

CHALLENGING THE NOTION OF EFFICIENT IN MEETINGS

Sara A. Peterson, JD, Management Consultant



A THREE-PART SERIES

DEMYSTIFYING

Generative Governance

Part 1

Challenging the Notion of
Efficient Meetings

Part 2

(re)**Setting** the Table for
Generative Thinking

Part 3

Challenging **EFFICIENT** Meetings

Conventional wisdom doesn't serve
Tradeoffs effective / efficient
Identify your needs
Tips for slowing down and flipping the script



WHAT IS AN EFFICIENT MEETING?

How many decisions
you make?

How quickly your
governing body
navigates an agenda?

Whether it is done in
an hour? Two?

**WHEN IS THIS
QUESTIONABLE
GOVERNANCE
ADVICE?**

HEADLINES

Say no to meetings!
Why your meetings stink

Conventional Tips

Always have action items
Don't kick the can down the road
Be brief and concise, silence = assent
Use a timer, watch the clock
Use standing meetings, 10-min huddles

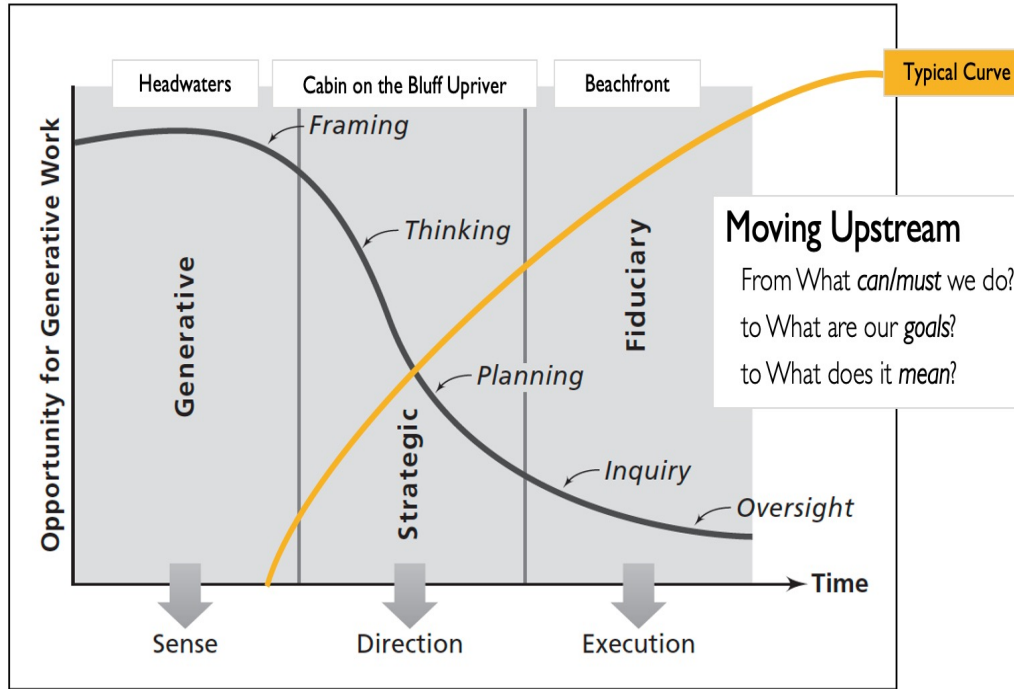
PART ONE

30 SECOND RECAP

PART ONE RECAP



PART ONE RECAP



Consequential Governance

Bringing GENERATIVE thinking to our fiduciary duties, strategic direction, and organizational learning and insight

Asking questions to make sense / meaning together

WHY POOLS SHOULD CARE

- Pools are complex
 - with characteristics of all 3 sectors
 - and concerns about governance
- Work in uncertain environments
 - with constant change
 - ambiguous or contested goals
- Where meaning matters

Nonprofit Boards

Sub-set of corporate – different rules
Private entities with public duties
Often with fundraising and volunteers
Different divisions of labor
Balance mission and money

Corporate Boards (for-profit)

Private entities
Subject to industry regulations
Shareholders and profits
Paid board members

Government Councils

Public entities with public elections
Open meeting laws
Constitutional & legislative mandates/constraints

