Tools for Leading in Loosely Coupled Systems

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About CFAR

CFAR is a private management consulting firm that helps leaders create organizations in which talent and innovation flow freely across the enterprise. People own the changes they need to make, and behavior is aligned with mission and strategy.

CFAR spun off from The Wharton School in 1987. We leverage our academic roots in strategy, management and the social sciences to help clients work through complex organizational issues.

Our clients are mission-driven organizations—including health systems, academic medical centers, family enterprises, life science companies, universities, foundations and associations.

We partner with our clients to understand obstacles to their success and offer ideas, tools and approaches that improve outcomes and performance.
Goals for today

1. Reflect on the challenges of working in loosely-coupled systems like the courts.

2. Share some approaches that have worked and built strong, well functioning court organizations.

3. Provide useful frameworks and tools for Managers to use in your work.
Our agenda

1. Welcome, introductions, purpose of session

2. Challenges of loosely coupled systems

3. Approaches to working in these kinds of organizations
   - Tool 1: Creating productive leadership pairs across the judicial-administrative boundary
   - Tool 2: Clarifying roles through decision rights
   - Tool 3: Using influence to get work done

4. Applying these frameworks to your work
Challenges of Loosely Coupled Systems
Courts can be thought of as “loosely coupled” organizations

- Segmented between judicial (church) and administrative (state)
- Administration may feel undervalued and under authorized
- Individuals and groups retain a high level of autonomy
- Tension between integration and autonomy
- Relationship-driven rather than formally structured
- Accountability and authority can be diffusely distributed
Systems are often loosely coupled at multiple levels.

**Macro**
- *(Institutional)*
  - Practice Plan
  - Medical School
  - Hospital
  - University

**Midrange**
- *(Team on a Unit)*
  - MDs
  - NRSES
  - Ancillary
  - Admin
  - "Parallel Play"

**Micro**
- *(Individual)*
  - Faculty Member
  - Clinician
  - Researcher
  - Multiple hats, views may vary from one setting to another
Creating room to lead from the middle

- **Notice how often** you stand between people who ought to be together.
- **Be a middle who stays out of the middle**
- Bring together **those who need** to be together and do what it takes to make their interactions with each other productive.
- **Your value? Bring tools, skills, and perspectives** that help *them* resolve their issues and conflicts. **Coach others** to be able to do what they need to do.
- You **aren’t abdicating**; you remain committed to the resolution.
- Opens up a **whole new realm of power**—who and what should be connected around here.

Tool 1. Creating productive leadership pairs across the judicial-administrative boundary
Increased need for integration

Increased specialization makes organizations ever more dependent on the emergence of productive pairs. The pair plays the integrator, the translator and multilingual role rather than that being resident in a single individual.
Characteristics of Productive Pairs

- Separate bodies of knowledge, networks, etc., even different ways of looking at the world.
- Understanding and valuing each other’s area of expertise and perspective.
- A belief that both areas need to be integrated in the service of the superordinate mission, and often, a shared passion for the purpose.
- Enough time or history together to explore the interdependencies.
- Trust of one another that enables direct talk and push back, even when the topic is centered in the other’s world (e.g., not OK to “pull rank” by one’s expertise).
- Minimal use of triangulating in another party as a way of exporting difficulties in the pair to an absent third party (for example, feeling close though involving a common enemy or shifting blame to an absent third party when they disappoint each other).
- Strong in resisting being split apart by the manipulations of their respective colleagues who may talk behind the back of one or the other.
Five ways that conflict is handled

Role Negotiation: A tool to build the skill needed to bridge the gap

- Can help you **work across personal and role differences to clarify expectations** about behavior required to create productive working alliances
- Enables participants to **discuss the informal agreements and expectations we have of each other** that often influence how we take up our roles
- **Assumes that most people prefer a fair, negotiated understanding about roles** to a state of uncertainty or unresolved conflict and are willing to make some **concessions** to one another in order to achieve that shared understanding
Taking the mystery out of understanding the other’s point of view

Successful Role Negotiations rely on:

- **Focus on task**
- **Open and honest dialogue** about behavior as each person has experienced it
- **Clarity of expectations** and demands from each other
- **Honest feedback** and positive reinforcement
Successful Role Negotiation relies on feedback

Dimensions of effective feedback:

- **Specific vs. Global**—Use concrete examples
- **Descriptive vs. Evaluative**—Describe your experience without evaluating or attributing motives to another person’s behavior
- **Timely vs. Delayed**—The best feedback is given close to the time the event occurred
Role Negotiation: Three types of questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More of:</th>
<th>Less of:</th>
<th>The same:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you do the following things more or better, it would help me to increase my effectiveness in my role...</td>
<td>If you were to do the following things less, or were to stop doing them, it would help me to increase my effectiveness in my role...</td>
<td>The following things which you have been doing help to increase my effectiveness, and I hope you will continue to do them...</td>
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Tool 2. Clarifying Roles through Decision Charting
Lack of clarity about roles can hurt collaboration

- As organizations grow more complex, confusion can increase around who participates in what decisions and how. Uncertainty about substance gets mixed with uncertainty about process.
- Groups become less competent because roles and responsibilities are unclear. So, either...
  - Politics dominate substance, or...
  - Conflict is avoided and suboptimal choices are made.
- This can lead to:
  - duplication of effort
  - decisions falling through the cracks
  - unnecessary slow downs in productivity
  - unmanaged conflict
Decision Charting is a tool that can help

- Decision Charting helps negotiate a clear and shared understanding of roles, authority, communication, and decision processes
- Gives us a richer language to describe participation and involvement
- Gives us a way to understand work in the “seams”
- Helps people to articulate authority, roles and responsibilities
It is a deceptively simple process...

