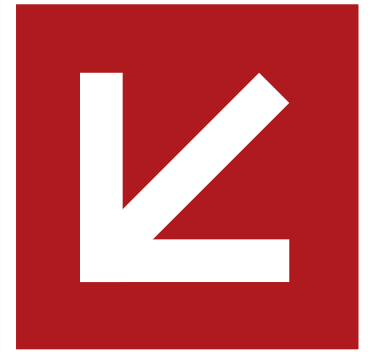
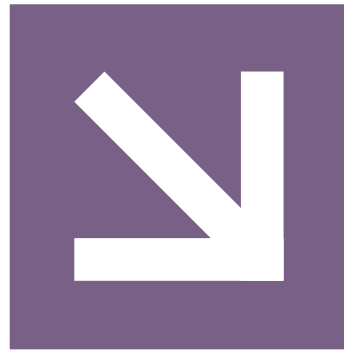


The Last Heist



Developed for
Design Intersections 2019
Design + Networks + Activation

A scenario-based
tool for exploring
organizational
behaviors

The Purpose of This Tool

Activating networks is a difficult business for many reasons: we only see our parts of the picture, our individual objectives don't always align even when our shared goals do, and the very nature of our organizations shape—for better and for worse—the conditions that impact how (or even if) we act.

The main purpose of this tool is to use narrative and insight into organizational behavior to prototype network formation and activation. We rarely get a chance to explore scenarios before they happen, or to prototype possible futures to see how they might play out and test how we might act differently. Simulations—even simple ones like this—are immeasurably valuable for testing approaches and getting feedback from events before they happen, which can help us plan more effectively for the future.

Think of the term “network” loosely: while this scenario focuses on individuals coming together to form a network, networks come in all shapes and sizes. The same construct is designed to be used for players representing larger entities and interests, and the game mechanics can scale up or down depending on the circumstances you would like to explore.

The Scenario

This narrative brings four characters together as a network with one goal: to pull off a once-in-a-lifetime heist.

MASTERMIND has hatched a plan to steal a collection of uncut gems that can be easily sold at top price. It's a grand finale to a long career... they've never been caught, thanks to careful planning and good leadership abilities, and it's time to retire and move on.

To accomplish this, **MASTERMIND** has recruited a top-notch team:

- **SAFECRACKER**, new to the team and the absolute best in the business but with the reputation for being a bit of a prima donna
- **HACKER**, a coder who knows the ins and outs of tapping into and controlling security and surveillance systems, but who can go a little rogue
- **GETAWAY DRIVER**, a loyal friend and long-time professional crony

The scenario plays out over the course of three meetings, where the gang gets together to coordinate and activate the emerging plan.

Components

This tool is composed of multiple parts:

- **A gamebook**

This is what you're reading right now; it contains frameworks and reflection activities that are used in the **The Last Heist**, but which are also appropriate for real-life situations and scenarios.

- **Participant profiles**

Each scenario character—like all entities—operates according to internalized rules and conditions that influence how they behave, or what options even seem available. These profiles provide information about attitudes, concerns, and individual and network goals for each **The Last Heist** character.

- **Reflection cards**

Reflecting on situations and behaviors can make us more attuned to why things played out as they did, for better *and* for worse.

- **“Out of the blue” events**

Life is uncertain! Throw a wrench in the works to test unexpected developments mid-scenario.

How to Play

1. **Distribute the Last Heist characters.**
2. **Familiarize yourself with your character's profile.**
... how might their “conditions” inform what they might say or do?
... how are their individual goals distinct from their shared network goals?
... how might perceptions of other characters influence your actions?
3. **Start the scenario.**
As the leader, let **MASTERMIND** kick things off.
Let the conversation play out for ~10-15 minutes.
4. **Turn to p. 5 in the Gamebook and use the Network Goal Framework to reflect on the conversation (~15 minutes).**
5. **Return to the scenario and follow the second prompt (~10 minutes).**
6. **Turn to p.7 in the Gamebook and use the Behavioral Prompts cards to reflect on the conversation (~15 minutes).**
7. **Finish the final part of the scenario (~10 minutes).**
8. **Turn to p.9 in the Gamebook and use the Organizational Conditions framework to reflect on the conversation (~15 minutes).**

The Last Heist scenario is designed to introduce individuals to the frameworks and reflection activities in a narrative format, but the same basic tools can be used for any real-life network activation situation.