BEGIN

AT THE BEGINNING

(a.k.a. why we all must change, now)

PSYCHOLOGY & NEUROSCIENCE

SYSTEM 1

Intuition & instinct

95%

Unconscious
Fast
Associative
Automatic pilot

SYSTEM 2

Rational thinking

5%

Takes effort
Slow
Logical
Lazy
Indecisive

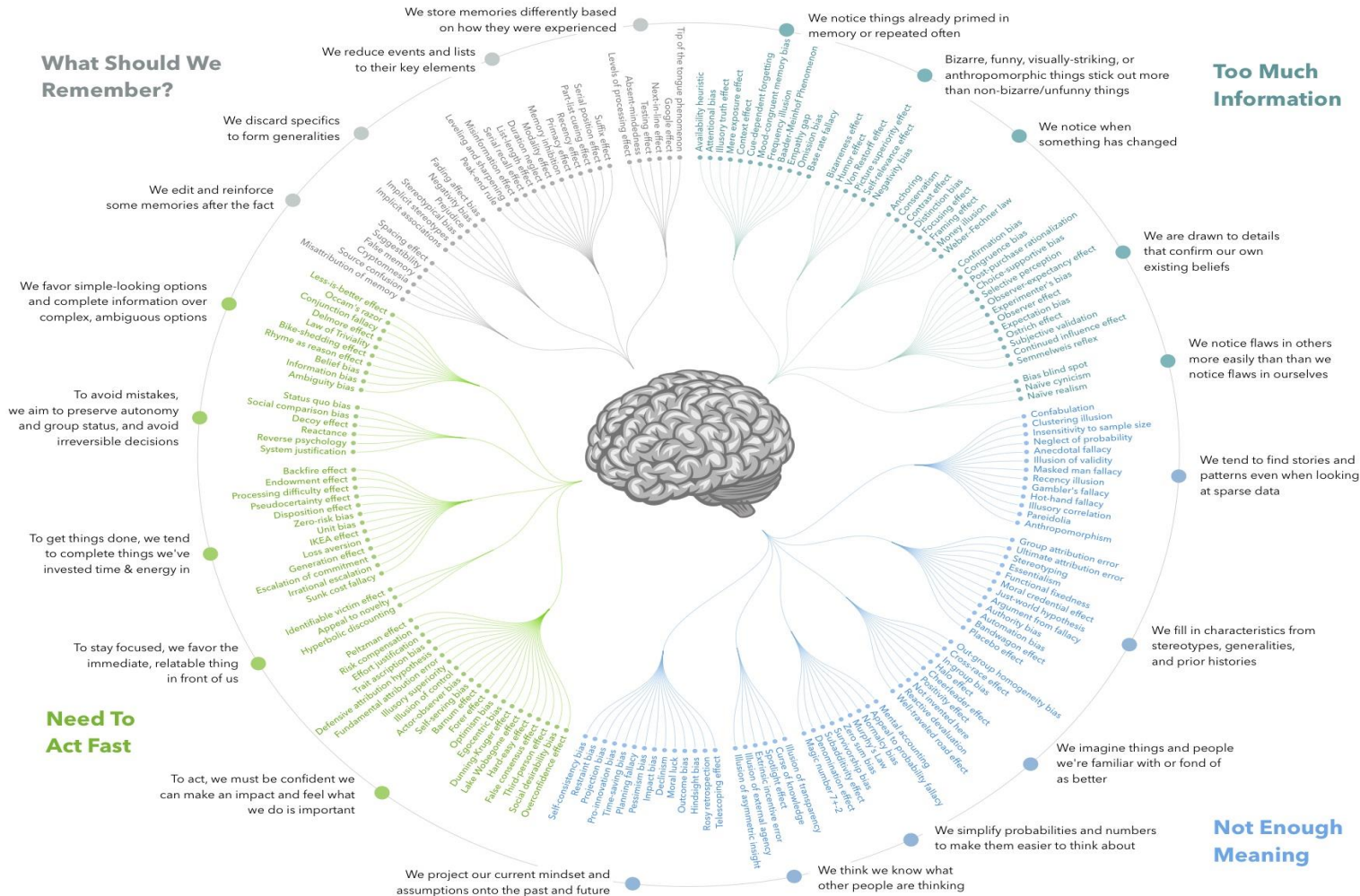


Source: Daniel Kahneman

“If you think about the way the information that seems flows up through the spinal cord, through the brainstem, through the limbic system to the cortex, we begin to understand the very important fundamental of how the brain works, which is that **every single decision that we make, no matter how logical we think that decision is inspired by emotion** because that data has already been processed by the limbic system, before it even reaches the cortex.”

