



New Leader, Endless Possibility:

Bringing a Legacy Organization into a New Era

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A consultant and an organization meet up

On February 14, 2017, I began a one-year engagement as the Senior Fellow for Strategy and Organizational Effectiveness with the Peninsula Jewish Community Center (PJCC) in Foster City, California. The PJCC, entering its 70th year at the time, was facing weighty questions of purpose, identity, and contribution. I was motivated to serve in this role from a place of deep empathy for this legacy organization. As a longtime consultant, at a particular stage of my life and career, I too found myself facing questions of purpose, identity, and contribution. In the PJCC, I saw the potential to bring together my skills and experience as a seasoned consultant with the needs of a legacy organization facing generational transitions in leadership and values. This is the story of that endeavor. It reveals the power of partnership, the value of mayhem, and the limits of change.

The audience, the stage

The audience for this story is leaders of nonprofits and foundations that are either facing or funding organizations going through leadership transitions. These transitions tend to generate, or have implications for, organizational questions on issues of purpose and relevance. It is my intention to prompt more conversation on this topic—not to proffer a one-size-fits-all solution but to provoke our imaginations so that we are able to invent new methods for moving resources across generations into productive collective action.

While this story is about specific people and a specific organization, implicit in its telling is the potential for broader application. To identify points of resonance, I'll begin by introducing the players who feature prominently in the story.

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The organization – The PJCC is one of a tribe of more than 250 Jewish Community Centers (JCC) across North America. JCCs were first established 100 years ago as welcoming and acculturation centers for Jewish immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe. The PJCC, started in 1948 in a rented house in a San Francisco suburb, began by serving a small but growing Jewish community of new immigrants as well as Jews who had relocated from the East Coast. Since its founding, the PJCC has moved several times and now resides on a 12-acre campus in Foster City, California.

The CEO – The PJCC’s CEO is a mid-career 40-something male whose previous position was as executive director of a synagogue where he’d served for 11 years. Earlier in his career, as director of youth and family programs at a different Jewish Community Center, he’d been schooled in program design but not operations, governance, or management. With a background in psychology and high emotional IQ, he was well suited for the relationship-healing and relationship-building responsibilities identified by the board as of the highest priority during the search process.

The senior fellow – I’d arrived at the PJCC as an independent consultant with 25 years’ experience advising, supporting, and evaluating nonprofits and philanthropy on culture, values, leadership, and impact. I’d worked for two consulting firms led by others and then launched a firm of my own (Informing Change) in partnership with two professionals (one of whom became my wife). I brought to this assignment a willingness to take leaps of faith, try new things, and be in full possession of my confidence as well as my uncertainty at any given moment in time.

Context, legacy quotient, and rationale for this approach

Consequential context

The PJCC started out with clear charitable intent: to facilitate acculturation of new immigrants while enabling cultural preservation and to provide support in the form of direct services as well as social and educational programs. Over time, as the Jewish population became more integrated into mainstream society, the service and financial model began to shift, as did the population served. Services expanded to include a health and fitness facility, early childhood education programs, summer camps, and other fee-for-service programs. With a growing emphasis on sustainability, the financial model shifted from donor dependency to earned revenue. By 2017, the PJCC had a budget of \$18 million and employed directly or through third-party arrangements a team of almost 300 full- and part-time staff. While the PJCC boasted 10,000 members, 70 percent or more did not identify as Jewish, nor were they participating in the center’s modest Jewish-program offerings. The center had drifted a long distance from its social-purpose roots.

Legacy quotient

Today there are hundreds of legacy nonprofit and philanthropic organizations that were launched at an earlier time with ambitions to address social, racial, immigrant, and economic justice issues. Many of these organizations now find themselves led by or in transition from aging leaders who bring with them the passion and the bias of their generation. These organizations may be using outdated paradigms of gender, race, and ethnic identities and business models that at a minimum confuse and sometimes fully compromise their third-sector social purpose. They do so in service of sustainability, whether that is expressed as reliance on government contracts or earned revenue streams. It is my

sense, after a full year embedded in such a legacy organization, that these organizations, without intervention, will either weaken or disappear entirely. Their autopsies will reveal the role that risk aversion (fear) and commitment to continuity played in their demise.

How can we change the story ending?