In place of the heist characters, participants would first need to construct their entity profiles—the high/low mapping of underlying conditions and their individual goals—and agree to the shared goals for the network.

Participants would then have a free-form discussion focused on a key topic or sticking point. This can play out over multiple rounds, using the reflection tools to explore issues that arose.

*In order to “prototype” different potential paths and test likely scenarios, players can also use the **Out of the Blue** die to declare changes to the situation.*

REFLECTION 1

Network Goal Framework

One important consideration when activating a network is understanding what the participants expect from the network relationship.

There are two dimensions to consider:

- The nature of interaction to be fostered—the **Relationship/Transactional** vertical axis
- Alignment on end goals—the **Aligned goals/Distributed goals** horizontal axis

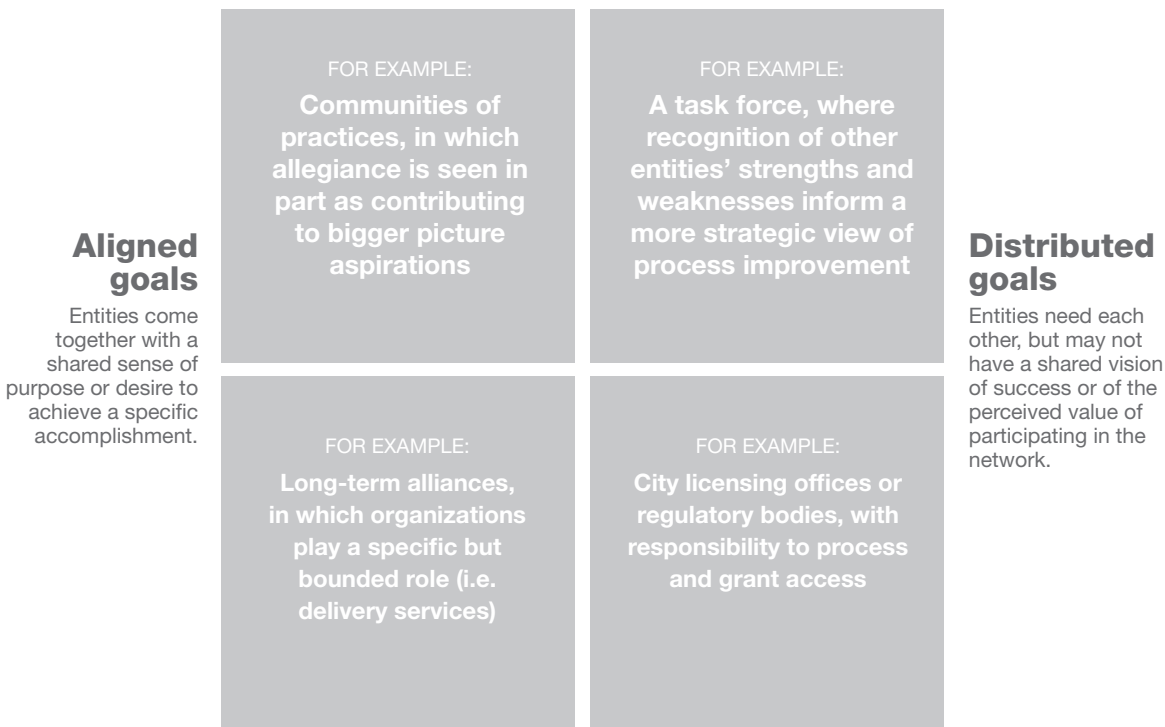
Different participants within the network may have different perceptions of where they sit: Having different perceptions is natural, and can work fine, but identifying where each individual situates their participation can help with expectation-setting and reduce potential conflict.