Neuroscience for Nonprofit Leaders:
Methods for Building Your Brain's Agility and Capabilities
Dr. Tara Swart (2019)

COGNITIVE BIAS



Cognitive Bias Codex https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases

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INDIVIDUAL STYLE & PERSONALITY

Deciders pushing
everyone to

SPEED UP

Process folks
trying to

SLOW DOWN

Not to mention

MBTI, DISC, StrengthsFinder, Thomas-Kilman, Parker, Kolb, and so many more

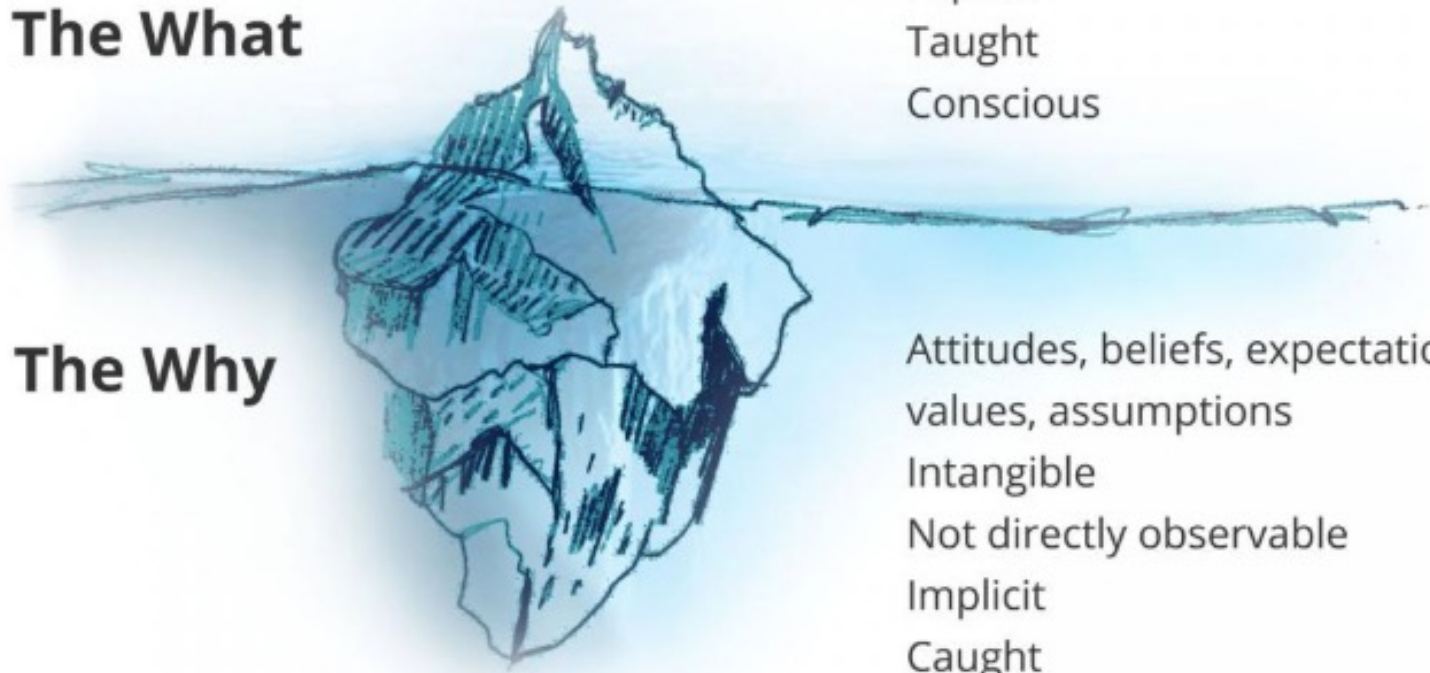
SHARED CULTURE

The What

Behaviours and artifacts
Accessible to the senses
Observable
Explicit
Taught
Conscious

The Why

Attitudes, beliefs, expectations,
values, assumptions
Intangible
Not directly observable
Implicit
Caught
Subconscious



HABITS

Deep ones for Decision Process +
Shallow ones for the Relationship

**A room full of
acquaintances
hardwired for their
day jobs**

What kind of thinking do your governing body members engage in all day, every day?