One may see this story as the opportunistic convergence of a particular person and a particular organization at a particular moment when both are ripe for risk. But, I believe it is possible to retrieve and revive legacy institutions by facilitating engagements between seasoned professionals, who have developed courage and methods of managing over time, and the rising generation of leaders, who bring fresh energy, vision, and commitment to the table. This time-limited and embedded approach to partnership enables young leaders to assume the courage and skills they require to move their organizations beyond the limits of the past and face the challenges of the future.

No one can walk backwards into the future ...

~ best fortune cookie ever, 2018

The position, practices, and lessons of this experience with the PJCC have relevance for other legacy institutions—including foundations and nonprofits—that are facing a leadership transition, experiencing a crisis of identity, or wrestling with matters of mission.

Arriving at the position

After the announced departure of a 37-year veteran who had been serving as his second in command, the CEO engaged me to conduct an organizational assessment² in order to evaluate current conditions, culture, and capacity. The findings from that assessment and the CEO's sense of his and the organization's needs led us to design a position that would be time-limited—strictly a one-year post—with two categorical intentions:

1. To provide intensive support through observation and coaching to enable the CEO to develop the skills and courage required to lead
2. To employ disruption as a strategy to provoke curiosity, prompt new thinking, and increase the organization's adaptability and comfort with change

The essential design elements were the time-limited nature of the role and the absence of line authority. The one-year time limit established urgency and clarity in priorities and actions. The absence of line authority provided the role with the altitude required to see the whole picture without being vulnerable to self-interest or subject to the bias of direct reports.

² This organizational assessment concluded that the center is responsive, not anticipatory; it is comfortable doing what it has done before (self-referential); its staff tends to be long-tenured in a cautious, conservative, and compassionate culture; they are not always honest; there is an absence of curiosity and a reluctance to express what they do not understand or believe.

This “on the balcony”³ perspective specifically allowed me to see the dance floor and learn the dance steps without having to actually dance. It had the added benefit of minimizing what could have been conflict between positional and organizational interests since the position was designed to go away while the organization was designed to endure. The overall intent of the senior fellow role as we defined it was to challenge assumptions, question practices, and create enough discomfort to cultivate the capacity within the organization and among its people to pursue a forward-facing path at a time of considerable uncertainty. It was meant to turn up the heat just enough to seize people’s attention but not so much as to paralyze them.⁴ Like other legacy institutions, the PJCC needed to deeply consider its underlying assumptions about itself, and how to honor its lineage while finding relevance in an ever-changing, diverse, and complex society.

The work

I was to be the Maestro of Mayhem.

While I’d been counseling leaders of nonprofits and foundations for more than two decades, my position at the PJCC was preciously unique. It embraced the potential value of internal disruption as a strategy for organizational growth. My job was to essentially transform the workplace from a platform of reliable expectations to a laboratory of relentless experimentation.

My first week, I placed a giant Post-it on my door that read: Some Things to Think About. I wanted my door to be a place for pause—something worth taking the time to stop and ponder. My first posting included two questions that anchored the work: “What is in the best interest of the organization?” and “Why aren’t we doing that?”

Not only did the CEO and I consistently raise these questions during the course of our work with one another and staff, the art of asking questions and cultivating a culture of curiosity became, for everyone, the hallmarks of the year itself.

On leader development

The steepest climb for a new (young) leader is in taking their proper seat within the organization and understanding how *that* seat differs from every other seat. The new leader must be mindful to exercise power when required. A primary power of that first seat is to define the organization’s interest and defend it. In the absence of a clearly defined organizational interest around which staff can align, personal and positional interests will rule. This gives rise to a culture of conflict, reducing the organization’s efficiency and, more importantly, its effectiveness. The CEO seat is the one seat in the house that must be ever attentive to the interest of the organization *above all else*—separate and apart from the people and positions within it. A related and essential requirement of successful leadership is the ability to establish and maintain boundaries—knowing when to share what with whom and why.

³ Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

⁴ Ibid.

These lessons or standards of leadership are not easy for anyone. Our experience at the PJCC suggests that having an on-site, embedded coach/observer accelerates the leadership learning process.

I worked closely with the CEO to consistently consider and defend the organization's interest, even when that resulted in hurt feelings, disappointments, and sometimes departures. I encouraged him to consider, and to ask his team to consider, questions like, "What does this say about us as an organization?" and "Is that in our organization's best interest?" This helped to define the organizational interest, and sometimes to establish a bright line between that interest and the interest of individuals (the personal) or their departments (the positional), as well.