In addition, network participants often bring different assets to the table that can influence and sway negotiations in their favor:

- **Economic power** is the power of the purse: the ability to provide necessary funding
- **Convening power** contributes credibility the ability to attract and keep the right members
- **Expertise** gets participants a seat at the table, since things can't get done without them
- **Resources** are valued for their ability to support action with connections and other capital

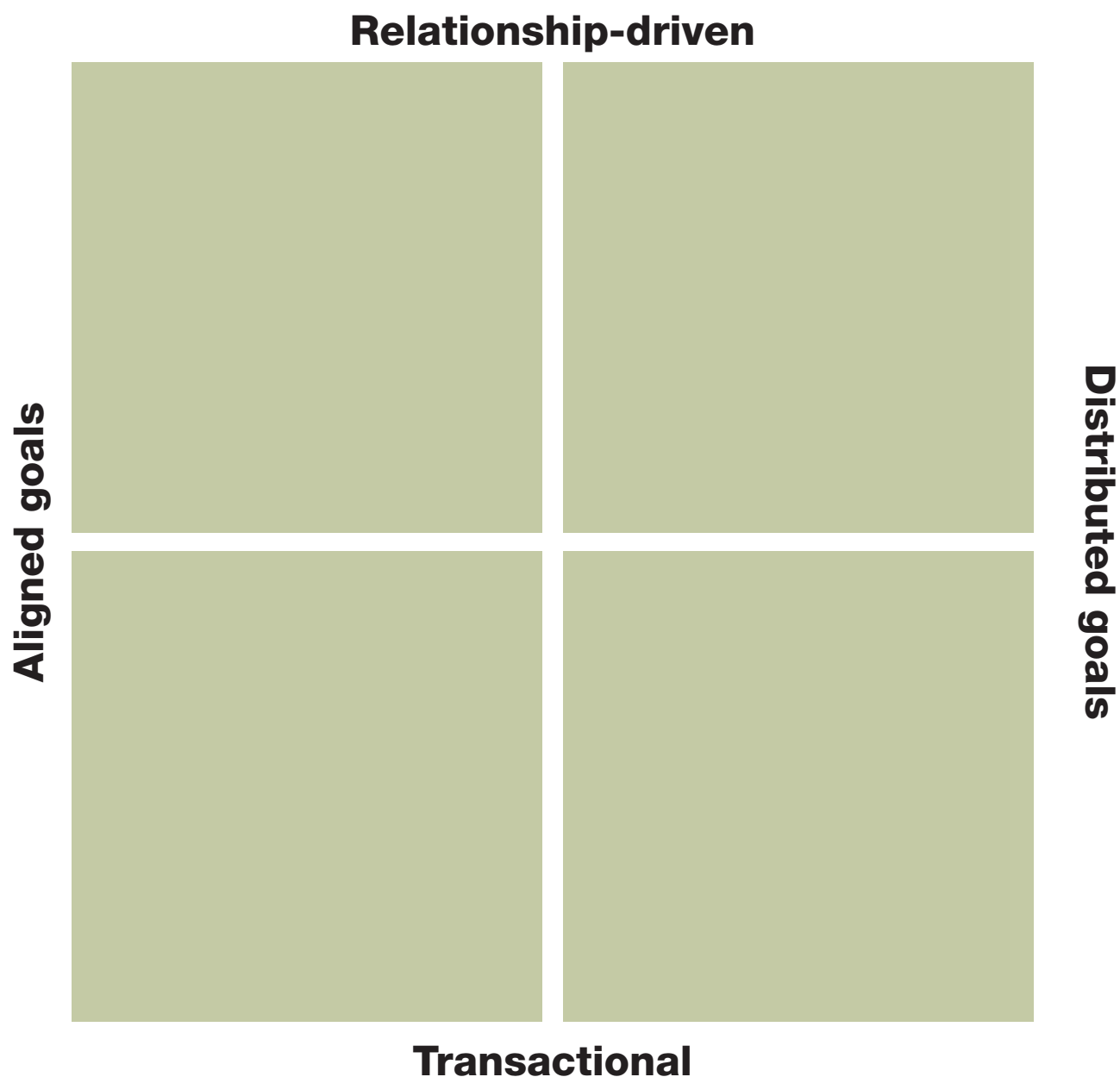
Entities see each other as more than a means to an end, seeking either a longer-term or simpatico connection.