Elected Officials

Public Entity Administrators

Financial Directors

HR Directors

OK, SO?

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN
FOR GENERATIVE GOVERNANCE

WE ARE STARTING FROM BEHIND

Our work requires **deep thinking**.

We have **barriers** to overcome.

- We are hard wired against precisely that
- We are even physically set up against it
- We have deep habits reinforcing the status quo

We are **sacrificing effectiveness** to superficial efficiency. And deep down, you already know it.

Generative work

means

*think first &
think hard*

about

*what's at issue &
what's at stake*



False Premise

That the...

Maxims, business books, best practices, conventional wisdom etc. of day-to-day management, implementation...

Yes, even meetings...

Are equally applicable to the work of governing bodies

prem · ise

LOGIC: a previous statement or proposition from which another is inferred or follows as a conclusion.
"if the premise is true, then the conclusion must be true"

TYPICAL COMPLAINTS

ABOUT GOVERNING BODIES

- Group dysfunction
- Disengaged, disinterested
- Micromanage
- Misunderstand role
- Lack content expertise

FROM GOVERNING BODIES

Frustrating, boring
Time consuming
“Just tell us what we need to know”

BUT WHAT IF WE HAVE...

- Oversimplified
- Overscheduled
- Discouraged
- Retained too much
- Rewarded the wrong things
- Forced just-in-time decision-making

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Opportunity Costs

Biased, short-sighted, even fragile decisions

Groupthink and failure to learn

Your governing body's full potential

*intellectual, technical, reputational,
political, social capacity and capital*

Real oversight and accountability

RISK !

< These things

- Not on the same page
- Future conflict
- Blind spots and missed cues
- Decision churn, recreating the wheel, the waste trying to avoid

THE GOVERNING BODY

WHAT DOES YOURS NEED?

SO, PICTURE YOUR POOL

GOVERNING BODY

- Number and tenure
- Day-job composition, life experiences, education/training, style, patience
- Competing interests, cohesion
- Meeting style, frequency, travel distances
- Representation, alternates

MEMBERSHIP

- Number
- Entity type/diversity
- Internal risk sophistication
- Risk retention
- Stability, health
- Contentment

STAFF

- Number, structure
- Employee / contract
- Time availability

Not to mention

- Pool health, reputation
- Conflict, crisis
- Data quality
- Regulation intensity...

A COUPLE EXAMPLES

Small Pool

- 20, 30, 50 members
- Directly representative
- Small staff
- Tight geography
- Engaged in settlement decisions
- Greater fluctuations because of the numbers

Huge Pool

- 500, 800, or more members
- Indirectly representative
- Large staff
- Long distances
- Delegated settlement decisions
- Averages absorb a lot of variation

WHY DO THESE THINGS MATTER?

THEY AFFECT...

Time

Speed with which MUST decide
Time to prepare and follow up

Permission

To NOT know the answer
To engage in operational detail
To gather information, educate, reflect

Space

Literal (distance, agenda...)
Figurative (head, interpersonal...)