On cultivating comfort with change

I understood that the work would need to be disruptive in order to effectively cultivate adaptive capacity, but I didn't want to be so disruptive as to provoke active resistance. To that end, the CEO and I agreed to approach the changes as experiments. Rather than asking staff to commit at the outset to up-set, we asked them to join us on time-limited experiments by which we would all evaluate every change against agreed upon intended results and abandon the change if it failed to achieve those results.

We started with two experiments designed to increase comfort with change and encourage a culture of curiosity: Repurposing the Management Team and The Questions We Hold. In the latter, we asked staff and board members to anonymously submit any question they had about any aspect of the PJCC, no holds barred. Both of these experiments are described below.

Repurposing the Management Team

In order to achieve influence across the organization's multiple departments and reach the hearts and minds of almost 300 full- and part-time staff, we needed to engage leaders in the organization as instruments of influence. When I arrived, the PJCC had a management team⁵ made up of top leaders. The team met for two hours weekly and spent most of its time exchanging information and providing updates. In March of 2017, we introduced the first disruptive experiment, Repurposing the Management Team, in which we expanded the management team to include the director of human resources, placed the team under the direct auspices of the CEO, and adopted a new purpose emphasizing leadership and learning rather than management and updates. We rebranded it the leadership and learning team (LLT) and established a twice-monthly meeting schedule that would allow team members to complete reading, writing, and reflection assignments in between. In its new formulation, the team adopted a statement of purpose that read, "to serve as an instrument of organizational leadership to improve performance, practice, management, and culture."

The team's first endeavor was to generate a series of topics for collective learning. The topics were far-reaching and some were very specific. They included unpacking our social value proposition, defining values, understanding vision, role clarification, team building, performance evaluation, and creating more effective communications. The CEO prioritized the topics and his list became the organizing frame for our ongoing LLT work. It was through and with this team that we were able to challenge

⁵ The management team consisted of the CEO, CFO, chief marketing officer, director of Jewish Life, director of youth programs, director of health and fitness, and director of development.

assumptions, introduce new practices, and, most importantly, have difficult discussions about social value, charitable purpose, and Jewish identity. While my job was to tee up conversations, develop resource materials and assignments, and document proceedings,⁶ the CEO was often in the role of leading the conversations—and was always in the role of influencing the direction they took. I was able to observe him and the team dynamics, which was a source of great fodder for feedback during my weekly one-on-one sessions with him.

At the six-week mark, the LLT evaluated itself against the objectives it adopted at the outset and deemed the experiment a success and worthy of continuing.

The Questions We Hold

The second experiment, and according to the CEO⁷ the most important experiment we introduced, was The Questions We Hold. Across the organization, starting with the LLT, I asked staff and board members to list the questions they were holding about the organization. The instructions emphasized anonymity and honesty. Over the course of the year, this process generated hundreds if not a thousand questions that ranged from the mundane—“Why can’t we have music in the lobby”—to the more profound—“What makes us a *Jewish* Community Center?” There were scores of questions in between, like, “Why do we have a board?” and “What is the role of the CEO?”

This was precisely the right foundation from which to launch our work: Both staff and board members could participate; it gave people an avenue for expression; and it revealed informational and functional gaps, including what we didn’t know about ourselves as an organization and the limits of our communications and information sharing systems (within and across departments as well as with our board). The one stakeholder group we neglected to address in this process was our primary beneficiaries—our members. In retrospect, this was a mistake but one that could be remedied going forward.

At different points we were able to ask staff why they had held on to their questions rather than asking them. Here is a sample of what we heard:

- *I did ask, but never got an answer.*
- *No one ever asked me if I had questions.*
- *It’s not my place to ask questions.*
- *I think I should know the answer.*
- *To ask is to appear disloyal.*
- *A question can be a weapon used against you.*
- *We don’t have time to ask.*

⁶ In general, I’m a stickler for documentation. The process of documenting honors the time and effort of those engaged, acknowledges the value of the content, and ensures the possibility of generative continuity.

⁷ On January 14, 2019, I met with the CEO for an all-day “Brain Jam” during which we reflected on what we had learned during our year together. One of his key conclusions was that uncovering the breadth and depth of unanswered questions across the organization was among the most important efforts we undertook because it gave him perspective on the stories we tell ourselves that influence how we, as an organization, behave. It also led him to the priorities of improving communications, adhering to transparency, and cultivating trust.

