful change program.

New ideas emerge, change happens and the alpha doesn't bark.

Culture = Success

If you're responsible for a large group, you know that culture = success.

That succeeding in business is not a one shot deal, that your main differentiator is the way you've made your workforce into more than the sum of the individuals.

Depending on circumstances, you may have focused on quality of client relationships, continuous improvement in manufacturing safety or another high-leverage aspect of your business. But, if you haven't examined your overall culture, you're likely overlooking systemic weaknesses and allowing them to drain organization effectiveness.

For example, if yours is a “talk shop” rather than a “get it done” shop, your organization wastes time and is vulnerable to nimble competitors.



As senior leader, you must be the catalyst for change. It won't happen without you. But, you won't achieve change by barking about it. You need engagement, understanding and willing action from a motivated organization. Give them metaphors to work with. They'll see themselves and their challenges differently, address them collaboratively and commit themselves to change.

If you can find the right inspirational metaphor, they'll understand the logic and emotion of what they have to do. **Build windmills!**

The following pages describe more about the working metaphors available to you and how they can be used.

Continuously Engage Your Staff

When they're non-stop "heads down" doing their jobs, **they're not doing the whole job**

Your employees must also look up and out.

What are clients saying?

What are competitors doing?

How can we improve the end-to-end?



Waiting for the boss lets problems linger and good ideas lie dormant.

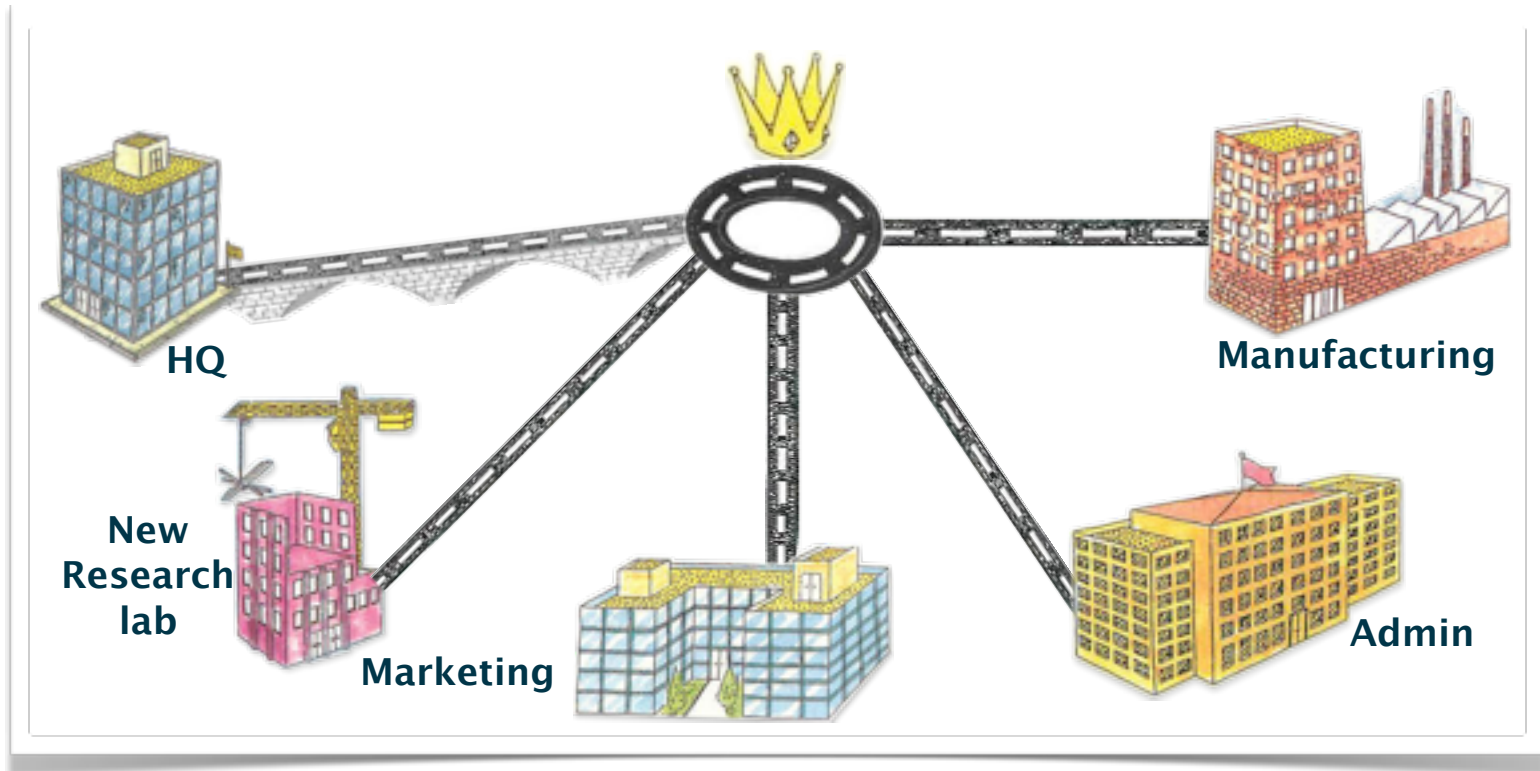
Metaphors bring passion to fix them.
Everyone on their feet. Out front. In motion.



Engagement, Not indifference.

Relationships are the Greatest Enterprise Asset

When teams build maps of their ideal operation, strong relationships are always central to their vision. A network of roads represent relationships and their quality. Every function is well connected and people know each other. They want an open culture of easy communication and dynamism.



