Photo by Daniel Bowman

BELIEF #1

BLENDED LEADERS ENGAGE WITH THOUGHT LEADERS AND ENGAGE AS THOUGHT LEADERS

CROTTY'S WRESTLING

We begin unfolding our beliefs by calling to mind a near-empty school building in the middle of the summer of 2014. A few maintenance professionals are working with light fixtures and air vents; a few more wander through empty hallways slopping paintbrushes into paint. The scheduler processes schedules, the registrar processes grades, and construction on a new building grinds on and then off in a rhythm dictated by a man with a gruff voice. Steve, meanwhile, is fiddling with a pen and pad at his desk,

tweaking an agenda for an upcoming leadership retreat. He is stuck—and the building that usually inspires and energizes him, that usually fans his ideas, is failing him. He has no colleagues to bump into, no students to ask him questions, no classroom discussions to shake up his thinking—nothing to break the logjam in his mind.

Steve, like many people in education at that time, had been thinking about grit. He felt it was important for leaders in his school to be aware of the topic, to understand how it might fit into their work with other teachers and with students. He added the topic to his agenda along with a framing question, feeling unsettled about both. Something was missing; he wasn't seeing all the angles; and the books and articles he had read on the subject hadn't helped him to feel settled. Normally when stuck, he would just walk to the office of one of his trusted colleagues . . . or even talk to one of his brightest students. Normally, when school was in full swing, the energy of the place was enough to help him think.

Steve found the support, and the scratch for his itch, on *To Keep Things Whole*, a blog published at regular intervals by Mark Crotty, head of St. John's Episcopal School in Texas. Steve regularly checks in with this blog because Crotty possesses two key characteristics of an effective digital thought leader: a useful, wide-ranging antenna and a quick trigger finger. He picks up important currents in the educational world and then has the discipline and confidence to project his own opinions, his own thinking, into the fray. It was no surprise that Crotty had written about grit at almost the exact moment when Steve was thinking about it.

And it was no surprise that Crotty's thinking was helpful as Steve attempted to plan his team's retreat. The seed of grit—failure—seemed so easy to talk about, but much less easy to accept, much less easy to promote. That was the problem Steve was having with it. Crotty helped Steve make sense of his misgivings when he wrote the following:

> So much of the educational conversation these days focuses on failure and the need for it. Yet one thought keeps nagging at me: Do we really want children to experience failure very often? Part of my concern comes from the word failure. It's a loaded, powerful word, full of psychological barbs. Some argue that we need to soften the word, and that strikes me as a rather quixotic notion. Plus I believe we should keep the word for true failures that deserve it. I keep coming back to Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, which allows students to work at levels which allow them to experience the right degree of success but also struggle until an adult intercedes at the right moment. It strikes me that's what we want. For students to stumble, trip, fall, then get back up. When this happens while a toddler is learning to walk, we don't call it a failure. I'm not sure why we would with any form of learning. (Crotty, 2013)

Crotty's wrestling with the topic of failure was as good as anything Steve had read about the subject. In fact, it was better because Crotty had seemingly digested the same readings Steve had, and here he was clearing his own thinking, his own reactions, as a thoughtful school leader. Facing a near-empty summertime building, Steve wasn't likely to find a colleague with whom to debate the merits of what he wanted to bring to his retreat. And a phone call to a colleague, most likely at the beach or whiling away the summer with family, didn't seem appropriate. Steve turned to Crotty because, for one, he could access Crotty's thoughts without disturbing him. Also, Crotty had always been a blogger who was willing to embrace, challenge, and frame educational trends.

Reading a blog, in itself, is hardly worth reporting. But reading a blog that you've read before, while carrying in your mind a certain (local) problem you are trying to solve, is a way of working made possible by blending practice. We're emphasizing Steve's interaction with Crotty's blog because it represents a critical habit for school leaders today. They must find ways, and make time, to wade into streams of voices that exist outside the ones they hear in their own, familiar school contexts. These outside voices are valuable in that they exist beyond the constraints established by context (time and place in particular). Steve's time and place couldn't help him; at the same time, his disciplined approach to reading certain blogs, along with knowing how to make use of what he found there, could help him at a crucial time in his summer planning.

