Prep Work

The prep work below was sent to board members twelve days before the February 6th board meeting.

Hello NCG Board Members,

I am honored to serve as your consultant and facilitator for the segment of your February 6th Board meeting on *Leadership Visibility and Engagement*.

As Robynn has informed you, I have interviewed a cross-section of nine Board members and Executive Team members selected by her and Matt. I'll be producing a *Summary of Findings* for you to review in advance of the meeting. Additionally, I will circulate proposed target outcomes and an agenda, which you will review and align on at the start of the meeting. You will receive all of these items within the next week.

For now, I'm including some prep work in the form of articles and questions for reflection. The prep material included in this email will be central to our work together. I encourage you to read it at your earliest convenience, with the understanding that quality reflection on these concepts often occurs best over several days. In order to prepare optimally for February 6th, I suggest that you not wait until a few days before the meeting to begin reading this material.

Please read the following, and reflect on the associated questions:

- Cynefin framework
    - Read A Leader's Framework for Decision Making
    - Review the attached diagram on the Cynefin framework as an

aid to the article. (This version of the Cynefin framework diagram appears in a blog by a relatively unknown author, Harish Jose, without copyright attribution. It is similar to one developed by the creator of the Cynefin framework, Dave Snowden. However, the attached version includes more elements, in a simple form, than almost any other on the web, making it especially useful)

    - Reflect on these questions, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them:
        - In which of the four contexts (simple, complicated, complex, chaotic) do you typically work?
        - In which context(s) are you most comfortable functioning?
        - Which context(s) applies most strongly and/or often to the greatest challenges & opportunities facing NCG member co-ops?
        - Which context(s) applies most strongly and/or often to NCG's greatest challenges & opportunities?
        - What are the implications of your answers to the questions above?
        - What are the implications for you as leaders?
- Robust Adaptive Strategies
    - Read *Robust Adaptive Strategies*, attached
    - Reflect on these questions, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them:
        - What concepts and ideas from this article, if any, apply to the current situation(s) within which NCG and member co-ops are operating?

    - If you were to map the current situation(s) facing NCG and member co-ops onto a fitness landscape, what would it look like? What would be the peaks and valleys?
    - Might there be multiple, robust, adaptive strategies that could assist NCG and member co-ops in securing a successful future? If so, which would you suggest as most promising?
    - Is it possible for member co-ops and/or NCG to deploy "platoons of hikers" to find high peaks in the fitness landscape? If so, what might that look like? What systems, processes and other infrastructure would be required? What would be required of you as leaders?
- Reframing Organizations
  - Read the attached handout on *Reframing Organizations*
  - Reflect on these questions, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them:
    - If you had to choose one frame as your dominant frame, the one with which you are most comfortable functioning, which would it be? (This is a forced choice. Please choose one.)
    - If you had to ascribe one dominant frame to NCG, a dominant disposition for the organization overall, which would it be? (Please choose one.)
    - If you had to ascribe one dominant frame to NCG member co-ops, a dominant disposition for the overall network, which would it be? (Please choose one.)
    - What are the implications of your answers to the questions above?

- As leaders, how might you suggest using different frames for yourself as an individual, for the NCG board, for NCG, for your co-op, and for the NCG member co-ops, to be most effective in facing current challenges and opportunities, leveraging key assets and resources, and moving towards an optimal future

Additionally:

- Reflect on your highest vision for NCG member co-ops and NCG 5-10 years out. What do you see? Come prepared to share key elements of your vision. (In the board meeting, I will probably ask you to share just a few elements of your vision briefly with a colleague. It is not necessary to develop a full or polished vision.)
- Reflect on all assets and resources, of any type, currently available to NCG member co-ops and NCG. List the critical few that can best be leveraged to move NCG and the member co-ops from the current reality, to an optional future. Come prepared to share your lists.
- What would be required of you as leaders to leverage these assets and resources in service of a compelling future vision?

Optional:
The section below is interesting reading that may have significant application to NCG and member co-ops. However, for purposes of the board meeting, it is optional.

- Business Innovation, Disruption and Transformation
    - In [Disruption Vs. Innovation: What's The Difference?](), Forbes writer Caroline Howard writes:
      People are sometimes confused about the difference between innovation and disruption. It's not exactly black and white, but there are real distinctions, and it's not just splitting hairs. Think

of it this way: Disruptors are innovators, but not all innovators are disruptors — in the same way that a square is a rectangle but not all rectangles are squares. Still with me?

Innovation and disruption are similar in that they are both makers and builders. Disruption takes a left turn by literally uprooting and changing how we think, behave, do business, learn and go about our day-to-day. Harvard Business School professor and disruption guru Clayton Christensen says that a disruption displaces an existing market, industry, or technology and produces something new and more efficient and worthwhile. It is at once destructive and creative.

- Read The Transformative Business Model
- Reflect on these questions, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them:
    - What major transformations (whether innovative, disruptive, or other) has the food co-op sector faced within the last few decades? What major transformations is it facing currently? What major transformations might it face in the foreseeable future?
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    - How skillful are NCG member co-ops and NCG in navigating sector- and/or industry-wide transformations? How skillful are NCG member co-ops and NCG in catalyzing sector- and/or industry-wide transformations?
    - How might some or all of the six keys to success listed in this article serve NCG member co-ops and NCG in navigating current or future transformations, and/or in catalyzing them?
    - Most conventional businesses in the dominant economy do not

account for triple or quadruple bottom lines in assessing the value of transformative business models. What might be strategic advantages, or disadvantages, of factoring in triple or quadruple bottom lines when creating or assessing transformative business models? What would this look like?

- What are the implications of your answers to the questions above in general, and specifically for you as leaders?

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to email or call me (510) 551-5101.

I'm very much looking forward to our session together!

~ Lawrence

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