You need **three elements**
to chart a decision:

- **A decision**
- The list of people who either have, believe they have, or should have something to say about that decision.
- A way to describe the role of each of those people.
The third element describes one’s participation in a decision...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Responsible—the person who takes the initiative in the particular area, develops alternatives, gets relevant consultations, makes the initial recommendation to the A; accountable if nothing happens in the area.</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>Approve—a person who must sign off (or veto) a decision before it is implemented. A selects from options developed by the R role; accountable for the quality of the decision.</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Consulted—a person who must be consulted prior to a decision being reached but with no veto power; accountable for giving their best thinking to the R or A.</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Informed—a person who must be notified after a decision is made, but before it is publicly announced; someone who needs to know the outcome for other related tasks but need not give input; accountable for following through on their tasks after being informed.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>No Role—this person has no role in the decision: accountable for staying out of the decision process.</td>
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<th>All Judges</th>
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<th>Trial Court Manager</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<td>Other decisions?</td>
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**A:** Approve  **C:** Consulted
**R:** Responsible  **I:** Informed
Tool 3. Using influence to get work done
Influence and persuasion are communication processes, and a way of leading in complex organizations where you may not have authority.

Good leaders use them as tools to navigate in a shifting landscape of authority—and it take constant practice.

It’s through influence and persuasion that leaders can collaborate effectively and achieve their goals.
Influence and persuasion are part of your toolkit

Key challenge is "attunement"—getting the other person’s perspective.
“Some of my most difficult negotiations are internal.”

Relationships

Interests

Politics
There is a science of influence

- **Liking**: We most prefer to say yes to the requests of someone we know and like. (Similarity and respect: the “skunk” problem.)

- **Authority**: There is a strong sense of duty to authority within us all; because obedience to authority is most rewarding, it is easy to comply automatically with that authority. (Expert knowledge and competence.)

- **Social Proof**: One means we use to determine what is correct is to find out what other people think is correct. (Snowball effect.)

- **Reciprocity**: We feel obligated to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us. (Favors and trades.)

- **Scarcity**: Opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited. (Fear of loss.)

- **Commitment and Consistency**: Once we have made a commitment, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment. (Small-step actions.)

Influencing is a four-step process

1. Survey the situation and set goals.
2. Remove the barriers.
3. Make your pitch. Use PCAN. Make your pitch memorable.
4. Secure your commitment. Target key individuals. Manage the politics. Create a “snowball effect.”
STEP ONE  
Survey your situation

- What are my goals?
- What is the core of my idea, and how can I polish it?
  - How is it better than the alternatives?
- Who are the decision makers and influencers?
  - What is my “stepping stone” strategy?
STEP TWO

Remove the barriers to effective influence and persuasion

Barriers to seeing you

- Relationships
- Credibility

Interpersonal

Why should I pay attention to you or your idea?

Barriers to seeing your idea

- Beliefs and Values
- Interests
- Channels and Language

Organizational

Understand their interests

1. **Why might it be in the other party’s interests to support my idea?** When you can, avoid conflicting interests and build on shared interests.

2. **What do other parties want that I can give them to gain their support?** Look for low-cost ways to give others what they want.

3. **Why might they say no?** Try to find shared interests that outweigh conflicting interests.
We get stuck on positions, not interests

We get stuck here:

Look beneath the surface!

Use issues and interests to explore the value that you can create for yourself and for your partners.
Are you on the right channel?

**Authority** (emphasis on using formal position or rules)

**Rationality** (emphasis on using data and reasons)

**Vision** (emphasis on organizational goals, purposes, and aspirations)

**Relationship** (emphasis on liking, similarity, and reciprocity)

**Interests** (emphasis on using trades and compromises)

**Politics** (emphasis on managing perceptions and building consensus)

A core skill in influence and persuasion: perspective-taking

If there is any secret to success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from that person’s angle as well as your own.”
—Henry Ford

What are techniques for gaining perspective (role reversals, etc.)?
Build the relationship

**Trust** level: Will I extend myself for you? Will I give you the benefit of the doubt?

**Reciprocity** level: Are you reliable?

**Rapport** level: Do I know you?
Application

Thinking about the three tools and skills we covered:

- Productive Pairs
- Decision charting to clarify roles
- Leading through influence

How can you strengthen your manager role in your organization?
Bibliography and further reading

- CFAR. Strategic Choices Tool.


Oshry, Barry. “Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Mysteries of Organizational Life.”