There are different names for such practices, which are recognized by researchers as being effective in generating creativity and in aiding effective problem solving. Creativity expert Scott Barry Kaufman, scientific director of the Imagination Institute in the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, might describe Steve's practice, the one that helped him frame grit and resilience for a leadership team, as an "openness to experience." In his book, *Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined* (2013), Kaufman asserts that openness to experience, in the right amount, is critical to creativity; it can help a person approach a new situation or piece of information without immediately relegating it to a particular category. It also allows us to avoid the immediate conclusion that something is irrelevant. Blogs and other digital scrimshaw are less polished than journals or magazines or books, which frequently employ editors to corral content and proofreaders to reduce language to a single meaning. That doesn't mean blogs are irrelevant or even less relevant, though many people avoid them as sources of knowledge because they want access to knowledge that at least gives off the impression of being "approved." Openness to experience, on the contrary, allows one to learn in places and ways that some people will not.
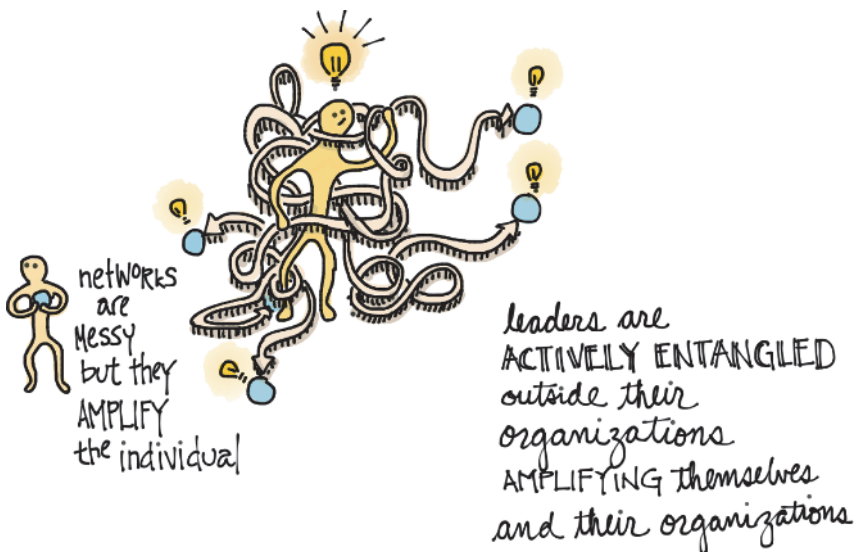
What becomes critical, then, if you want to take at least some of your cues from blogs, is something that social scientists call "individual absorptive capacity," which, according to researchers Salvatore Parise, Eoin

Whelen, and Steve Todd, is "the ability of employees to identify, assimilate and exploit new ideas" (Parise, Whelen, & Todd, 2015). Paired with openness to experience, it becomes a vital tool for activating knowledge that comes from channels outside the mainstream, or outside the range of voices that you hear on a regular basis. Listening to the same voices creates filter bubbles and redundancy; they tend to reinforce one another's perceptions. Listening to a wide array of voices, some from outside your regular context, and translating them into the community and context in which you work, allows new ideas to enter your closed systems.

Both the givers and the receivers of thought leadership understand that blending leadership can advance their schools. Steve's presentation of grit and resilience, tempered by Crotty's thoughts, achieved its purpose. The leadership team absorbed the trend without becoming fanatical about it; they knew it had some flaws, and they kept this in mind as they worked it into their own daily practices with colleagues and students.

BROADER ENTANGLEMENTS

So some leaders publish and read blogs, and some leaders go a step further, building and sharpening their leadership positions through more active entanglements in the online world. They not only follow thought leaders, but also engage actively with them, building off their work, their thinking, as if it were a platform.

networks are messy but they AMPLIFY the individual

leaders are ACTIVELY ENTANGLED outside their organizations AMPLIFYING themselves and their organizations

Recently, Reshan followed a tweet by Scott McLeod to a blog post by Larry Cuban. As someone who cares deeply about the place of iPads in education, Reshan was first interested in the conversation because of his respect for the participants. Like Steve, he wanted to see what some of the brightest minds in the field were saying; he wanted to learn from these thinkers and doers.

Clicking the blog, he found that Cuban had used his platform to comment on the Los Angeles Unified School District's deal with Apple. iPads would be distributed to all 650,000 students in the district. Reviewing the deal, Cuban questioned the depth of research that had informed the decision. Additionally, he threw in a dollop of skepticism about the way in which the district had outlined its steps for measuring the success of the initiative as well as the accounting figures.