An unanticipated and powerful benefit of this exercise was the opportunity it gave the CEO to have meaningful conversations with different members of the community and to place the right topics on the agenda for board conversation and action. It seems simple: A culture of curiosity must start with questions. But consider how hard people work within organizations to look competent and knowledgeable. And then consider the price we pay as leaders for not knowing what we don't know.

The way we work

Over time, the PJCC, like many long-standing organizations, had adopted vertical structures—programs and departments with defined areas of responsibility lacking interconnectedness. They were silos. Silos deprive departments of the good thinking that resides across the organization, they undermine the organization's sense of wholeness, and they can serve to encourage continuity over creativity, like ruts in a road. Silos often serve positional interests but almost never serve the organizational interest. At the PJCC the silos were structural, in that many programs had their own fee structures, revenue targets, and program objectives. The system that had evolved over time was undermining one of the CEO's emergent organizational interests—to create a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts. The question was how to begin to diminish divisions and leverage the power of the whole—not just the programmatic resources but the intellectual capital, experience, and wisdom residing among the divided staff.

I came up with “**Crazy Concepts**”—an invitation to participate in an unbridled, interdisciplinary collective solution quest. We asked members of the LLT to present a problem they wanted to solve or an outcome beyond their reach that they hoped to achieve. We then brought together people from across the organization at different levels to generate their best ideas on their own and then share those ideas with one another. The process involved staff preparing homework in advance and coming together to explore potential solutions and eventually settle on a strategy to implement on an experimental basis. The process included setting priorities, performing a risk-benefit analysis, and adopting risk-mitigation plans. Implementation required continued interdisciplinary cooperation.

Crazy Concepts helped the PJCC engage in an experiment with membership fees—to provide Early Childhood Education (ECE) families with substantial discounts to health and fitness membership as an expression of gratitude for their enrollment in ECE. It also served to create a literal and figurative pathway for ECE families to leave the ECE building and enter the center proper. We also employed a Crazy Concepts approach to the development department, aiming to clarify the purpose of development and adopt new strategies. This effort resulted in the PJCC adopting a new vision for its development work. It addressed our need to *repair* relationships, *reconnect* with old friends and supporters, *introduce* ourselves to new friends, generating new supporters, and enable those within our community to connect with one another. Out of this effort, the team came up with 70 Years, 70 Stories—a yearlong campaign led by the board with support from staff to honor the center's anniversary by reconnecting with old friends and capturing and celebrating stories of how the center had changed lives. Crazy Concepts is a disciplined approach to abandoning discipline—it encourages and rewards ideas that push limits. It deliberately introduces new voices and disrupts business as usual.

What else and how else

While there are many other disruptive practices that I introduced from my Maestro of Mayhem post, there are two areas of work that I believe are of highest priority for accelerating the learning curve for a new leader governing an organization through transition: feedback and governance.

In regard to “feedback,” I introduced a weekly practice of documenting my observations of the CEO and using those written summaries as a conversation starter for our weekly one-on-one sessions. We punctuated these weekly sessions with quarterly off-site “Brain Jams.” To provide a sense of the nature of the weekly observations, I am including an excerpt from my April 2017 reflection memo:

You started the week strong. I was especially impressed when you wrestled the LLT agenda from me and introduced the mission-craft assignment. Here’s what is important and positive about this: You stayed true to our meeting purpose. You picked up a conversation we had started with the team the week before. You weren’t hijacking content, you were completing a conversation. You had your own idea of what you wanted from the discussion and how you wanted to get there and you asserted it strongly. You had done the preparation (brought in the exercise sheets) so you were prepared. You modeled good behavior and here’s what it shows: As your direct report, it demonstrates your leadership and decisiveness. For the team, it demonstrates that the team belongs to you. And you know it.

These weekly reflections weren’t always laudatory but they were always aiming at the “organizational interest” as the CEO was defining it.

I designed the Brain Jam as a daylong conversation intended to unleash fears, set priorities, tabulate accomplishments, and muster the courage for more. This is an intense coaching process. It is an opportunity for deep learning, conscious culture cultivation, and the development of a level of self-awareness that helps a leader embrace the concept of compensatory leadership. Compensatory leadership is about bringing in skills, experience, knowledge, and passions that fill the gaps leaders have come to accept within themselves.

