

6. Collective Impact

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Megan Camp introduced the evening by sharing her experience of working with Scott on the Farm to School (FTS) Network. In a year's time, with Scott's help, they moved from being not sure how to achieve their common vision to highly functioning self organized groups systematically accomplishing agreed upon crucial steps to achieving their goal of establishing FTS in every Vermont school. She also mentioned that Scott has been working with other Vermont collective efforts: The Energy Action Network; Lake Champlain cleanup; and Education for Sustainability.

Scott asked each person to respond to this question:

What do you want to learn tonight, what are you struggling with, can you frame it in a question? Here are the responses:

Craig Smith (Rock Point development): **How do you introduce a networked system into a hierarchical system?**

Will Raap (Costa Rica Watershed Project): **How can the economy be our friend, fostering what we do?**

Jen Cirillo (Shelburne Farms): I pass because I've already asked Scott questions.

Megan Camp (Shelburne Farms): We have spent 1 ½ years reinventing the FTS Network, moving from hierarchical to self-governing governance. **How do you resist the pulls back to hierarchy where many partners are comfortable?**

Meg Harris (PH International): **How do we make sure what we're doing is results-based and how not to simply chase the funding?**

Ann Martin (PH International): **How can project participants build enough trust so they will take a risk to commit to the project over its duration?**

Steve Schmida (SSG Advisors): **How to deal across cultures to build strong partnerships? How create market incentives to tackle development challenges?**

Megan Epler-Wood (Epler-Wood International): **Our goal is to work with the private sector to build collective impact projects to ensure that tourism is sustainable.**

Barbara McAndrews (Institute for Sustainable Communities): **How to agree on what numbers are most important to measure the impact of what we do?**

Jackie McMakin (VGE): **How to help this busy group organize?**

Beth Sachs (Vermont Energy Investment Corporation and Vermont Works for Women): **How can we use collective impact to help us in our work of advancing women?**

Nina Meyerhof (Children of the Earth): **As I move back from a leadership role and as our sources of financial support diminish, how do I help our large band of young people step forward and sustain themselves?**

Princess Ukaga (Children of the Earth): **How do we achieve cultural unity among people in Vermont?**

Louis Siegel (Consultant in local governance): **How deal with conflict – differences in social/economic background – in building a project for the common interest? How build communication and sustainability among groups?**

Gail Stevenson (Vermont Council on World Affairs): **How do we define and measure impact?**

Scott's Responses

Conflict in groups may not be personal; it may be structural - people are working from different structural frameworks, come with different assumptions, and have different notions of appropriate leadership styles.

Dave Snowden's work at Cynefin helps us understand structural frameworks, assumptions, and leadership styles. (Take a look at the sheets I, Jackie, forwarded to you yesterday.) Conflict arises when one person assumes the situation is simple and requires hierarchical leadership; another assumes the situation is complex and that self-governing groups will offer emergent leadership in a changing context.

Structure drives behavior. Conflict, often, is not personal, but structural.

Questions to ask individuals:

- What do you care about?
- What are you trying to cause?
- What is needed to do that?
- Tell me a success story

Questions to ask individuals and groups:

- What's the state of reality?
- What's causing that reality?
- Where to intervene in that reality? How identify the points of leverage?
- How to create the structural framework for those interventions?

As participants in change, we can ask:

- How to give value to each actor?
- How to care deeply about what they care about?

Really it is all about love – falling in love with each person and their ideas on how to make things better. It is important to probe together for the truth about what is really needed, not what we wish were needed, and also to activate each participant's full potential.

Note to VGE from Jackie: This is a pretty sketchy summary of an inspiring and fast moving presentation and discussion. It will help to read up on some of this stuff. Megan Camp will send us some of the references that Scott mentioned.

For now, I am including two links to things to read. The first is a summary on The Creative Process according to Robert Fritz. Robert Fritz is often mentioned by Scott in his articles. I found myself returning to Fritz's ideas throughout the evening. When you read this summary, it may seem dry. If you try it out in your life, you may create amazing results. I found this true when I taught Fritz's process in my former life.

Second, I'll send my own summary of Scott's 41 page article on his website about solving intractable problems. It shows how Scott builds from a deep listening to each person, to the group itself, and to the various stakeholders in a given change effort.

Scott generously ended the evening by inviting us to contact him via email if we would like further discussion on specific questions we have about our own work.
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Resources

A Leader's Framework for Decision Making by David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone
<https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making>