In the same way that Crotty helped Steve make sense of his own thoughts, Cuban helped Reshan. But as Reshan witnessed the blog's comment tail unfurling, he grew increasingly concerned about some of the oppositions to Cuban's post. He jumped into the fray, extending Cuban's argument:

> *I would suggest that people are looking for or relying on the wrong kind of research, considering how complex educational environments are. I agree with you that the traditional paradigm moves too slowly, so it is up to educational technology researchers to shift the conversation away from the tools themselves and towards learning, pedagogy and assessment. When those things are at the forefront, the constantly evolving technology is much easier to slide into the conversation. Right now it seems that the development and emergence of the tools are driving the learning and pedagogy choices, when it should be the other way around. (Richards, 2013)*

Reshan, as an educational technology researcher and leader, has a stake in any ed tech conversation that garners dozens of comments, as Cuban's blog post did. What's more, his perspective is a valuable one for schools to embrace. Pedagogy should always precede partnerships.

Blended leaders, as depicted in Steve's example, pull in content continually; those same leaders, as depicted in Reshan's example, push back when they need to, just like a leader would push back against a policy in his or her school if that policy seemed poorly reasoned, or worse, antithetical to the relationships educators seek to build with the students in their care. By leveling the proverbial playing field, interconnected computers also extend that playing field. Leaders can "overhear" much more than they used to; they then have to decide whether they want to act on what they hear or ignore it.

Acting helps the thinker with whom you are aligning; at the same time, it leads to co-creative possibilities, enhancing the thinking itself. Reshan's engagement in Cuban's online forum parallels countless other cases in which online collaboration has led to a productive proliferation of information and learning. Rainie and Wellman spend much time in their 2012 book *Networked* profiling individuals from a diverse array of professional and nonprofessional fields who have benefited from the collaborative aspect of online creation. A telling example was the story of Willowaye (a username), a Wikipedia editor. Wikipedia, the ubiquitous online encyclopedia, is well known for being edited and maintained primarily by over 2.8 million non-professional users. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Willowaye found himself in a maelstrom of editors making changes to newly relevant, and oftentimes charged, political pages. Rainie and Wellman observed that

> *the interactions that Willowaye experienced while editing these articles illustrate how networked creators collaborate to produce a collection of valuable information. . . . His editorial experience on Wikipedia during the Obama presidential campaign required that he interact with fellow editors to produce articles about Obama's parents. This often meant that there were back-and-forth discussion of what statements should be included, omitted, enhanced, or downplayed. . . . Creating online material not only gives networked creators a sense of teamwork, but also may lead to new forms of innovation. (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 203)*

Willowaye's creative engagement in an online community (like Reshan's) thus stimulated both his own knowledge and the information available to users through means otherwise impossible to access.

WALKING THE OREGON TRAIL

Before integrated technology was a goal for curricular and instructional leaders, students went to computer class. In the 1980s, students learned Logo or played Math Blaster or perhaps learned to keyboard. Do you remember the original Oregon Trail?

In the 1990s, high school students may have been introduced to hyper-card applications, word processing, spreadsheets, and maybe even some computer programming in languages like C or Java. In the 2000s, computer teachers may have continued teaching keyboarding, while adding the Microsoft Office suite among other software that might be useful in other disciplines. But the computer teacher was the source of the instruction.

In the past decade, the instructional responsibility for computer use has shifted from the computer teacher as a standalone specialist, and his or her class as a "drop-and-go" class, toward a model of integrated educational technology. In this new model, the teaching and application of computer programs is embedded in disciplines or content so that students learn to use the tools in context. The 1:1 computing models, including BYOD (bring your own device) and school-issued devices, have helped eliminate the computer laboratory as a learning space, turning every room into a technology center.

The current situation sounds promising indeed, but in the world of technology, things rarely, if ever, sit still. In the current day, though this concept is being whispered rather than shouted in most quarters, computer science, robotics, design, and engineering together form a discipline that may have more relevance than many other traditional disciplines taught in school. By extension, the question of space has resurfaced. In order to explore these associated ideas, the argument goes, it seems that a return to the computer lab (or design/hacker/makerspace) is necessary.