Distraction

Ability to disengage and focus

FLIP THE SCRIPT

S L O W I N G
DOWN TO ASK THE QUESTIONS

REDEFINING TERMS

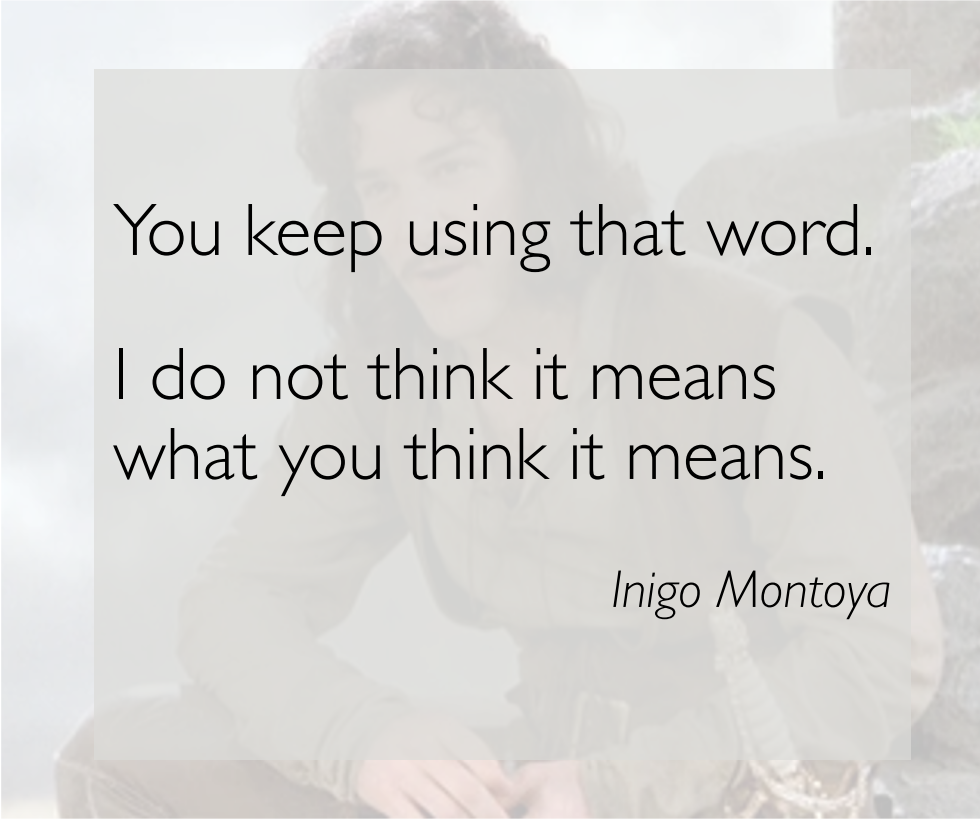
Effective

"capable of producing a result that is wanted"

Efficient

"capable of producing desired results without wasting materials, time, or energy"

What about Waste?



You keep using that word.

I do not think it means
what you think it means.

Inigo Montoya

GENERATIVE GOVERNANCE

Consequential Decisions

durable, clearly defined,
based on shared meaning

Principled Leadership

Effective Meetings

produce

Efficient Meetings

- *Use the full room's intellect*
- *Without overstressing time*
- *Or requiring us to go back again and again to the same topics*

GENERATIVE GOVERNANCE

NOT JUST FUTURE
ORIENTED...

LOOK BACK

Reflect, Analyze, Learn

RIGHT NOW

Scan, Experiment, & Clarify

LOOK AHEAD

Anticipate & Strategize

**FIND
&
FRAME**

FOCUS

WHAT WE NEED...

TIME

to think and discuss

SPACE

to explore and play

PERMISSION

to question and change

Free from

~~**DISTRACTIONS**~~

DECISIVE THE WRAP PROCESS

To make better choices, we must avoid the most common decision-making biases. Being aware of these biases isn't sufficient to avoid them, but a process can help. The WRAP process can help us make better, bolder decisions.



WIDEN YOUR OPTIONS

Narrow framing leads us to overlook options. (*Teenagers and executives often make “whether or not” decisions.*) We need to uncover new options and, when possible, consider them simultaneously through multitasking. (*Think AND not OR.*) Where can you find new options? Find someone who has solved your problem. Try laddering: First look for current bright spots (*local*), then best practices (*regional*) and then analogies from related domains (*distant*).

REALITY-TEST YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

In assessing our options, the confirmation bias leads us to collect skewed, self-serving information. To combat that bias, we can ask disconfirming questions (*What problems does the iPod have?*). We can also zoom out (*looking for base rates*) and zoom in (*seeking more texture*). And whenever possible we should ooch, conducting small experiments to teach us more. Why predict when you can know?

