Order Out of Chaos: Managing in Uncertainty
Alliance for International Exchange

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Nothing is intractable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>Tame Issues</th>
<th>Problem to solve</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single root cause</td>
<td>Many causes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear beginning and end</td>
<td>On-going</td>
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<td>Best practices work</td>
<td>They don’t</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expertise matters</td>
<td>Inquiry matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeats over time</td>
<td>Re-emerges over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers are useful</td>
<td>Stories are useful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow rules and expectations</td>
<td>Break rules and expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play to win</td>
<td>Play to keep the game going</td>
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<td>Example: Audit</td>
<td>Example: Public health</td>
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WHAT is yours today?
Your Wicked Issue

1. Choose one that is immediate for you and your organization
2. Write three sentences about it
3. Share the sentences with a neighbor

How are your wicked issues same and different?

Today we will . . .

WHAT?
What brings order out of chaos?

SO WHAT?
So what manages in uncertainty?

NOW WHAT?
Now what is one thing you will do to bring order out of your chaos?
WHAT brings order out of chaos?

Complex Adaptive System: Order Out of Chaos
Your Wicked Issue

SO WHAT manages in uncertainty?
Keep moving; keep learning

Manage in Uncertainty

Keep moving; keep learning: Adaptive Action

- What is happening right now?
- What do we know for sure?
- What are people saying?
- What . . .

- What? so what?

- Now what will we do?
- Now what will we measure?
- What will we communicate?
- Now what . . .

- So what patterns do we see?
- So what resources are untapped?
- So what stories have we heard about what works?
- So what do we wonder?
- So what options do we have?
- So what does success look like now?
- So what . . .
Your Wicked Issue

WHAT is the current pattern?

SO WHAT do you know for sure?
SO WHAT do you wonder?

NOW WHAT next wise action will manage your uncertainty?

Keep moving; keep learning
Focus on patterns, not problems

Manage in Uncertainty
Focus on Patterns not Problems

In general . . .

On one hand . . .
On the other

Surprised!

Wondering?

Pattern Spotters Worksheet

In general, I . . .

On the one hand, I noticed . . . On the other hand, I noticed . . .

I was surprised by . . .

I wonder . . .
Focus on patterns not problems: Pattern Spotters

WHAT do you see:
Generalities?
Contradictions?
Surprises?
Puzzles?

SO WHAT is possible now?

NOW WHAT next wise action
Help you manage your uncertainty?

Keep moving; keep learning
Focus on patterns, not problems
Find what’s true and useful

Manage in Uncertainty
The group recognizes that all are true and chooses the one that is most useful here and now.

Find what’s true and useful: Four Truths

- **Objective**: What everyone can see and understand by data and evidence.
- **Subjective**: What an individual sees and believes to be true, based on personal experience and interpretation.
- **Normative**: What members of a group agree is true and useful.
- **Complex**: The group recognizes that all are true and chooses the one that is most useful here and now.

Find what’s true and useful: Four Truths

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Find what’s true and useful: Four Truths

WHAT are each of the truths today?

SO WHAT is the value and use of each of the truths?

NOW WHAT next wise action?

Manage in Uncertainty

Keep moving; keep learning
Focus on patterns, not problems
Find what’s true and useful
Ask questions—lots of questions
Ask questions: Power of Questions

1. **WHAT?** Frame a sticky issue in 3 to 5 sentences.
2. **SO WHAT?** Listen to questions without answering.
   Questions are:
   - Open-ended
   - Not disguised advice
   - Beyond knowledge of the asker
3. **NOW WHAT?** Consider a next wise action:
   - Within your control
   - Reasonable
   - Promising
   - Short-term response

WHAT is your wicked issue?

SO WHAT questions can you hear?

NOW WHAT next wise action?
NOW WHAT is one thing you’ll do?

Learn more about HSD . . .

- Models and Methods: [https://www.hsdinstitute.org/resources.html](https://www.hsdinstitute.org/resources.html)
- Power of Questions—daily practice
  Inquiry IS the Answer
- Theory and Practice:
  *Adaptive Action: Leveraging Uncertainty in Your Organization* (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013)
- Applications to wicked issues:
  Live Virtual Workshops (free every month)
  Online Adaptive Action Labs (monthly)
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