But what do you do if your school has been spending time and energy integrating technology, only to find that the real truth is this: You need both integrated educational technology (to introduce PowerPoint, Word, and Web research, for example) and computer science (to teach programming, design, and engineering)? Or rather, how do you even find your footing? How do you know which direction is best when, looking back, so much has changed and shifted and, looking forward, so much will change and shift?

If you're a person charged with leading an educational technology program, you might begin by talking to other leaders who are struggling with the same challenges and who are learning from the same experiences. Faced with the queries listed, Reshan attended a monthly meeting of a consortium of regional school technologists who proposed the discussion topic of computer science education. A few people volunteered to share their own approaches, and the coordinator of the consortium (an annual position chosen by the "elders" of the group) was able to bring in someone from CodeAcademy.org to share her perspective. Reshan walked away from the meeting with an understanding: to meaningfully prepare young people to work with technology, schools need to both teach them how to apply tools and applications to different contexts and teach them how to design and program.

More important, for our purposes, is the way in which one can arrive at such certainty, such focus. Today's leaders cannot be insular, gazing at the navels of their own organizations or talking to the same people offering the same predictable advice. Hagel and Brown emphasize and extend this message in a report called "Institutional Innovation."

If we really want to achieve scalable learning, we can't stop at the four walls of the firm. As Bill Joy famously observed, "No matter how many smart people there are within your firm, remember that there are far more smart people outside your firm." We will never learn fast enough if we limit ourselves to the people within any single institution, no matter how large it is and how smart they are. (Hagel & Brown, 2013, p. 9)

Leaders have to be willing to travel outside the "four walls of the firm." They have to follow leadership consultant Les McKeown's advice that a healthy organization will "[expose] itself, through its executives, to other experiences, other realities, other solutions, other questions, other answers" (McKeown, 2010, p. 110). These days, leaders look out for their organizations by looking out of their organizations. Blended leaders, because they break down "time, path, place, and/or pace" specialize in such practice.

IT'S HARD FOR SCHOOL LEADERS
TO GET OUT OF THE BUILDING BUT...

NOT ALL THE SMART PEOPLE
ARE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Just sayin'

Why? Because blended leaders know that there are many ways to go outside the four walls of their organizations, many ways to examine other realities, solutions, questions, and answers. They know that you don't have to leave school to leave school. Whether they are active professionally on Twitter or Facebook, or spend time reading relevant blogs; whether they engage with others through webinars or the comment functions embedded in various media, blended leaders make it their business to know where to find whatever they happen to be looking for. They are "networked" in the

sense described by Rainie and Wellman: "Networked individuals have partial memberships in multiple networks and rely less on permanent membership in settled groups. They must calculate where they can turn for different kinds of help—and what kind of help to offer others as they occupy nodes in others' extended networks" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 12).

Ronald Burt of the University of Chicago further extends our understanding of the way individuals can span networks to increase their individual performance. In his work *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*, he outlines two explanations for the inequality of individual performance in the workplace: the Human Capital Theory and the Social Capital Theory:

> *The human capital explanation of the inequality is that the people who do better are more able individuals; they are more intelligent, more attractive, more articulate, more skilled. . . . The social capital metaphor is that the people who do better are somehow better connected. (Burt, 2001, p. 32)*

It is the latter theory in which Burt is interested. In his empirical examination of the social capital metaphor, Burt deals with the inherent gaps in social structure that prohibit relevant information from circulating efficiently between groups. He points out that even if the information being dispersed is of high quality and eventually reaches everyone, this dispersion takes time. This temporal factor means that the person who attains the information earlier has an advantage over the one who learns of it later, and is better equipped to deal with relevant emerging issues. The difference between these two people, Burt argues, is that the person who attained the information earlier was the one who was able to better span the inherent gaps in social structure, or, as Burt calls them, "structural holes."

Burt employs extensive empirical research of American corporations to support his claim that "teams composed of people whose networks extend beyond the team to span structural holes in the company are significantly more likely to be recognized as successful (p. 42)." In a comprehensive employee performance evaluation filled out by managers and coworkers at a large financial organization, Burt found that:

> *Officers with less constrained networks . . . have a significantly higher probability of receiving an outstanding evaluation (-2.3 t-test). The stronger effect is the tendency for officers living in the closeted world of a constrained network to receive a "poor" evaluation (3.3 t-test). (Burt, 2001, p. 41)*

Burt also unearthed a negative association between early promotion, relative salary, bonus compensation, and network constraint among employees. These findings demonstrate the numerous advantages of being a networked individual, unfettered by the "four walls of the firm."

