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Virtual Cohorts as a Team Building and Problem-Solving Tool

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# Virtual Cohorts as a Team Building and Problem-Solving Tool

Objectives

- Foster nascent relationships forged at LIAL 2018.
- Expand participants' understanding of the "four frames" of academic leadership.
- Increase comfort writing and assessing case studies.
- Explore different approaches to common leadership scenarios.
- Use technology to develop cohort culture.

Theoretical Framework: The Four Frames

Bolman, L. G., and Gallos, J. V. (2011). *Reframing academic leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. (1991). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Structural	**Political**
Human Resource	**Symbolic**
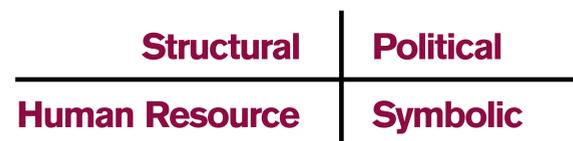
Structural Emphasizes formal roles, relationships, and hierarchies.

Political Focuses on power and resource allocation.

Human Resource Focuses on people and their satisfaction, motivation, etc.

Symbolic Builds shared meaning, rituals, values, and vision.

The concept of "reframing" acknowledges that while most leaders are strong in one or two frames, approaching a situation from a different, non-dominant frame may result in more potential solutions, as well as enhancing appreciation of different perspectives.

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Findings in Brief

- Most participants increased their comfort level in at least two frames.

- As expected, nearly all participants reported increasing their familiarity with nearly all other participants by at least a factor of one.

- All participants indicated that at the conclusion of the study there was at least one other participant who they did not know previously, but to whom they would now reach out with a problem or concern.

- Participants indicated this process was most successful at achieving the following learning objectives: "exploring different types of problem solving choices" and "identifying partners for future scholarship projects."

- Participants indicated this process was also successful at achieving the following learning objective: "exploring how to use remote technologies" and "enhance practice using the case study model."

- Participants indicated this process was least successful at achieving the following learning objective: "enhance and practice knowledge of the leadership frames".

- Of the learning objects which participants ranked as most important to them individually, all were "mostly" or "fully realized."

Tips For Starting Your Own Long-Distance Cohort

- Most effective groups are small - between 5-8 people.

- Ensure members have a similar scope of responsibility/common group.

- Ensure members share a common theoretical grounding.

- Consider limiting the speakers in each meeting.

- Establish time limits for speakers.

- Schedule (way) in advance: Meetings, topic due dates, etc.

- 1-2 page limit per case study.

- If mastering the frames is a priority, balance your group according to individual's pre-existing strengths and weaknesses in applying the frames.

- Be clear about what matters most to your group. Is it building relationships? Mastering theoretical approaches? Learning about common leadership challenges?

- Trust takes time! Meet regularly!

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