INFORMAL LEARNING: STATE OF PLAY
UNIVERSITY OF SIEGEN
GERMANY, 3.10.2015

ADULT INFORMAL LEARNING

VICTORIA J. MARSICK
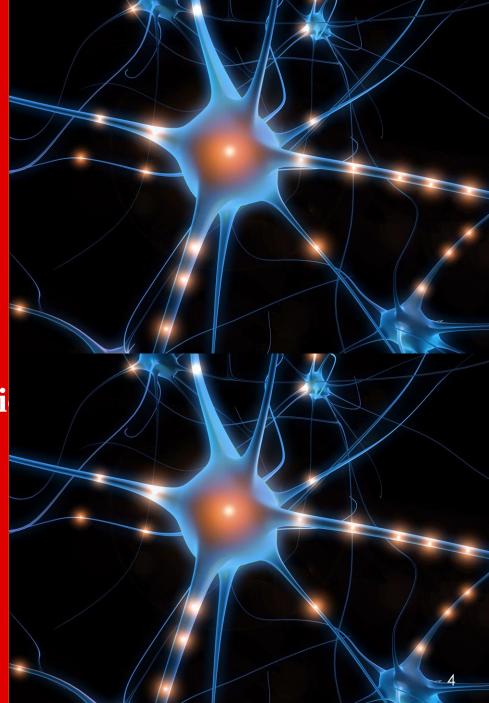## TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

OVERVIEW

- How do adults learn informally and incidentally?

- What supports informal learning?
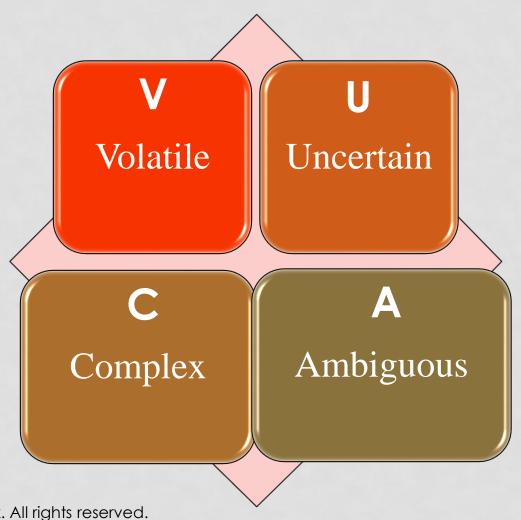
- What are some key challenges?

HOW DO ADULTS LEARN INFORMALLY / INCIDENTALLY?

DRIVEN BY NEW SOCIAL REALITIES

- **The knowledge era**

- **Globalization**

- **Engagement & participati**

- **Flatter & networked**

- **Immersive technologies**

VUCA ENVIRONMENTS

V Volatile

U Uncertain

C Complex

A Ambiguous

DRIVEN BY WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT LEARNING

- Neuroscience

- Embodied learning

- Subjective realities

- Social learning

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INFORMAL & INCIDENTAL LEARNING — ANY WHERE …. ANY TIME …. ANY PLACE
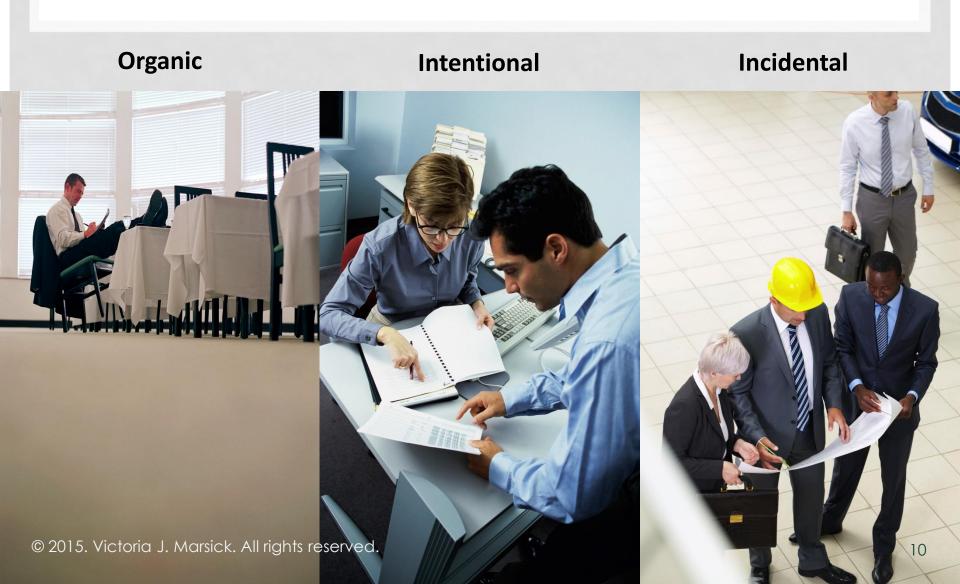
WHAT IS INFORMAL LEARNING?