NETWORKING, BUT NOT THAT KIND

In the past, the idea of networking could carry a negative connotation, especially for educators. Some people certainly connect with others online as a form of self-promotion, pushing an agenda that has more to do with their own aspirations for their careers rather than their aspirations for the schools at which they currently work. While this practice is unfortunate—and fairly easy to recognize—it should not tarnish the reputations of those people who are consciously working to build their global, online networks in service of the work they do locally, and offline, at their home base schools.

Indeed, networked individuals bring great potential value to their leadership teams. While they develop personal brands and recognition as their competencies grow, their networking skills allow them to build their support systems (that is, your school's support systems) before they need them. If your school faces a problem the likes of which it has never seen, the most networked individual on your leadership team will know where to turn to begin to address the problem—maybe a blog, maybe a comment stream, maybe a conference or consortium, or maybe another industry altogether. The most networked individual will have a shortlist of people who have demonstrated consistent thoughtfulness, consistent insight, and careful knowledge acquisition over time and outside your school. Though your best solution may come from inside your school, why wouldn't you want to increase your odds of solving a problem by having access to a group of educators and noneducators spanning the globe?

We would go so far as to say that if no one on your leadership team is truly connected to thought leaders, to other leaders, your leadership team is not as strong as it could be. What's more, if you are not actively supporting the ability of someone on your leadership team to function in this way, to get out of the four walls of your school, you are missing a chance to bring a continuous stream of new ideas to the table.

The argument against such drifting—in some senses, against networking in the manner we have put forward—is taken up in a paper by Ray Reagans and Ezra W. Zuckerman. Called "Networks, Diversity, and Productivity: The Social Capital of Corporate R&D Teams," it begins by sketching the lines of a debate between "pessimists, who worry about the coordination problems introduced by demographic diversity [on teams], and optimists,

who focus on the learning benefits it provides" (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001, p. 502).

Citing the work of Pfeffer (1982), Reagans and Zuckerman explain that groups that are "homogenous" are "expected to perform at a higher level because such groups coordinate their actions more easily than diverse teams" (cf. McCain et al., 1983; O'Reilly et al. 1989; Zenger and Lawrence, 1989). This makes sense. If you are working with a team that has similar goals, a common history, role clarity, and a shared sense of the place in which it works, it will efficiently solve problems. It will develop a short-hand that can be especially helpful in a time crunch and trusting relationships that will be especially helpful in a crisis. Its network density—or "average strength of the relationship between team members"—will allow it to establish and implement goals that help the organization as a whole.

Although there are some good reasons to maintain strong homogenous teams, Reagans and Zuckerman demonstrate the benefits of nurturing heterogeneous teams, as well. They cite Burt's theory on structural holes, ultimately presenting heterogeneity as a means to generate learning, ideas, and creativity, and thus drive the performance of teams. Thankfully, and we think wisely, they refuse to solve the debate that they frame at their outset—one between pessimists and optimists—or choose a side, which seems to be the most reasonable and productive way to go for school leaders, as well. They write:

> *A team that does not develop the connections among their members, which enable it to coordinate effectively, faces an uphill battle. However, when such networks remain concentrated among homogeneous sets of individuals, the team fails to generate the learning that can only come from interaction among different individuals. (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001, pp. 512–513)*

Not resolving the debate with an "either/ . . . or" proclamation presents an opportunity, a justification, for blending your leadership in the ways described in this chapter. Understanding how to lead and participate in a homogeneous group within your school will allow you to generate trust and common purpose and to nurture school traditions that remain worthy and relevant. Understanding how to connect with heterogeneous groups will ensure that your ideas and approaches always remain fresh. Indeed, these practices in some ways are a further articulation of the definition of the blended leader: one who can connect and be effective locally, in person, using the language of the tribe—while also connecting and being effective with more distant circles outside of the time, path, place, and/or pace used by that tribe.