In many cases, a new leader will have the least experience in governance and board management. Since the board is a crucial partner in determining the quality of an organization’s life and its sustainability over time, this is an important area of focus. In the case of the PJCC, over time the staff had rendered the board an “audience” for its “presentations and performances.” The monthly meetings had become opportunities for staff to present updates rather than opportunities to build relationships and engage in meaningful conversations of consequence to the organization. We introduced pre-meeting dinners and check-in questions, and dedicated time on every agenda to address a particularly relevant question or topic. This new approach was designed to minimize staff presentations by incorporating written updates into the board packet. When there were presentations, the CEO assumed more responsibility so that the board would develop more of a relationship with him directly and he would develop comfort with fielding their questions and addressing their concerns.

The moral of the maestro

It is, in the end, less about the specifics and more about the intentions when it comes to introducing a Maestro of Mayhem position like the one we introduced to the PJCC. A different person might invent different drills for disruption—but the point is the same: to enable a leader and an organization to have the confidence to try, the curiosity to inquire, the tools to test, the courage to fail, and the commitment to learn.

The evidence and limits of change

Many significant changes have occurred at the PJCC since our year of experimentation ended, including:

1. The health and fitness center, which had been entirely outsourced to a third party, is being brought in-house. This allows for one unified staff across the center, with a common salary and benefits structure and a shared set of values and purpose. **This decision reflects the CEO's desire to create a sense of wholeness across the organization.**
2. The CEO reorganized his leadership structure with an emphasis on coherence and connection in functions and reporting lines, and in the process established a new position dedicated to partnerships and community engagement. **During our year, the CEO and I talked about what it means to build an organization by function, placing functions in the proper proximity of one another to support effectiveness.**⁸
3. The development director resigned and the CEO assumed leadership for development.⁹ **The CEO's decision to assume leadership of development reflects his growing comfort with the seat he holds, including his understanding of the charitable purpose of the institution he leads.**
4. For the first time in a long time, positions on the board have become desirable, drawing more applicants than there are available seats. **During our year, the CEO revitalized the executive committee and had begun working in closer partnership with the board on everything from nominating to planning.**
5. The center is in the process of developing a Jewish Peoplehood Institute for the Bay Area—the first of its kind. **This demonstrates the CEO's willingness to be bold, to create value and relevance beyond the four walls of the center itself.**
6. The board initiated a strategic planning process with an emphasis on social value, vision, and purpose. **This effort should be building on the values and sense of purpose that the CEO began to define with the LLT during our year together.**¹⁰
7. The center has been successful in restoring relationships with old friends, evidenced by the attendance of a group of original core campus donors at the 2019 annual fundraising event. **The 70 Years, 70 Stories effort rekindled relationships and revived fond memories and commitments about and to the PJCC.**

⁸ One influential discussion we had on the issue of establishing proper reporting relationships among functions was about not placing an effectiveness function under the leadership of an efficiency function because resource conservation will almost always end up to be the “tail that wags that dog.”

⁹ At the start of my work with the PJCC, I indicated my expectation that at least one person would leave as a result of our process. “If that doesn’t happen I will not have fully succeeded. The process is intended to bring that degree of discomfort to the fore.”

¹⁰ During our year, we spoke of the values of generosity, curiosity, and courage.

Reflections of the CEO

Since leaving the PJCC in February of 2018, I have had two follow-up sessions with the CEO, the purpose of which was to explore the CEO's sensibility of what did and didn't work or stick over time and why—and also, to once again, engage his remarkable capacity for self-reflection in service of his continuous commitment to learn. Here are some of his thoughts in his words.

At the start of our work we took time—we didn't just dive into what we believed needed to be done based on the initial assessment. We recognized that the presenting problems may not be the same as the underlying ones—and so we had a period of diagnosis that lasted longer than I anticipated and was prepared for. I think that helped us seize on real drivers for change.

The CEO identified the following as three of the most important insights that led to action and lasting influence:

- 1. Making meetings matter** – When I arrived, the CEO and I agreed that meetings were out of control. They had become a substitute for getting work done. Moreover, everyone wanted to be at every meeting, whether or not their presence was necessary. This insight led us to review meeting schedules across the organization and challenge the purpose and composition of each. As a result, some meetings were eliminated, some were reorganized, and most were reconceived in terms of who was invited to attend. The CEO indicates that he now exercises more discipline around the why, who, and how of meetings. He leads with purpose first and people follow.
- 2. The Questions We Hold** – This exercise and our appreciation of the role that curiosity plays in adaptive capacity was key to our development and continues to be a touchstone for the CEO. Asking people what questions they have/hold is *hugely* important. It reveals how myths run organizations and how reluctance to question can become part of the prevailing culture.
- 3. Transparency** – The absence of trust was palpable at the start and recognizing this helped the CEO understand the role and value of direct and honest communication as well as, through practice, the appropriate limits of transparency given his role as leader.

On the role ...

- The senior fellow role works best when the person in the role is able to engender trust; having the right person is as important as the position. Taking time to align the person—their skills, experience, and style—with the organization is key. Skills and experience establish conditional credibility; style enables trust.
- Having the position embedded allows the fellow to have visibility into the day-to-day rhythm, which serves the CEO and the organization not only in how the fellow engages but with what.
- Having the position in the building, around the building, not just working with the CEO—though clearly working with the CEO—is key.
- Making the position a resource for the leadership team contributes to trust and the building of relationship. The PJCC CEO offered the team access to the senior fellow as a resource to them personally as leaders and to their departments. Not everyone took advantage—but that was information too.

- Having a time-limited position—one year—helped assuage anxieties at a time when people felt very uncertain given the CEO’s recent arrival and the departure of a long-tenured deputy executive director.
- Arriving early on the cusp of transition is ideal—whether the change is in leadership, purpose, or culture, or is multifaceted—because the position can serve as a “container for the change” and can provide the organization with the confidence needed to navigate “new” with greater success.

On the practices ...

- Brain Jams were incredibly important to the CEO’s learning process—in his words, “They provided a safe place to unload and unpack concerns and also a quarterly point of reference from which to see progress—so they inspired me to be more courageous.”
- The experience of being observed for the year was intense—and very different from having an occasional meeting with an executive coach. According to the CEO, “This was a careful observation by someone who developed deep personal knowledge of me in the process and who understood the environment and the personalities ...”
- The weekly reflection memos were intended to increase the CEO’s self-awareness and serve as a reference document over time. He notes, “They enabled me to internalize lessons more readily. I actually found, after your departure, that I could almost conjure your voice—it had become an inner voice for me.”

On what might have gone differently or better ...

When asked what he might have done differently had he known then what he knows now, the CEO shared:

- I would have chosen to do fewer things with more depth—completed more instead of starting so much.
- I would have used the senior fellow role as my learning guide/companion to go on a learning tour and visit other organizations and speak with other leaders about how they deal with transition, generational shifts, and issues of purpose and legacy.
- I would have introduced strategic planning *before* the senior fellow role came to a close.
- I would have started at the six-month mark to plan for your departure—admittedly, you encouraged me to do that, but I was hoping, by then, you wouldn’t leave.
- The first few weeks without you there were strange—I had to find my footing independently.

Reflections of the consultant

We started with initial resistance. We made courageous decisions. We overcame some resistance, not all. We did not do a strong transition when I left, meaning the CEO did not hire anyone to assume any of the responsibilities we had identified as gaps within the organization during my time there. The CEO reshuffled after I left. He moved boxes on the organization chart. He did so with more understanding for the implications of defining relationships between and among functions, but still, for the most part, he was shuffling the deck he was dealt rather than building a new deck. He did not bring in new talent or skills. He did not create a permanent new position dedicated to strategy and learning—my final recommendation. He did develop and promote talent within the organization. By his own admission, the CEO was more comfortable holding the team together than shaking it up.

Perhaps, this is a function of an unspoken promise he felt he had made at the start of my work with him—that my role was not intended to be a threat but an aid, that I was not a rival but a resource. But it may be that the CEO had misread the organization’s appetite for bringing in new staff or skills.

While it is true that my time-limited role allowed some team members to count the months and then the weeks and then the days, waiting for my departure, for others, my date of departure was a source of concern. They were adjusting to change and seeking opportunities to contribute and try new things. Disruption was breeding resilience. On my last day, my door included the following postings:

Worry is a misuse of the imagination ...

Be part of the solution ...

Some walls are made of stone ... And sometimes we build our own ... Some walls must fall.

~ excerpt from the song “Walls,” by Mary Ann Kennedy and Pam Rose

If you believe in broken, believe in fixed ...

~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

And finally ...

Two years out from the start of our work together and one year from its close, the CEO is in his boots—he has taken his proper seat. He is raising more money and telling more tales about the center he leads and the direction in which it is headed. He is better equipped to navigate uncertainty, enable curiosity, and encourage creativity. There are hardly more important qualities required for the journey ahead.

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