Organic

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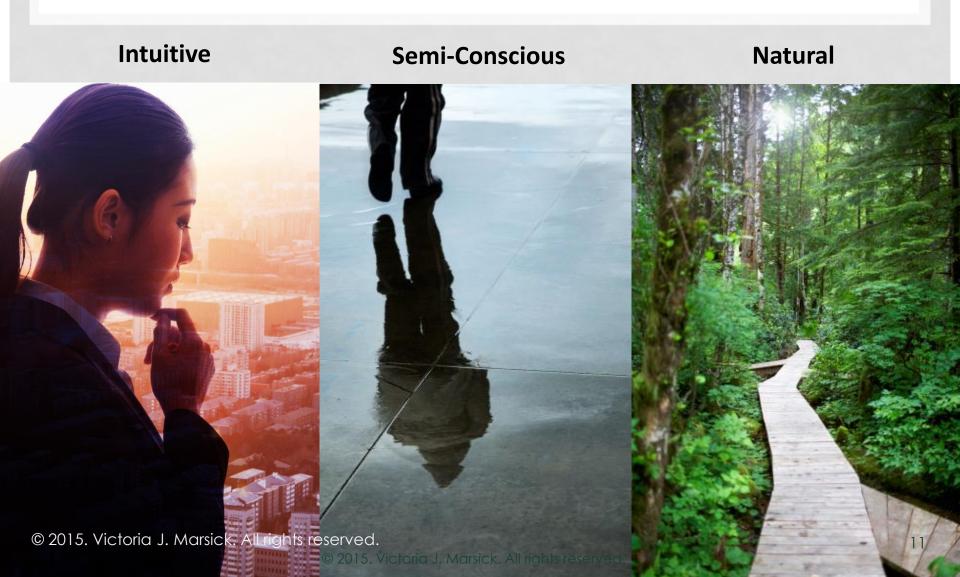
Intentional

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AND … IT IS OFTEN INCIDENTAL

Organic   **Intentional**   **Incidental**

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MORE ON INCIDENTAL LEARNING …

Intuitive   **Semi-Conscious**   **Natural**

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO RESEARCH AND SUPPORT INFORMAL LEARNING?

Pervasive　　　　**Contextual**　　　　**Embedded**

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HOW IT OCCURS

- From & through experience
- Intertwined with tasks — cannot separate from challenge that prompts it
- Tied to processes, roles, rules & settings
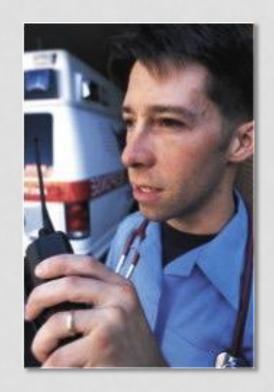- Social—interaction with others

CONTEXT IS KEY TO UNDERSTANDING INFORMAL LEARNING

EXAMPLE: PARAMEDICS STUDY

"No matter how many calls we make … it is never boring"

Learn more "on demand" than through mandated training

Source: Barbara Larson Lovin (1991) in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin (2010)

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PARAMEDICS (Continued)

Challenges at work matter!:

As [we] pulled up that day, we knew that we were in for a mess because there was a truck halfway on top of a car and the car was hanging over the bridge.

Source: Barbara Larson Lovin (1991) in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin (2010)

PARAMEDICS (Continued)

Relationships matter:

You go through so much with every partner …

You laugh so much.

You make mistakes together.

You get pats on the back together.

You're up all night together.

You're held over the next day and you're walking zombies.

Source: Barbara Larson Lovin (1991) in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin (2010)

PARAMEDICS (Continued)

Work practices — here, the Run Report, is key

I'll say, "You dummy, you should have done the opposite …" I'll get to the cause and effect ….It makes a lot of difference to finally see all … the 'vital signs,' written down….

Now that I'm writing the report, I'm thinking about the liabilities ….

Then maybe next time I'll be sure to do that differently….