Relationship-driven



Transactional

Entities have limited or no interest in establishing interactions beyond basic exchange of goods or economics.



Given the conversation you just had...

- Where on the chart above does each participant see their goal for involvement in the network (keeping in mind this might change over time)?
- How might expectations that arise from differing goals cause conflict?
- How might the distribution of assets (**economic, convening, expertise, resources**) across network participants impact the conversation?
- What are good approaches for moving forward?

REFLECTION 2

Behavioral Prompts for Diagnosing Tensions

Behavioral economics can offer us insights into why people act in “irrational” ways.

The field of behavioral economics emerged from a desire to understand why people don't always act according to a rational choice model. This “irrational” behavior is due to cognitive biases, which are essentially shortcuts our brains take to manage all the information we process and help us make judgments or commit to decisions. These biases can create tensions in interactions, however, when they lead to misunderstandings or mis-perceptions.

CONTEXT

Our sense of self, what we value, and the stories we tell ourselves have a huge impact how we perceive our options and take action.



COGNITIVE EFFORT

When we have too much information or don't have a clear sense of direction, we often struggle to make decisions.



Uncertainty can cause paralysis and an inability to choose, and is especially difficult when deciding on future paths.



UNCERTAINTY

Sometimes we know exactly what to do, but have trouble jumping in and actually *doing*.



ACTION

Given the conversation you just had...

Place all the **Context** cards on the table so all can see them

Distribute the other cards (**Effort, Uncertainty, Action**) randomly among the participants, so each person has 4-5 apiece.

Explore the cards on the table as well as the ones you're holding, thinking about what seems relevant to the discussion that just occurred.