Group mapping sessions with metaphors, such as the village, start building those

cross-functional relationships that can be the source of the next great competitive idea or the solution to a customer's problem.



Put Metaphors to Work for **you**

When each group in your organization is clear about how they fit in, their strengths, weaknesses, goals and obstacles, their energy and creativity are liberated and they're aligned with the whole organization.

They focus on the right things and don't waste time with unproductive rivalries and politics.

You can make this happen. Give them metaphors to work with and **ask (don't bark!) a few questions:**

Who are the stakeholders in your operation?



Where are the strong relationships to build upon?



Where are the weak ones to fix?



What doesn't work as well as it should?



What aspects of your function does the team value most?



What uncontrollable changes may occur in the environment?



What opportunities do you see that aren't addressed in the corporate strategy?



Symbols for Perspective

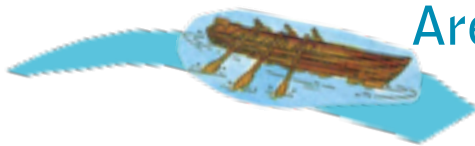
The short term success of many organizations depends on the execution of projects and strategies. Project teams are inherently optimistic. Sometimes potentially big obstacles are minimized or overlooked in status reviews.

A short **river metaphor** exercise can force an examination of relative risks and give you a better picture of whether they need help.

Here are a few questions map-building requires a project team to address:

How is the team doing?

Are members all rowing together?



Are there any hidden problems that could tear up the team?





Have the internal bureaucrats
been blocking you?

Anything you might get stuck on
or slowed down by?



What's the biggest
risk you face?



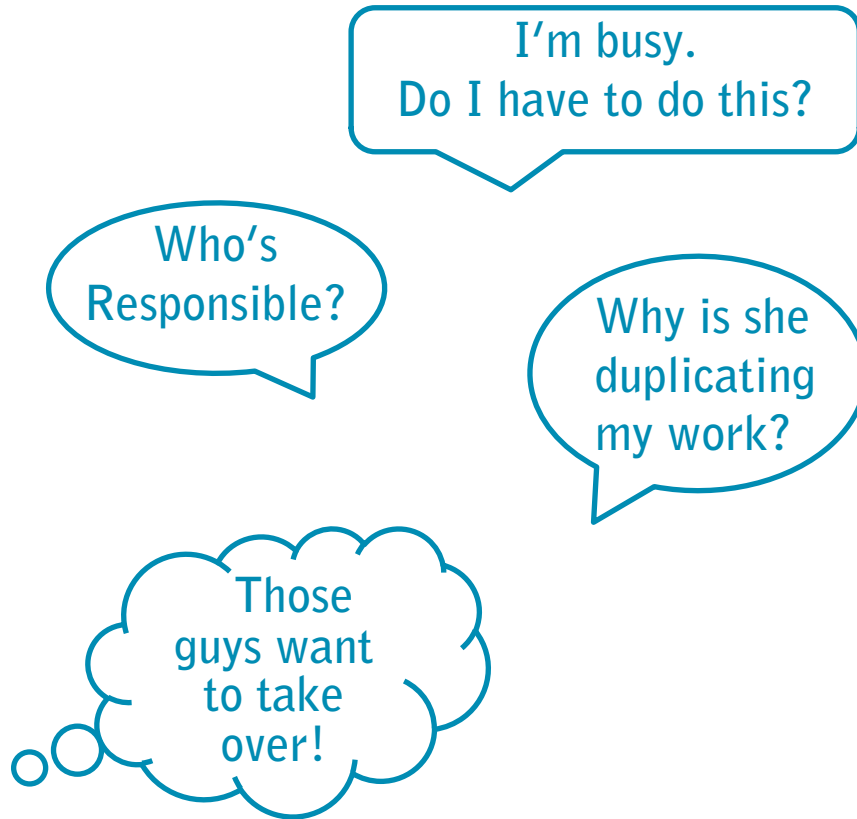
Are there signs of competitors entering the same space?



Symbols make it hard to overlook these important
questions.

They're easy to remember and natural to ask.

Symbols to Remove Uncertainty



Such sentiments
evaporate motivation.

Uncertainty causes them.

They waste energy.

You can eliminate them.

Throughout the
organization.

Call on a simple visual metaphor to make roles and responsibilities crystal clear.

Just a deck of playing cards.

Metaphor trumps uncertainty!



King - Leader, responsible



Queen - Decision partner
Must be consulted



Jack - Supports, as directed
by King or Queen

	G I S E L A	J U A N	C H I	K U R T
ACTIVITY				
#1 Establish agenda and arrange speakers	L	P	S	S
#2 Arrange room and refreshments	\$	P	L	i
#3 Advertise	P	L		S
#4 Greet guests, arrange seating		S	L	
#5 Write newsletter article	L	P		S

Closing Messages



Changing enterprise strategies, processes or culture is fraught with risks.

When senior leaders involve the whole organization in the change, they draw in more know-how and commitment and reduce those risks.

Inspirational metaphors focus and motivate organizations. Senior leaders should use them when driving any major change.

Working metaphors and symbols support an efficient, collaborative leadership style. They engage hearts and minds, motivate the staff and power the enterprise to peak performance. They're an asset available for exploitation.

When senior leaders employ metaphors and model collaborative leadership, they draw out the full strength of the enterprise and set a course for enduring prosperity.