Source: Barbara Larson Lovin (1991) in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin (2010)
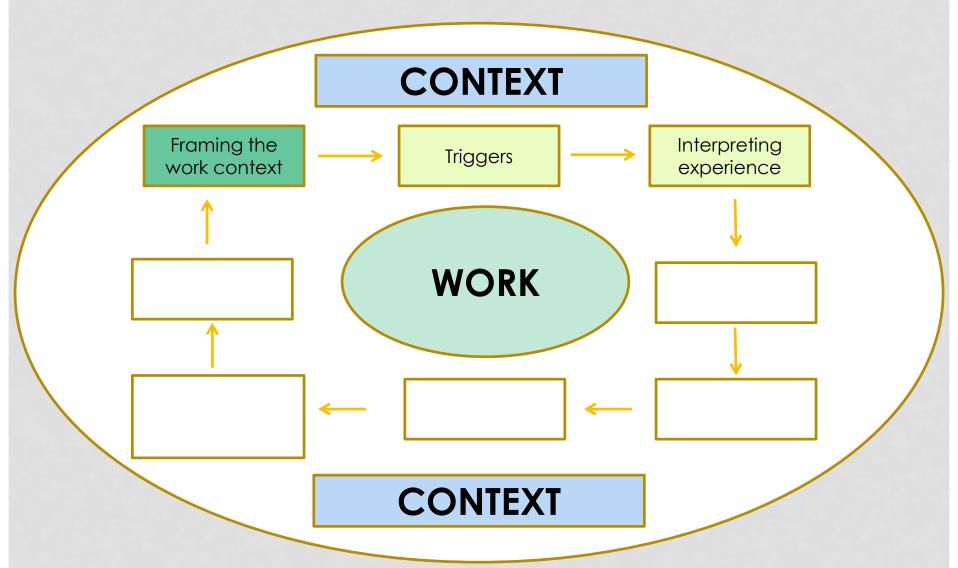
PARAMEDICS (Continued)

Reflecting and telling the story is where learning happens … with your partner … with your pals … round the clock
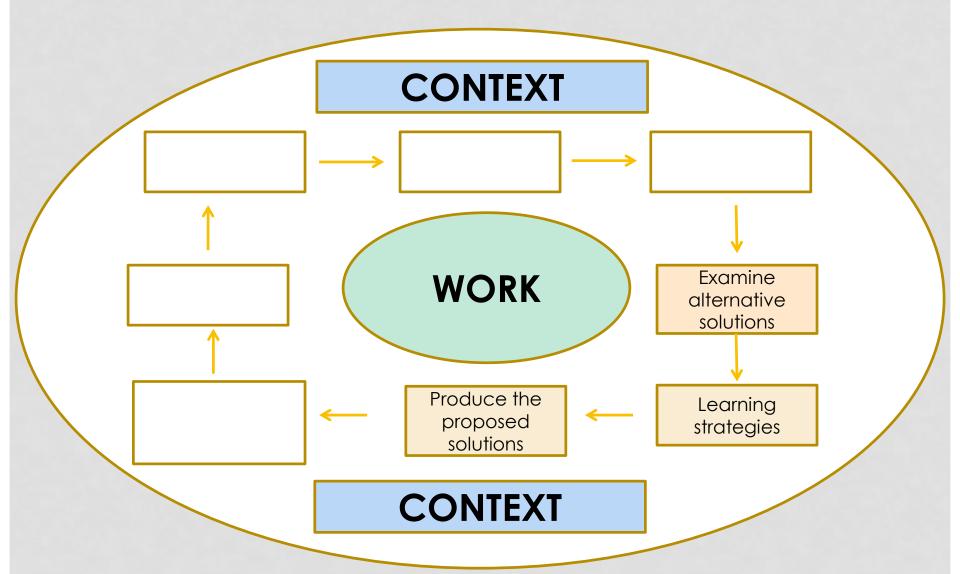
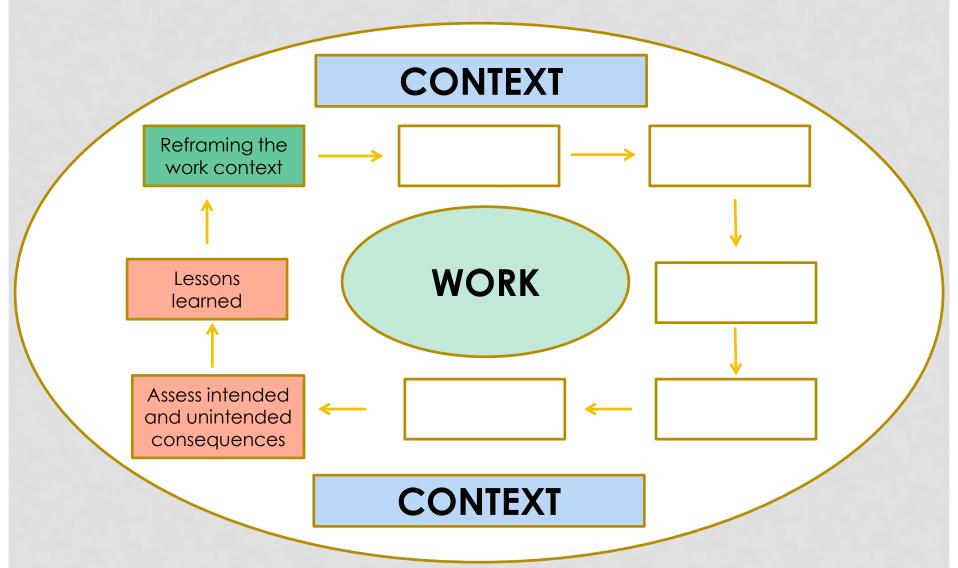*They "run a call once, physically …. Mentally you run the call dozens of times after that. Over and over and over…. In telling the story to other people … (and at any time) it comes back to you and you think about it."*
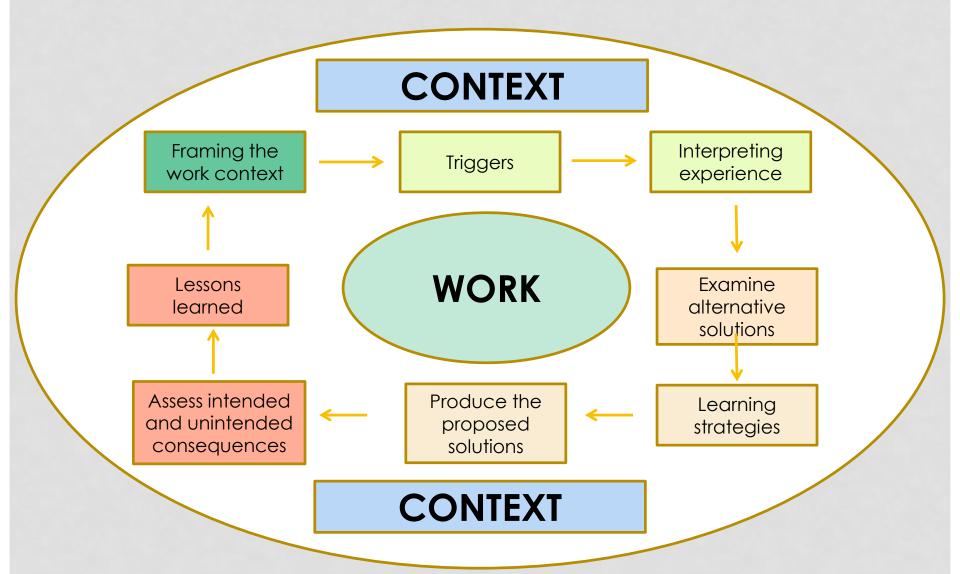
Source: Barbara Larson Lovin (1991) in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin (2010)