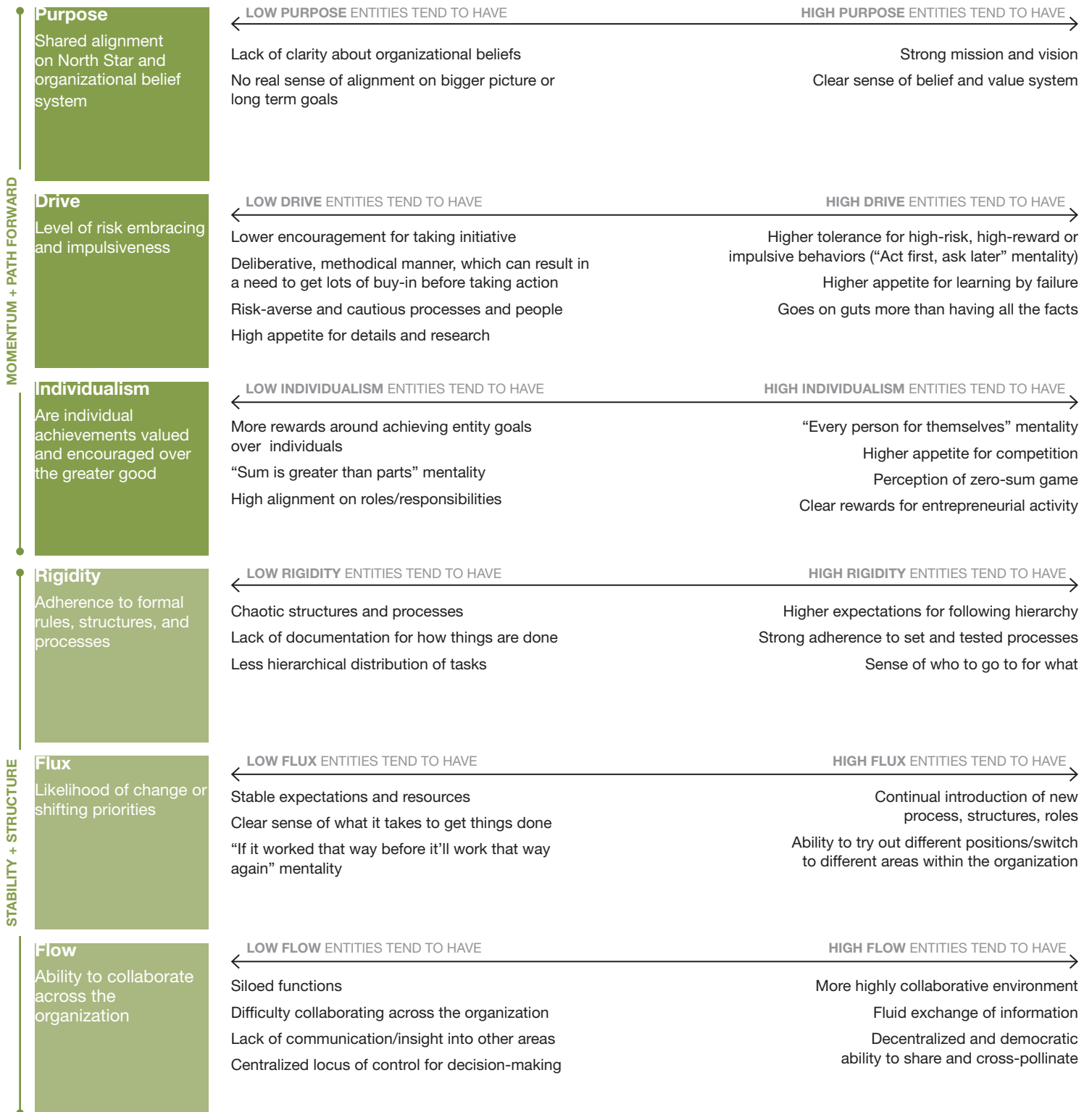
After everyone has had a chance to think about this, indicate or place a card from your hand on the table and discuss:

- How might this question prompt provide insight into what happened during the conversation?
- Have you had previous experiences where there were similar issues?
- How might these concepts provide direction for managing tensions in the future?