PYRAMID SEARCHING FOR THE GREATER GOOD

How far outside you want to go, and how far is feasible, is a much-scrutinized topic by researchers who study innovation. Marion Poetz (Copenhagen Business School) and Reinhard Prügl (Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen, Germany) recently touted "pyramid searching" in *Harvard Business Review*, helping us understand how we might use networked intelligence when faced with a unique or challenging problem. The method encourages leaders to network their way to the top of the field of knowledge in which a problem exists. When they reach that peak, according to Poetz and Prügl, they are "more likely to get a referral to someone in a distant but analogous topic area." This allows the pyramid searcher to hop from domain to domain and find innovative, even radical "analogous field solutions" (Poetz & Prügl, 2015, p. 26–27).

Though Steve and Reshan have never consciously practiced pyramid searching, they have felt its impact and seen its results. One of the most beneficial leadership conferences Steve ever attended was an executive coaching conference at which he was the only educator. Everyone else was an executive from a different field. After spending time with a banking executive and a vice president from a family-owned car company, Steve returned to his school and was able to solve one of his knottiest ongoing problems. His colleagues at the conference shook up his typical strategies for dealing with the problem, gave him a new set of questions and tools, and perhaps most important, assured him that he could solve the problem. Back at school, at the level at which the problem was created, people had given up on ever solving the problem. It was considered a sunk cost of the institution.

Reshan also experienced pyramid searching at a conference at which educators and non-educators mixed together to discuss the present state and future of technology. In fact, he uncovered an interesting subset of medical practitioners who had lifted models from education and other industries and applied them to their work.

Ricky Bloomfield, Director of Mobile Technology Strategy and Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine-Pediatrics, told Reshan about interoperability in healthcare:

> *Health care is very behind relative to other industries. Just consider how easy it is for you to send money from one bank to the next—even of a competing business!—or for your airline to rebook you on another flight with another airline, if needed. Much has been standardized in other industries, but healthcare is behind. We've looked to those other industries for inspiration regarding how we can make healthcare more interoperable, and to empower patients*

by making it easy for them to view and use their own information. (personal communication, August, 2015)

Warren Wiechman, MD, MBA, associate dean for the Division of Instructional Technologies and assistant professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine at UC Irvine Health School of Medicine, continued the themes in Ricky's comments:

In medical education, we're always looking for ways to further engage our students and our faculty with technology. Each poses its unique challenges and oftentimes we try and find solutions amongst other medical education providers. In looking beyond medical education examples, I have had much inspiration for technology engagement and faculty development from K–12 [education].

For our students, the challenge was, how do we get them more engaged with the technology beyond just using it for core functions of note-taking, web-browsing, and email? After attending an Apple event, I saw how K–12 programs (and more specifically K-6 programs) were using their iPads for content creation with video and iBooks; I found this model very easy to adapt into our environment. I also borrowed heavily from "app-smashing" and "app showcases" . . . and adopted them for our medical students.

For our faculty, the issue was professional development—how do you teach them the technology and the ecosystem that comes with it. I got my inspiration here from a K–12 program that leveraged an iTunesU course as a self-directed learning model for basic faculty technology competencies. While the competencies taught are different here on the medical school campus, the concept was the same and we have had good success there.

In both examples, the key was looking outside of the "traditional" environment, finding common challenges, and reworking the solutions into my environment. Having the opportunity to be exposed to these other environments has been absolutely pivotal in making my environment grow and succeed. (personal communication, August, 2015)

Later, as a result of the same conference, Anoop Agrawal, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine, spoke enthusiastically about the SAMR model (discussed later in this book):

When you look around medical education, everyone is experimenting randomly without any type of direction or framework. When I

stumbled upon SAMR (which I found in Twitter posts from K–12 folks), I was blown away. After [our conference], I saw and heard SAMR spoken of as a core teaching. It has given me a pathway on which to lead the change in medical education, rather than just saying "Look at this iPad! Isn't it awesome?" (personal communication, August, 2015)

Agrawal's enthusiasm led him to share an article with Reshan called "What I Learned about Adverse Events from Captain Sully: It's Not What You Think." Written by Marjorie Podraza Stiegler, MD, Department of Anesthesiology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2015, the article acknowledges that some people in the medical community were experiencing "aviation fatigue," tiring of the connections being made between the medical industry and the aviation industry. While model swapping and analogous field solutions might have been drying up between the industries, Stiegler believed that there was more to be gained in relation to our understanding of "second victims," or medical practitioners involved in critical or even fatal events with former patients. After speaking with Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, made famous by safely landing a damaged plane on the Hudson River, she realized that even if everything seems to go well in a crisis, there could be residual emotional damage for the medical team. She didn't pull a new model from her conversation with Sullenberger, but she did find new questions to ask in her pursuit to provide the best possible care for patients (and the medical practitioners who serve them).