ATTAIN DISTANCE BEFORE DECIDING

Short-term emotion tempts us to make choices that are bad in the long term. To avoid that, we need to attain distance by shifting perspective: What would I tell my best friend to do? Or, what would my successor do? (*Or try 10/10/10.*) When decisions are agonizing, we need to clarify our core priorities—and go on the offensive for them. (*Remember the stainless steel bolts on the Navy ship.*)

PREPARE TO BE WRONG

We are overconfident, thinking we know how the future will unfold when we really don't. We should prepare for bad outcomes (*premortem*) as well as good ones (*preparade*). And what would make us reconsider our decisions? We can set tripwires that snap us to attention at the right moments. (*David Lee Roth's brown M&M, Zappos' \$1,000 offer*)

SOCRATES TO THE RESCUE

Who sees the situation differently?

What are we missing?

How does the situation look [to]
the constituents most affected?

What problems might the proposed
solutions create?

What is the best possible outcome?

What is the worst-case scenario?

What is the next question...

Quoted from Chait et al p. 125

Clarify

Why do we say that? How does it relate to ___?
Will it include ___?

Probe

Assumptions

What are we assuming? What could we assume instead?
Can we verify or disapprove that assumption?
Are we neglecting ___ and including only ___?

Reasons &
Evidence

What would be an example? What is ___ analogous to?
What do we think causes to happen? Why?
Do we think that ___ is responsible for ___?

Viewpoints &
Perspectives

What would be an alternative? What is another way to look at it?
Why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits?
Why is it the best? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
How are ___ and ___ similar? What is a counterargument?
From ___ standpoint, do you think ___ will affect the ___?

Implications &
Consequences

What generalizations can we make? What are we implying?
What are the consequences of that? How does ___ affect ___?
How does ___ tie in with what we learned before?
How would our results be affected if ___?

Question the Question

Why are we asking the question? Why is ___ important?
What does ___ mean?

How does ___ apply to our mission, strategic plan, members?

STEVE TRAUTMAN'S QUESTIONS

Big Picture Measures of Alignment

1. What is our pool's core purpose?
2. What are the products or services we currently provide?
3. How does our pool define its membership and member relations goals?
4. Who are our competitors?
5. **What are the most important measures of our pool's success?**
6. What is the relevant history of our pool that affects our current strategy?
7. Which external trends or issues are important to our strategy?
8. **What are three priorities we are working on this year to support our pool's overall business strategy?**

**How can we know
our pool's business
strategy and CEO's
vision is clear to all
staff?**

DEEPENING THE SHIFT

From a Fiduciary to a Strategic Approach	
Management defines problems, opportunities and formal plans Governing body listens, learns, approves, monitors	Governing body and management think together to develop strategic priorities, drivers
Governing structure parallels administrative functions Premium on permanency	Governing structure mirrors strategic priorities Premium on flexibility
Meetings are process-driven Function follows form Protocol rarely varies	Meetings are content-driven Form follows function Protocol often varies
Staff transmits technical data from few sources to governing body	Governing body and staff discuss strategic data from multiple sources

From "Governance As Leadership", Chait et al (2005), p. 75

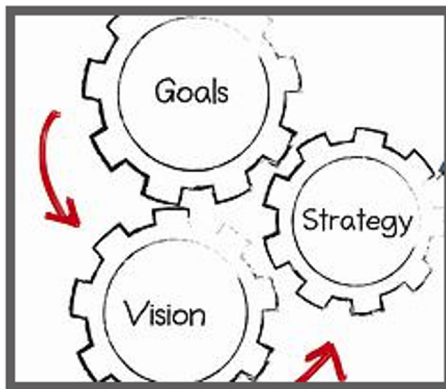
From a Traditional to a Generative Mindset	
Choose among alternatives	Generate alternatives
Make decisions	Decide what to decide
Solve problems	Discern & frame problems
Preserve congeniality	Promote collegiality
Pursue consensus	Pursue perspectives
Meet efficiently	Discuss robustly
Consider realities	Consider hypotheses
Pose pragmatic questions	Pose catalytic questions

Table 1.4 from "The Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership" Cathy A Trower (2013)

SMALL STEPS

1. Start somewhere,
anywhere
2. Yes, and...
3. Parking lots for future conversations
4. Select a few reflective questions
5. Experiment





Sara Peterson Consulting

effective strategy, governance and management
for nonprofits, foundations, government, & community groups

P | 812.822.2122 • C | 651.260.0273
www.SaraPetersonConsulting.com