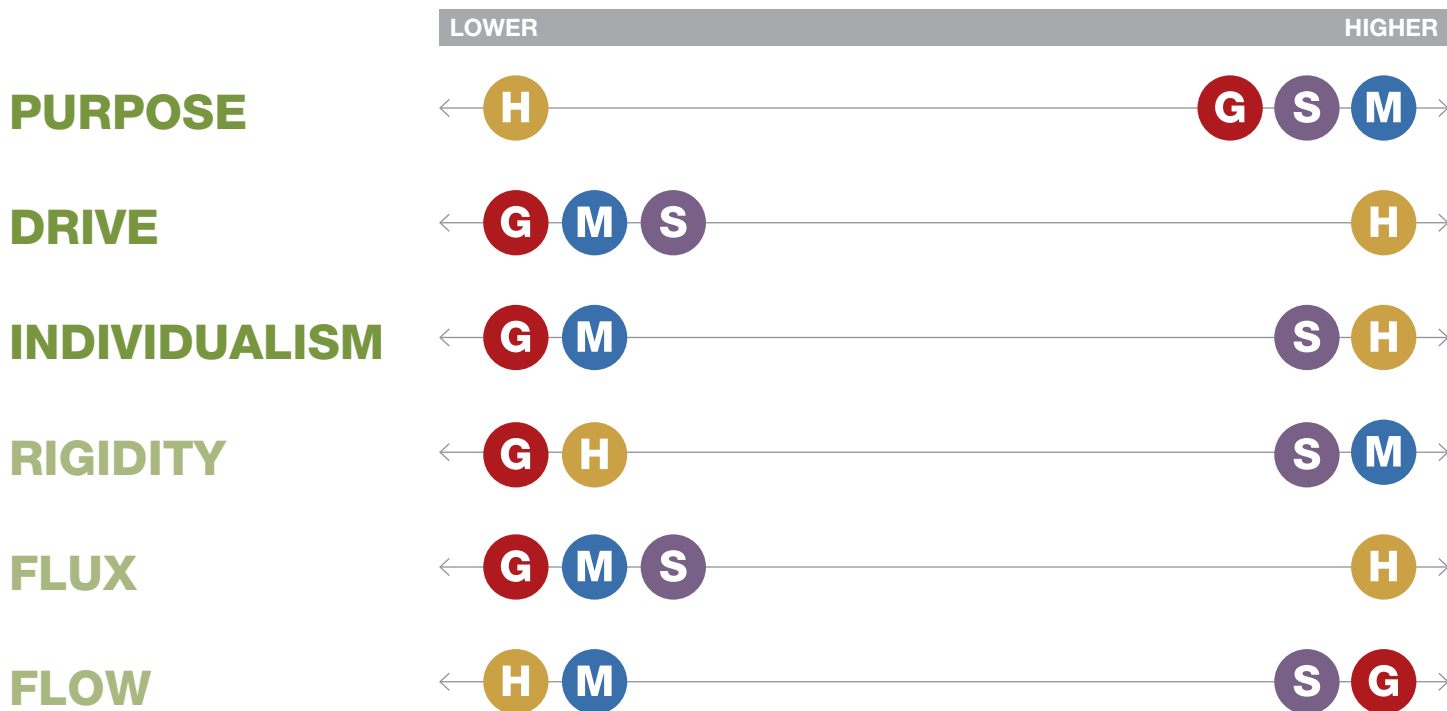
REFLECTION 3

Organizational Conditions

These six factors—**Purpose, Drive, Individualism, Rigidity, Flux, and Flow**—create the conditions that make certain behaviors more comfortable, and thus more likely to occur. Tensions can arise when different combinations are present within a network.



This chart indicates where these four characters—**Mastermind (M)**, **Safecracker (S)**, **Hacker (H)**, and **Getaway Driver (G)**—sit on each of these dimensions:



Given the conversation you just had...

- How do you think your individual profiles contributed to causing tensions or making progress?
- In what ways did **similarities** (e.g. multiple participants with High Purpose) make conversations productive, and in what ways did that cause conflict?
- In what ways did **differences** (e.g. participants with a mix of attributes) make conversations productive, and in what ways did that cause conflict?
- How might increased insight into the conditions that support or discourage behaviors be helpful in other situations?

Organizational Conditions for Behavior (expanded)

Purpose

Shared alignment on North Star and organizational belief system

← **LOW PURPOSE ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH PURPOSE ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

Lack of clarity about organizational beliefs
No real sense of alignment on bigger picture or long term goals

Strong mission and vision
Clear sense of belief and value system

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Increase cognitive effort (Lack of direction makes it harder to know what good looks like) ▲ Increase uncertainty (If I don't know what we stand for I lack a sense of why and what to do) ▼ Discourage action (No sense of purpose can reduce urgency to move forward) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Decrease cognitive effort (Easy to understand and align with sense of mission) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (I don't waste energy trying to figure out what good looks like) ▲ Stimulate action (Investment in the overall good and sense of purpose spurs activity) |
|--|---|

Drive

Level of risk embracing and impulsiveness

← **LOW DRIVE ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH DRIVE ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

Lower encouragement for taking initiative
Deliberative, methodical manner, which can result in a need to get lots of buy-in before taking action
Risk-averse and cautious processes and people
High appetite for details and research

Higher tolerance for high-risk, high-reward behaviors ("Act first, ask later" mentality)
Higher appetite for learning by failure
Goes on guts more than having all the facts