If nothing else, educational leaders should always be on the same kind of lookout, possibly from the height of a pyramid: How can we best care for our students (and the teachers who serve them)?

OUR LEARNING PROCESS MADE VISIBLE

As the previous examples show, we paid a lot of attention to our own learning while writing this book. We included content from things we had read or heard or experienced. That's a given when you're writing a book. You write what you know and learn through your research. The twist for this particular book is that we also thought deeply about how we have learned over the years and how others have led us to learn.

Let us take, for example, some of the guiding leadership principles presented in our introduction. The quotation about leadership from Pearl Rock Kane came to us the old-fashioned way. Steve met Dr. Kane at the Summer Klingenstein Institute, and because he was impressed and enlightened by

what she had to say in person, he eventually started reading what Dr. Kane had published. Ultimately, he stumbled upon "Farewell, Lone Warrior," an article whose words have affected his perspective on leadership and learning ever since.

Another one of our guiding leadership definitions came from Robert Johansen. We found this definition, via our own online learning network, by accessing the work of Dr. Michael Ebeling (head of the Summit School in North Carolina). Dr. Ebeling is an example of an effective and insightful sharing leader. If he reads something of value, if he learns something, he seems to share it indiscriminately with whoever happens to be "following" him online. In this case, he advanced our understanding of leadership by tweeting. But there's more to the story. This tweet included a link to an annotation he had made in the book. And the next day, he went a step further by linking to a slideshare presentation on the topic. What's important here is not whether or not we all agree with Johanson via Ebeling. What's important is the way the knowledge came to us—and began to shape our professional lives.

> **Michael Ebeling** @MichaelEbeling   24 Nov
> Johansen: "Amplified individuals" in world of connectivity: Best Leaders as "ravenous networkers" amzn.com/k/... Amplified in...
> Expand

Part of Dr. Kane's job and calling in life is to mentor emerging leaders. She does this masterfully through her leadership of the Klingenstein Institute. On the surface, Dr. Ebeling's job as head of school is to lead his school. Most likely, he's deeply enmeshed in everything from the hiring of teachers to the raising of money. Most likely, too, he helps leaders in his own school to grow. But he's not responsible for helping two educators in New Jersey (that is, Steve and Reshan) to grow. And yet . . . he has . . . consistently. Michael Ebeling is a leader who is concerned about leadership generally, and he leads others—who knows how many—through the deft use of multiple online platforms. When it comes to Twitter, Kindles, Facebook, iPads and the like, the verdict is still out for many people; while they are making up their minds, blended leaders are trying out the platforms, seeing if they serve a purpose, meeting whoever is already there, and leading within the spaces—because that's what leaders do. They organize around a purpose. They share resources. They develop relationships. They facilitate learning. They get their groups moving.

A PROOF OF CONCEPT

As mentioned at the outset, this book's evolution—from presentation to multi-touch book to the physical book you are currently holding—is proof of the concepts of iteration, versioning, growth, and continuous learning. This book's content is also proof of a certain concept. We started the Beliefs chapter with a belief about thought leaders because much of the book that follows wouldn't have happened without it—without our commitment to learning from those people we could access through our online and offline networks. Sometimes this meant walking down the hall; sometimes it meant traveling to a new city, school, or conference; and sometimes it meant scrolling through a Twitter feed. You can read the rest of the book, in fact, as a narrative driven by network-oriented learning, and as proof of what we found when we blended in with the world (mainly online) while having our feet firmly planted in the world (mainly offline).

We have benefited from being part of homogeneous (in this case, one school) and heterogeneous (in this case, many schools/industries) groups. And, in fact, our membership in both kinds of group has led us into countless scenarios that have either broken down something we thought we knew (helping us to rebuild it) or built up something we thought we knew (helping it to become stronger). It has led, too, to the education that no school could give us . . . because no school has ever been as closely aligned with the actual work we were doing and the actual work we wanted to do.

