

City Managers Conference Session:
“Pitfalls to Avoid in the City
Management Profession”

February 7, 2020

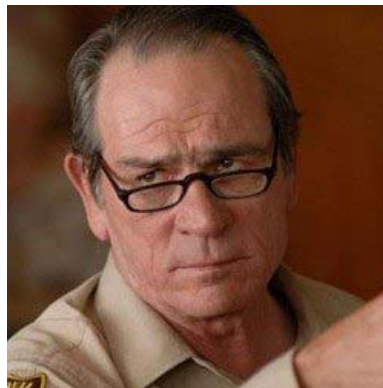
Presented by:

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The Centre for Organization Effectiveness

Discussing an “Undiscussable”



Presentation Outline

- Why This Matters So Much
- Current Context
- Current Structural Arrangements
- Current Mindsets: Professional and Personal
- Blind Spots
- Red Flags
- Antidotes
- Closing Comments



Variables



Why this Matters So Much



A Reminder re Complexity

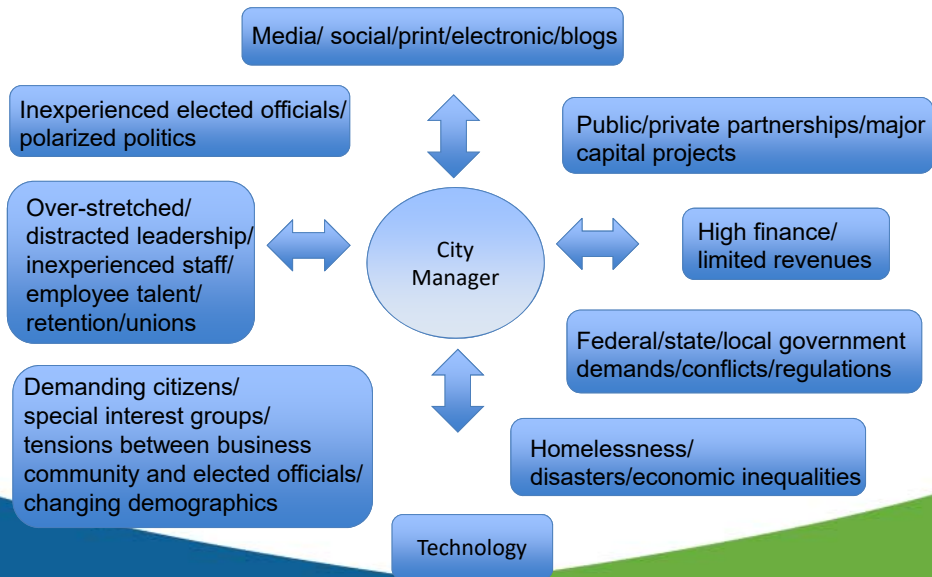
This is a “VUCA” World*:

- Volatile
- Uncertain
- Complex
- Ambiguous

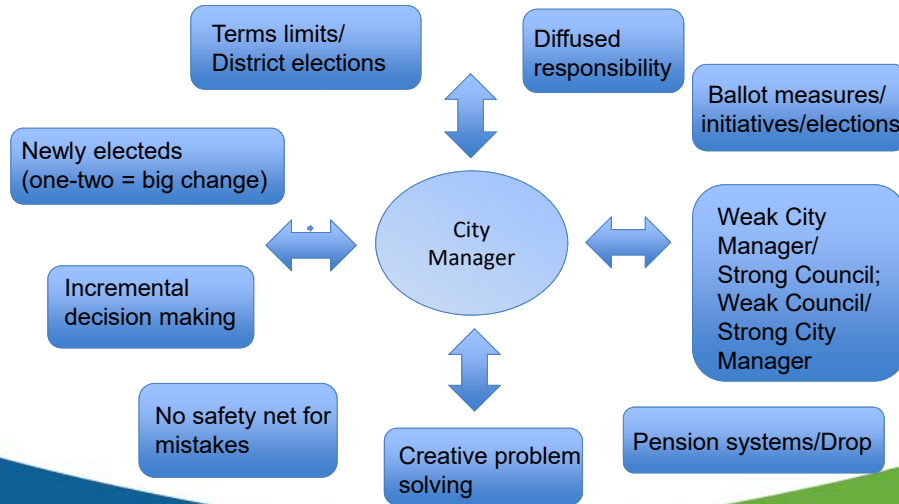


*ICMA, 2012

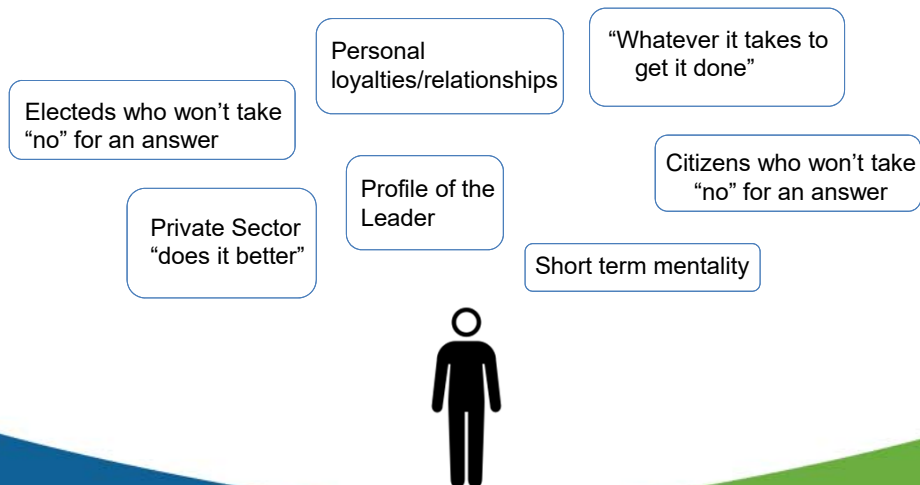
Current Context



Current Structural Arrangements



Current Mindsets: Professional



Current Mindsets: Personal

Highest
One Year;
Drop

Cool Projects;
"still having
fun"

"Undisciplined
pursuit of more"

Denial of
risk and
peril

Inability to
imagine the
perspective
of other
interested
parties

Degree of
sophistication
about how
organizations work

Staying/
Waiting
too long



Blind Spots



Hubris Born of Success



Blind Spots (cont'd)



Moral Hypocrisy/Double Standard



Blind Spots (cont'd)



Ethical Fading



Blind Spots (cont'd)



The "Want" Takes Over



Blind Spots (cont'd)



Ethical Spinning



Blind Spots (cont'd)



“...individuals feel a greater license to engage in questionable behavior after having engaged in worthy behavior.” (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2011)

Johari Window

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Arena	Blind Spot
Not Known to Others	Façade	Unknown

Perceptions of One's Own Ethicality

“Are You As Ethical As You Think You Are?”



“I should behave ethically,
Therefore I will”

“I should have behaved ethically,
therefore, I did.”

PREDICTION

RECOLLECTION

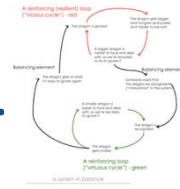
Should

Want

DECISION TIME

“I don't see the ethical implications of this decision,
so I do what I want to do”

It is the Interplay...



“I’ve concluded there are more ways to fall than to become great”.

Jim Collins, author of **Why the Mighty Fall: And Why Companies Never Give In**, 2009.

Some

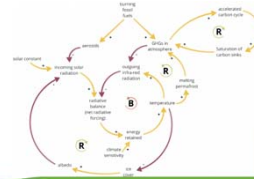
RED FLAGS



Red Flags



- The language you use
- Really cool project; legacy; highest one year
- Incurring downside risk; high infrequent/high risk/low skill
- “Undisciplined pursuit of more”



Red Flags



- Not learning anymore
- Doing battle with an Elected Official
- Changes that matter in the “**Current Context**”;
“**Current Structural Arrangements**”
- Externalizing blame



Red Flags (cont'd)



- Erosion of healthy debate and dialogue



- Inexperienced staff



- “Unconsciously” competent







ANTIDOTES



Antidotes



- Create mechanisms 
- Understand the “bank account” 
- Think several steps down the road 
- Create a “devil’s advocate” role
 - Team must discuss “undiscussables” 

Antidotes (cont’d)



- Time/System One decision-making; System Two decision-making; outside feedback



- Manage your reaction to ambiguity
- “Blameworthy” continuum

“Blameworthy” Continuum

A Spectrum of Reasons for Mistakes

(not all mistakes are equal):

Blameworthy ----- Praiseworthy

Deviance			Uncertainty	Exploratory
Inattention	Lack of Ability	Task Challenge	Hypothesis Testing	Testing
	Process Inadequacy	Process Complexity		

Antidotes (cont'd)

- Reframe issue(s) broader; partner with City Council/Board of Supervisors
- Anticipate the “want” self
- Identify **hidden**, but powerful, values
- Exit gracefully; make it a project



A Word of Caution to Elected Officials



Closing Comments



What Will the 90 Year Old You Say to You?

References

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- Trevino, L. and Nelson, K., **Managing Business Ethics: Straight Talk About How to Do it Right**, 7th Edition, 2017
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