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>May not have a significant effect on cognitive effort</i> ▲ Increase uncertainty (Too many opinions and over-deliberative nature of decision-making can reduce clarity rather than improve it) ▼ Discourage action (Tendency toward risk aversion can slow things to a halt) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ May require putting brakes on cognitive effort (Added friction can reduce the risk of jumping to conclusions) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (...but it may be too easy to jump to conclusions) ▲ Stimulate action (...maybe too much! Impulsivity can benefit from friction) |
|---|--|

Individualism

Degree to which individual achievements are valued and encouraged over the greater good

← **LOW INDIVIDUALISM ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH INDIVIDUALISM ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

More rewards around achieving entity's goals over individual's success
"Sum is greater than parts" mentality
High alignment on roles/responsibilities

"Every person for themselves" mentality
Higher appetite for competition
Perception of zero-sum game
Clear rewards for entrepreneurial activity

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Increase cognitive effort (Requires making sure tradeoffs across entity are considered) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (Access to examples across the entity to see what works for common good) ◆ <i>May not have a significant effect on stimulating action</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Decrease cognitive effort (All I have to do is weigh my own needs) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (I can use my own small set of examples to provide direction on path) ▲ Stimulate action (Sense of ownership in the form of personal gain can encourage investment in my own success) |
|--|--|

← **LOW RIGIDITY ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH RIGIDITY ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

Chaotic structures and processes
Lack of documentation for how things are done
Less hierarchical distribution of tasks

Higher expectations for following hierarchy
Strong adherence to set and tested processes
Sense of who to go to for what

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Increase cognitive effort (Chaos means not knowing what to do, lack of structure to make informed judgment) ▲ Increase uncertainty (Lack of documented process = constantly reinventing the wheel) ▼ Discourage action (Lack of process and sense of “what good looks like” can lead to hesitation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Decrease cognitive effort (I know what to do, who to ask, what expectations are) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (Examples, path forward, and frame of reference are clear) ◆ <i>May not have a significant effect on stimulating action</i> |
|--|---|

Rigidity
 Adherence to formal rules, structures, and processes

← **LOW FLUX ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH FLUX ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

Stable expectations and resources
Clear sense of what it takes to get things done
“If it worked that way before it’ll work that way again” mentality

Continual introduction of new process, structures, roles
Ability to try out different positions/switch to different areas within the organization

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Decrease cognitive effort (Reliable past history to refer back to) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (Individual decisions require judgment, but the general context is reliable and stable) ◆ <i>May not have a significant effect on stimulating action</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Increase cognitive effort (Shifting priorities means structure is unstable and unreliable) ▲ Increase uncertainty (Old reference points and examples may no longer apply) ▼ Discourage action (Why do anything when things are only going to change again?) |
|--|--|

Flux
 Likelihood of change or shifting priorities

← **LOW FLOW ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** **HIGH FLOW ENTITIES TEND TO HAVE** →

Siloed functions
Difficulty collaborating across the organization
Lack of communication or insight into other areas
Centralized locus of control for decision-making

More highly collaborative environment
Fluid exchange of information
Decentralized and democratic ability to share and cross-pollinate

THESE CONDITIONS CAN TEND TO:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Decrease cognitive effort (I know how things work in my corner of the universe) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (...but not in a good way, if there is a lack of insight into other activities and processes) ▼ Discourage action (Barriers to effectiveness and lack of incentives can reduce the likelihood of acting) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Increase cognitive effort (May require juggling different inputs and modes of working) ▼ Decrease uncertainty (Insight into broader systems provides useful input for smarter decision-making) ▲ Stimulate action (Opportunities for collaboration/cross-pollination = greater sense of responsibility and accountability) |
|--|---|

Flow
 Ability and ease of working and exchanging information across organizational functions

Developed for:

Design Intersections 2019
Design + Networks + Activation

For more information contact:

schmidt@id.iit.edu

bblake@id.iit.edu

ajuneja@id.iit.edu



ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY