

Leadership Excellence in Challenging (and Changing) Times

NWTAC KEYNOTE - 2025

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Setting the Stage for Strong Decision Making

START STRONG

ORIENTATION

RULES

**DYNAMICS
AND
DECISION
MAKING**

**WHAT'S
ON THE
GO?**

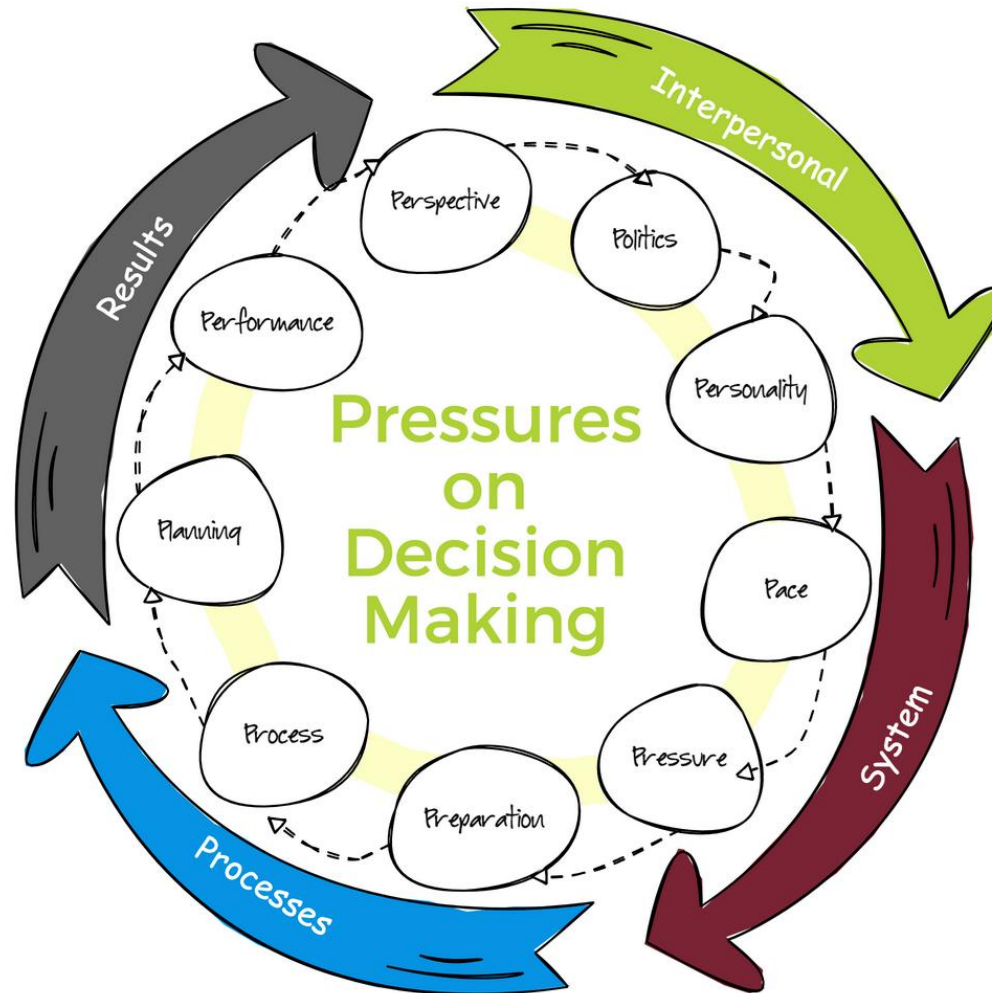
WHO?

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

START STRONG



Impacts on Decision Making



Politics

- Repairing after the election
- Respecting philosophical differences
- “Slates”
- Representing diverse elements of your community

Personalities

- Are you self aware?
- Do you understand your impact on others?
- Do you care?
- Strong personalities meet at the table
- Need to have a diverse mix but that can lead to conflict
- Practice candour
- Understand your reaction to conflict

PATIENT PARKING ONLY

Pace

- Sense of urgency
- Desire to collect complete facts
- Don't rush or delay

Pressure

- Time pressure
 - Public pressure
 - Family pressure
 - Cultural pressure
 - Media pressure
 - Financial pressures
-

Preparation

- Collectively ask for what you need
 - Agree on the facts in advance
 - Be prepared to act with imperfect information
 - Deal with those that don't come prepared
-

Process

- Role clarity
- Respect for staff
- Respect for experts
- Meeting processes
- Rules vs. guidelines

Planning

- Plans allow for quicker decisions to be made, that are driven by data not opinion or pressures
- Investing time saves time
 - Strategic plan
 - OCP
 - Other community plans

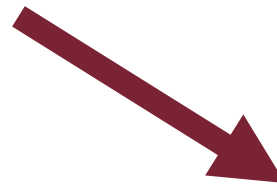
Performance

- Focus on results –
- Without measures staff and elected officials will be aiming at different targets
- Carefully consider your comments about your colleagues and staff
- Ensure regular performance feedback is given to the SAO

Perspective

- Don't "major in the minors"
 - Develop a thick skin
 - Don't make it personal
 - Advocate then support
 - Be prepared to change your mind
 - More curious, less certain
-

START STRONG



ORIENTATION

RULES

**DYNAMICS
AND
DECISION
MAKING**

**WHAT'S
ON THE
GO?**

WHO?

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

**What kind of group do
we want to be?**

FIVE BEHAVIORS OF HIGH FUNCTIONING TEAMS



TRUST ONE ANOTHER - When team members are genuinely transparent and honest with one another, they are able to build vulnerability-based trust.

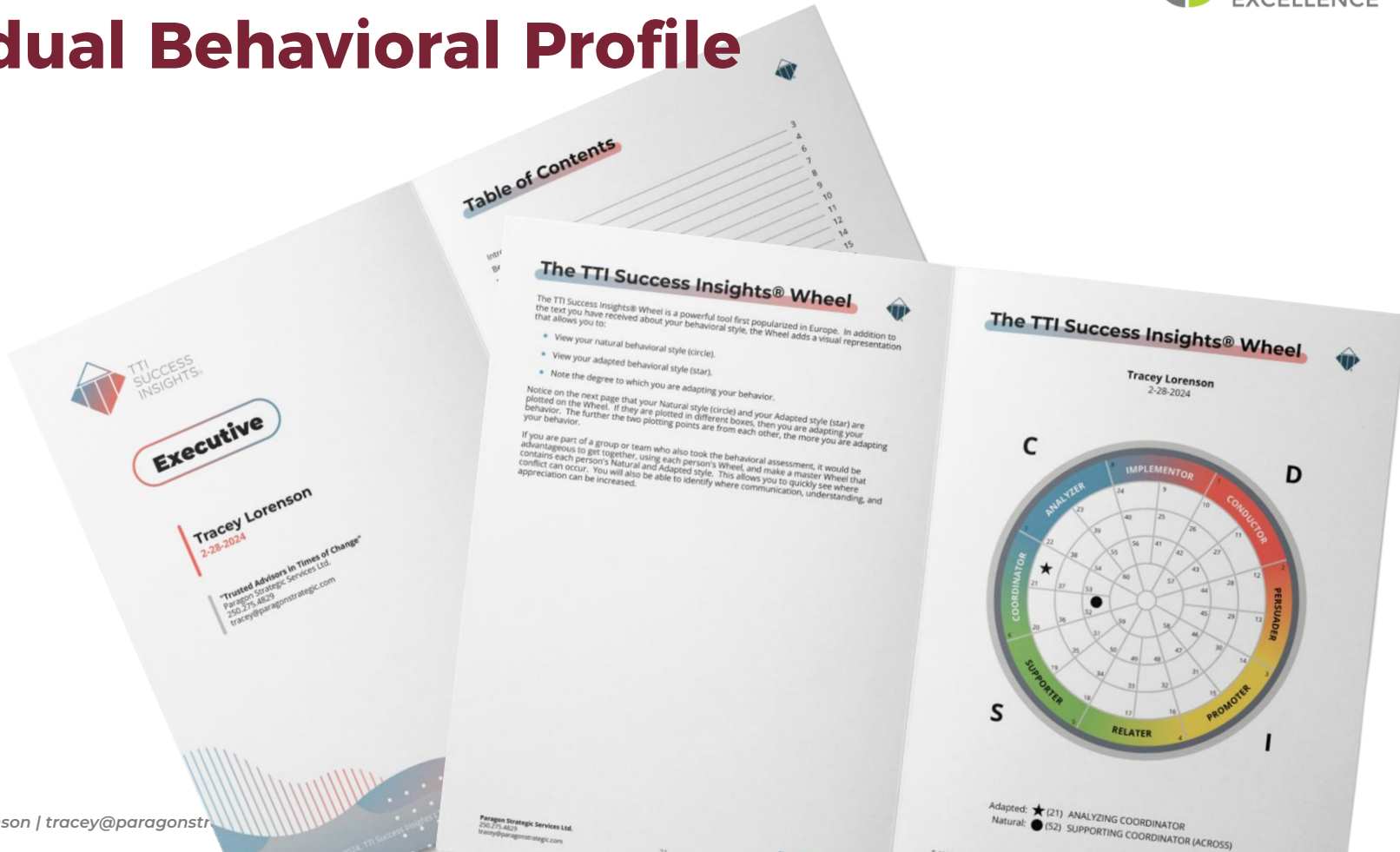
ENGAGE IN CONFLICT AROUND IDEAS - When there is trust, team members are able to engage in unfiltered, constructive debate of ideas.

COMMIT TO DECISIONS - When team members are able to offer opinions and debate ideas, they will be more likely to commit to decisions.

HOLD ONE ANOTHER ACCOUNTABLE - When everyone is committed to a clear plan of action, they will be more willing to hold one another accountable.

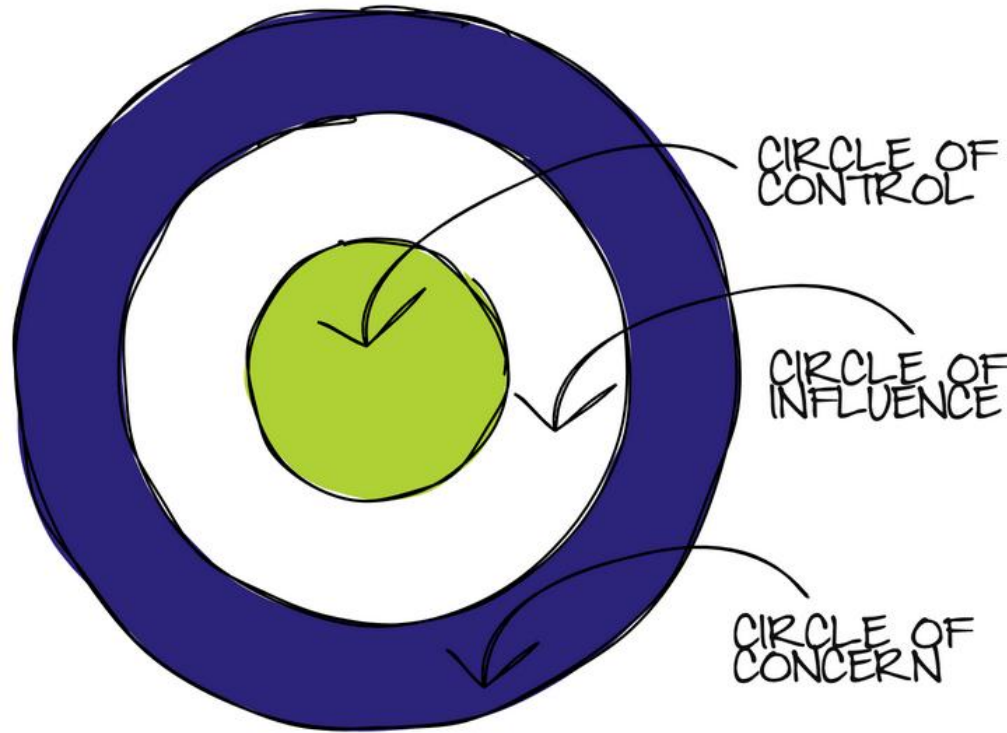
FOCUS ON ACHIEVING COLLECTIVE RESULTS - The ultimate goal of building greater trust, healthy conflict, commitment and accountability is one thing: the achievement of results.

Individual Behavioral Profile



What do we focus on?

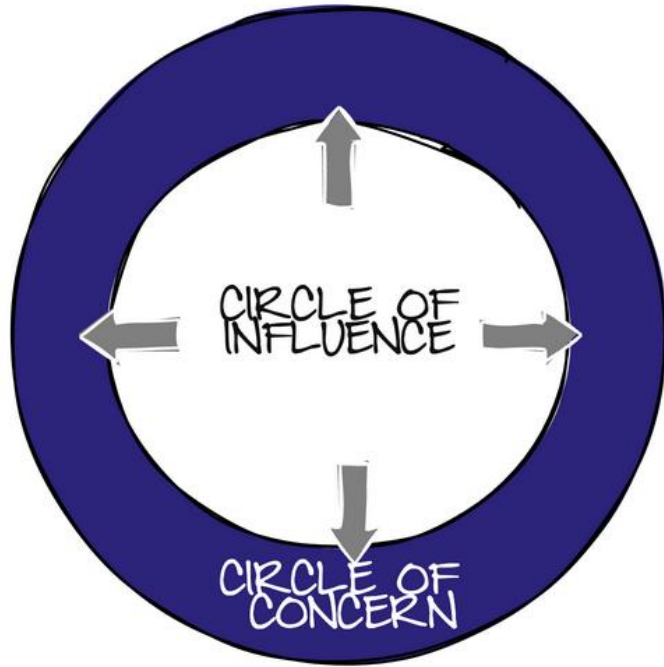
This concept explores three spheres:



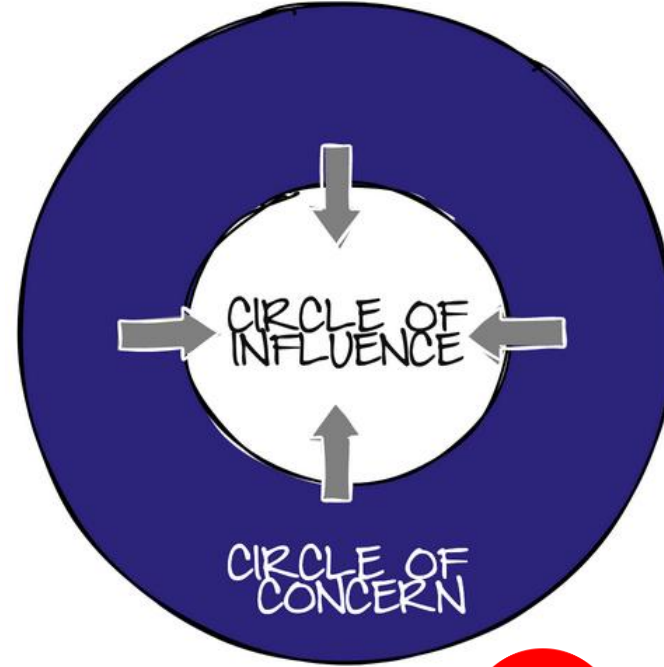
The smallest circle, representing the things we can actually directly do something about

A narrowing of the outside circle into those worries we can do something about – either directly or indirectly

The wide range of worries we might have about a topic



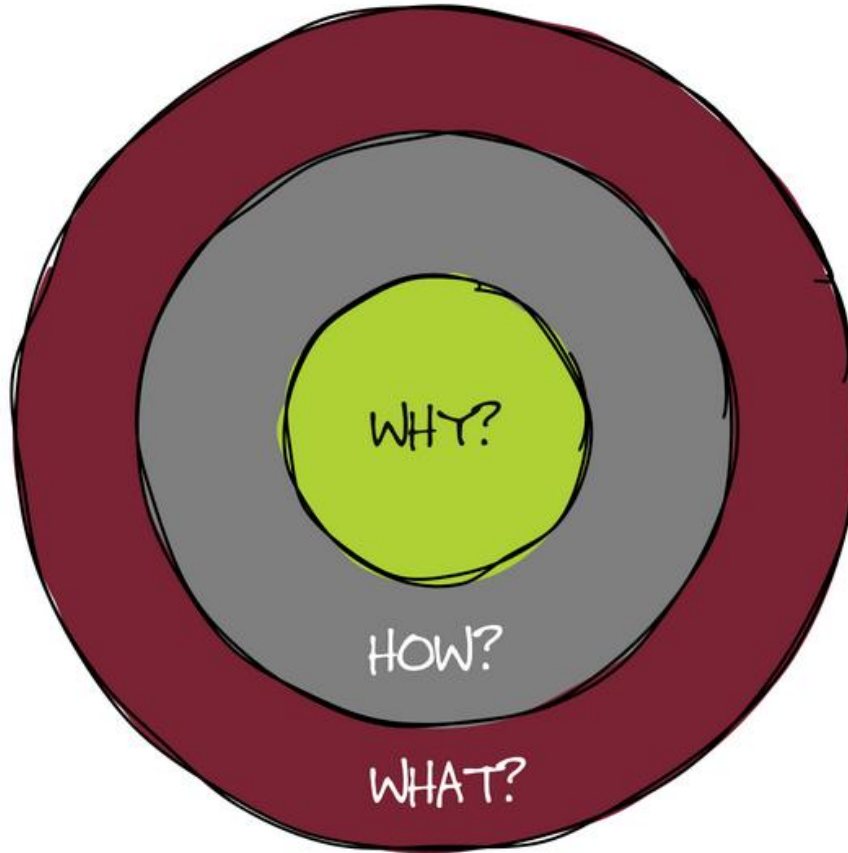
PROACTIVE:
focus on circle of
influence



REACTIVE:
focus on circle of
concern



START WITH WHY



Elected officials wanting to be clear on their direction and provide policy/strategic advice to their organizations focus on WHY (not HOW or WHAT) this also makes communication of decisions significantly easier.

Simon Sinek

START STRONG



**“Planning Strategically” -
How aligned are you?**

A large, stylized green opening quotation mark.

**The essence of strategy is
choosing what not to do**

~Michael Porter

A large, stylized green closing quotation mark.

STAYING ON TRACK

A light blue speech bubble pointing towards the bottom right.

CONDUCT

A dark grey speech bubble pointing towards the bottom left.

SUPPORTS

A lime green speech bubble pointing towards the bottom left.

**GOVERNANCE
CHECK INS**

A lime green speech bubble pointing towards the bottom right.

**STRAT
PLAN
CHECK
INS**

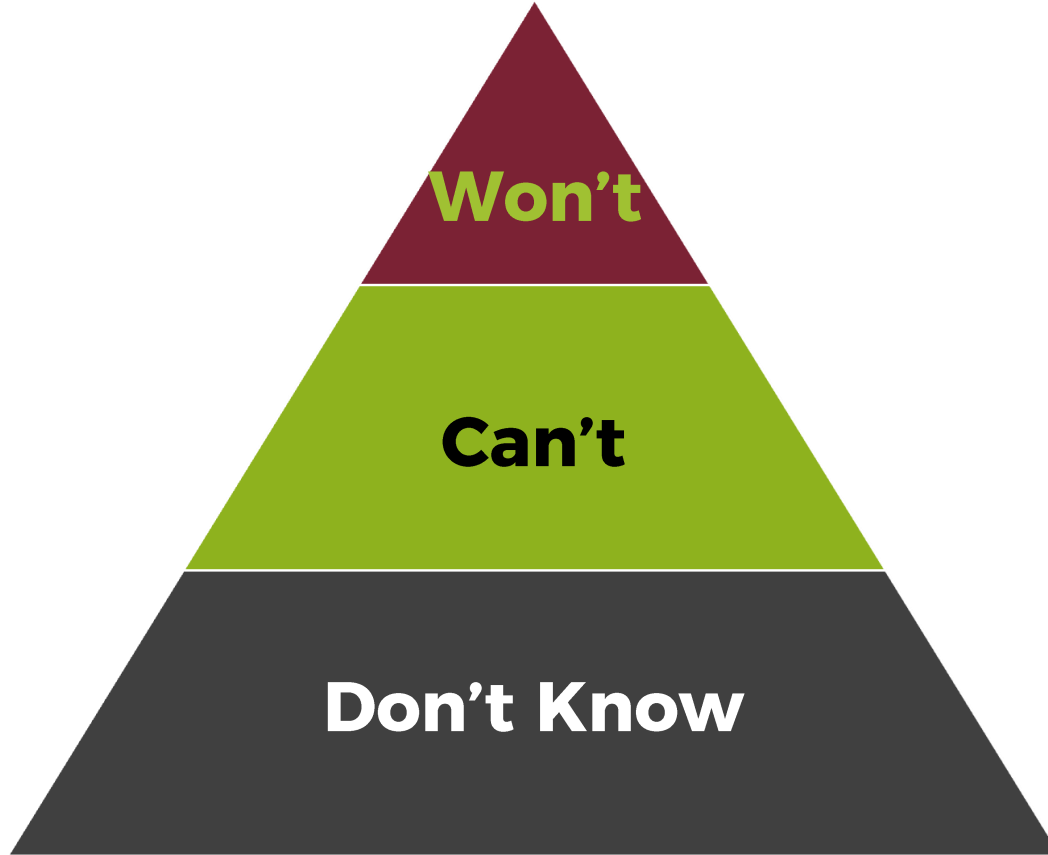
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**SAO
EVALUATION**

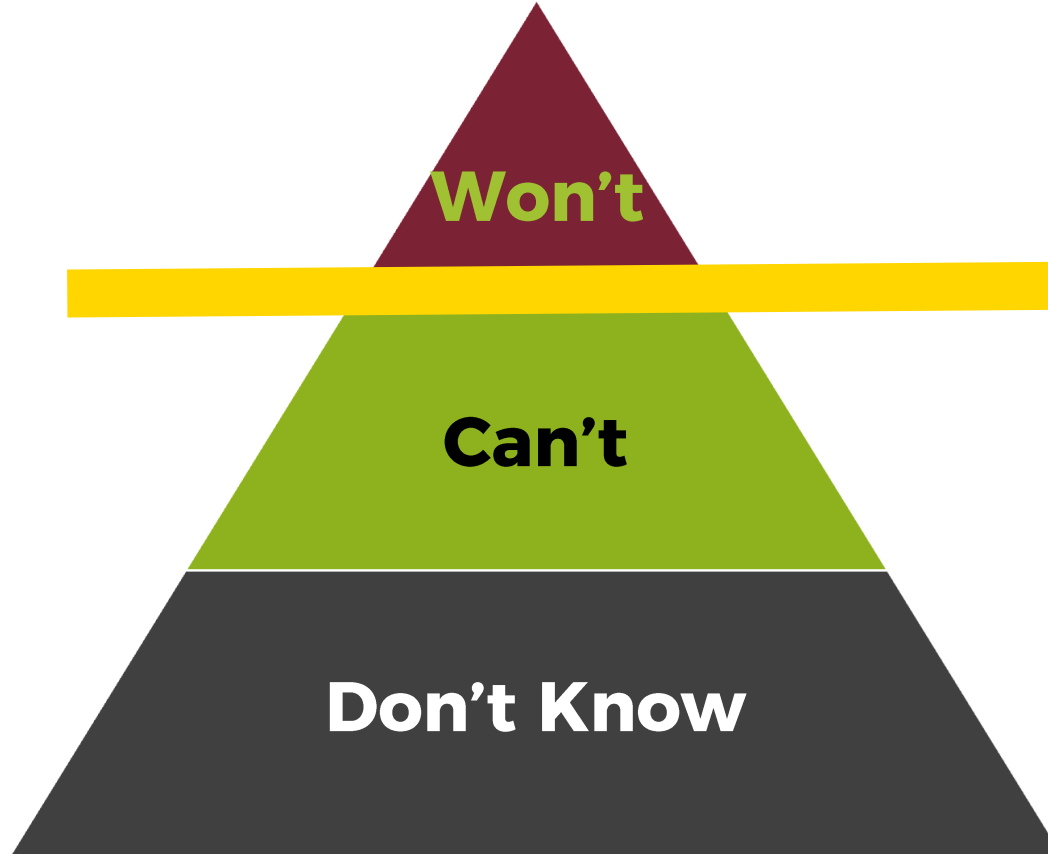
Behaviors - Dealing with Conflict



Conduct Issues



Conduct Issues



STAYING ON TRACK

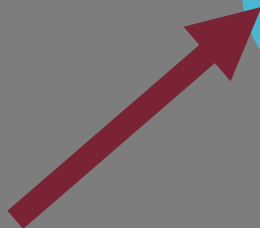
CONDUCT

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**GOVERNANCE
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**STRAT
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**SAO
EVALUATION**



SAO Feedback

Discussion: *how do you provide feedback to your SAO*

SAO Evaluation "Lite"

June 04, 2024

Organization Name - 2024 CAO Performance Feedback

CAO Review - Executive Summary

The Sample Community has conducted this CAO Evaluation in order to keep Council and the CAO aligned, and provide feedback to the Town's CAO.

The CAO is a high-performing CAO meeting or exceeding the expectations of both Council and direct reports in all areas. Those evaluating recognize his strengths as set out below, and providing suggestions for continued professional development and growth.

CAO Review - Process

Council identified the value of receiving feedback from both Council and the CAO as both groups bring different perspectives to the challenging role of the CAO.

We provided a brief survey and follow up Zoom calls, and were very impressed with the responses provided by those involved.

Where themes were common between the two groups, we've provided them. Where there may be differences those are identified.

Organization Name - 2024 CAO Performance Feedback

Sample Community | June 04, 2024

Proposal prepared for: Sample Client | Sample Community
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Organization Name - 2024 CAO Performance Feedback

June 04, 2024

CAO Review - Strengths

The process identifies significant strengths that the CAO brings to the role. There is a strong alignment between the feedback provided by elected officials and the input provided by his direct reports.

Specific strengths include:

- **Visionary Leadership:** The CAO demonstrates a clear vision for the future, combined with the drive and relentlessness to achieve Coaldale's desired outcomes. His leadership style is seen as a fit with both Council and his team, facilitating smooth operations and motivating members towards common goals.
- **Effective Communication:** A standout communicator, the CAO's ability to articulate thoughts clearly and engage in meaningful dialogue (both in meetings and written correspondence) enhances team collaboration and fosters strong relationships with council members and external stakeholders.
- **High Emotional Intelligence:** The CAO possesses a high level of emotional intelligence, which manifests in his considerate nature and strong listening skills.
- **Moral and Ethical Integrity:** With a strong moral compass, the CAO places high value on ethical conduct and transparency and seems to be instilling trust and confidence within the team and organization.
- **Adaptability:** The CAO is able to adapt to fast-paced and changing environments, maintaining a proactive approach, ensuring the organization remains agile and responsive to new challenges.
- **In-depth Knowledge of Municipal Government:** With a comprehensive understanding of municipal operations and governance, the CAO's expertise significantly contributes to the effective management and strategic planning of the Town of Coaldale.
- **Team Empowerment:** By allowing his direct reports the freedom to manage their departments, the CAO fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among team

Organization Name - 2024 CAO Performance Feedback

June

members, which in turn leads to increased innovation and productivity.

- **Commitment to Professional Development:** The CAO values and invests in continuous learning, both for himself and his team. This dedication to professional growth ensures the organization remains current on best practices and industry standards.

These are not exhaustive, but highlight some of The CAO's key strengths.

A more detailed graphic of his strengths is attached to this report.

CAO Review - Developmental Opportunities

While the CAO is performing at a very high level in his role, there are some opportunities for continued growth and development.

It is quite common for CAOs to have a strong focus on the elected level of the organization over the first part of the term, and the feedback identifies the opportunity for the CAO to shift more attention to his team and the staff. In preparing this feedback we also had a chance to review the staff survey, and this feedback supports the work on that project.

The feedback gathered identifies five key areas for improvement that would be beneficial to the organization.

Enhancing Work-Life Balance

A crucial focus for improvement is managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Strategies include setting clearer boundaries for work hours, especially evenings and weekends, and making effective use of scheduled time off to mitigate the risk of burnout and ensure long-term sustainability in The CAO's role. Creating less dependency on the CAO also serves to create

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SAO Review Detailed

Detailed analysis with specific feedback based on different groups. Aligns with specific coaching advice and usually includes a survey and zoom calls with elected officials.



STAYING ON TRACK



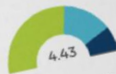
Discussion: *Do you check in as an elected group on how you're doing?*

Gov Check In

Decision-making



Elected officials actively seek input from the community to broaden their perspective on issues.



The decision-making process is transparent and accountable.



Each elected official has a voice, and uses it, in the decision-making process.



Decisions are made using the best evidence available.



Decisions are consistent with the interests of the community.



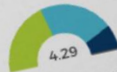
Elected officials consider evidence and advice with an open mind before coming to decisions.



Elected officials represent and voice constituents' views, even when they conflict with their own opinions.



The meeting environment encourages the participation of all elected officials, not only those who speak most frequently or the loudest.



Elected officials support the decisions of the group once they are made, notwithstanding personal views.



Individual Reflection

On a scale of 1-10 (10 means everything is perfect), how effective do you think you have been as a member of Board?

7.22

On a scale of 1-10 (10 means everything is perfect), how do you think Board has been as a whole?

7.67

10 - Highest

Relative Governance Strength



What are some specific challenges you're seeing?



CHALLENGING ISSUES TO ADDRESS

ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



CHALLENGING ISSUES TO ADDRESS

CIVILITY – what
are you seeing in your
roles?

Civility

**LEAD BY
EXAMPLE**

BOUNDARIES

EXPECTATIONS

CONSEQUENCES

SUPPORTS

CHALLENGING ISSUES TO ADDRESS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST – PROCUREMENT/ HIRING

SUGGESTIONS

- Identify early - discuss often
- Use your NWTAC resources (legal access etc)
- Get a third party to review or handle
 - Neighboring SAO (may need to go further if family involved)
 - Expert unrelated to the procurement
 - Contractor or consultant
- Get a 'second opinion'

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR COMMUNITIES?

Discussion: *Any other challenges or topics you're seeing emerging?*

CHALLENGING ISSUES TO ADDRESS

HELPING ELECTED OFFICIALS ENGAGE

Engaging as a Council

Questions to Consider

1. Understand the Issue

- What is the main problem or opportunity we're looking at?
- Why does this matter to our community?
- What are the important facts and details we should know about it?

2. Think About Who Will Be Affected

- Who will be impacted by this decision (like residents, businesses, or community groups)?
- How will this decision help or hurt those people?
- Have we asked those affected for their thoughts? If so, what did they say?

3. See How It Matches Our Goals

- How does this decision fit with our community's goals or vision?
- Is this a priority we have already set? Do we have any plans that inform this?
- Are there other important goals we should keep in mind?

4. Look at the Costs and Resources Needed

- What are the short-term and long-term costs or savings?
- Do we have enough budget for this?
- How will this impact our resources, like staff time or materials?

5. Consider Other Options

- What other ways could we handle this issue?
- What are the good and bad sides of each option?
- What are the risks and benefits of each option?

6. Think About Risks and Surprises

- What risks could come with this decision?
- Are there any possible surprises we should be ready for?
- How can we reduce these risks if we go ahead?

7. Look at Long-Term Effects

- What are the long-term impacts of this decision?
- How will this affect our community in the future?
- Is this choice something that will last, or will it need changes later?

8. Check for Laws and Rules

- Are there any laws or rules we need to think about?
- Does this decision match with local, provincial, or national policies?
- Have we checked with legal experts if needed?

9. Plan for Action

- What steps are needed to put this decision in place?
- What's the timeline, and who will handle each part?
- How will we know if this decision is working?

10. Be Open and Accountable

- How will we explain this decision to the public and others?
- What messages can help people understand the decision?
- How will we be responsible for the results?

Mahsi Cho

for having me!

Questions?

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NEW PROJECT PROPOSED