We don't want to go off on a rant about how you can get all the schooling you need from the Internet. We don't believe that. We believe in the power of interacting, face to face, with caring adults and peers. We believe in developing firm foundations through schooling. We believe that the adults in schools should be each other's best teachers.

But we also believe in a particular kind of leadership intelligence that can be developed and nurtured by interacting with a particular kind of thinker-leader via online networks.

As was written in *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, which has had an enormous influence on modern-day social media, advertising, and communication practices, "networked conversations are enabling powerful new forms of social organization and knowledge exchange to emerge" (Levine, et al., 2001, p. xxiii.). We explore this truism in the remainder of our book.

Another Cluetrain tenet that unlocks powerful learning opportunities for leaders is the confession and assertion that "to traditional corporations, networked conversations may appear confused, may sound confusing. But we are organizing faster than they are. We have better tools, more new ideas, no rules to slow us down" (Levine, 2001, p. xxviii.). Removing the hint of

MICHELLE CORDY ON ATTENTION

If you feed your public quotes and endless links to articles you did not read nor intend to read, they will become quiet ghosts. The power of being online is the abundance of information and people. The possibilities are practically endless for learning and connectivity. This is the great power that all leaders, and all individuals with a Web-enabled device, are able to access. But that power may be undone by a dark and sizable weakness. The great weakness, or potential weakness that leaders must guard against, is managing one's own attention. Howard Rheingold, author of *Net Smart*, argues that we need to develop infotention (Rheingold, 2014), a portmanteau of the words *information, attention*, and *intention*. We must develop a collection of sophisticated tools and couple those with intention, attention, and awareness. Without infotention, we will be led aimlessly through a meaningless forest of Web-linked distractions that will rob us of our capacity for greatness.

—*Michelle Cordy, EdM*

menace from that statement leads us to haystacks in which we might find golden needles. Like authentic learning, blended practice isn't always pretty. As such, many people skip right past opportunities to uncover crucial and relevant lessons.

When you listen and respond to thought leaders, especially the digital kind, communication might look messy or sloppy, maybe even confused or crass, but that's okay. It might unfold in blogs built on free platforms—like Crotty's—or in comments—like Reshan's—logged above or below comments from spammers or trolls. To find Ebeling's tweet on Johansen, you might have had to wade through twenty-five worthless (to you) tweets, fifty worthless tweets, or more. Learning and leading in a blended way means arriving at insights that are not neatly packaged (as if insight could ever arrive that way consistently).

Blended leaders deal with cognitive dissonance and quickly separate digital wheat from chaff. What's more, they don't allow themselves to be put off by chaff. They expect it, have names for it, look past it while toggling between being open to possibility and absorptive to value.

Put another way, blended leaders are the ones with their hands on a radio dial, inching through static in order to find the pure melody that will guide their work. The rest of this book is an example of our tuning and retuning the dial to pick up those distant frequencies, the ones we feel are most important for the future of our schools.

BELIEFS IN PRACTICE: THINGS TO TRY #1

An Offline Thing

Think about the leaders you look up to, whether or not you know them personally. How do you engage with them and how do they engage you? What moves do they make in their own leadership practice that you might try in your own? On a piece of paper, write in one leader's name and then write three words that capture an aspect of his or her leadership style that you admire. Which one is most important or relevant to you? Circle it. Is one dependent on another? Draw arrows to reflect those relationships. Fold (if necessary) this piece of paper and insert it after the last page of this book where it meets the back cover.

An Online Thing

Find an online resource (article, blog post, website, and so on) that was shared with you recently and that you found interesting. Leave a constructive response and/or comment for the author describing a point that you liked or disliked, or with which you agreed or disagreed. Check back in a few days to see if the author responded to your comment. If you want a safe space to practice this move, go to either of our blogs (www.refreshingwednesday.com or www.constructivisttoolkit.com) and respond to one of our posts.

A Blended Thing

Think about something face to face that is coming up next week (for example, a lesson, a meeting agenda item, an assembly topic). Go to http://www.twitter.com (or if you are a current Twitter user, to your preferred Twitter app/access point) and search for that thing. Spend a few minutes scrolling and clicking through the search results. When you find one (or two or three) relevant and helpful items, favorite (or copy/paste them), and make a point of mentioning or sharing the item next week with the appropriate audience.