PARAMEDICS (Continued)

Pattern recognition matters:

I was having a hard time intubating the kid. Blood was just coming from everywhere …. I knew how to find where the trachea was …. Based on previous experience with water in a drowning victim, I could tell by how the fluid was moving where the two different holes were … that's how I found it. Just watched where the blood was going, and placed the tube.

INFORMAL AND INCIDENTAL LEARNING MODEL

(MARSICK AND WATKINS, 1999, 2011)

INFORMAL AND INCIDENTAL LEARNING MODEL

(MARSICK AND WATKINS, 1999, 2011)

CONTEXT

WORK

Examine alternative solutions

Learning strategies

Produce the proposed solutions

CONTEXT

INFORMAL AND INCIDENTAL LEARNING MODEL

(MARSICK AND WATKINS, 1999, 2011)

INFORMAL AND INCIDENTAL LEARNING MODEL

(MARSICK AND WATKINS, 1999, 2011)

CONTEXT

Framing the work context → Triggers → Interpreting experience

WORK

Lessons learned

Assess intended and unintended consequences ← Produce the proposed solutions ← Learning strategies ← Examine alternative solutions

CONTEXT

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF ERROR—ANY STEP BUT ESPECIALLY …..

- Diagnostic step: Pattern recognition
  - Incomplete understanding of the context
  - Faulty diagnosis / lack reframing
- Solution implementation step
  - Limited perspective taking
  - Inventing the wrong solution or inaccurately implementing the right solution
  - Failure in negotiating access, resources
- Assessment step
  - Unintended consequences
  - Incorrect attributions or conclusions

WHAT SUPPORTS INFORMAL LEARNING?

PERSONAL CAPABILITIES + DESIGN + ENVIRONMENT

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT CRITICAL PERSONAL CAPABILITIES

- Basic capacities
  - Feelings of competence and confidence (self-efficacy)
  - Ability to be self-directed and self-regulated

- Mediated by developmental Ways of Knowing (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012)

  - Instrumental knowers

  - Socializing knowers

  - Self-authoring knowers

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT CONTEXT—WHAT PEOPLE NEED MOST ….

- Access to resources (Lohman, 2006, 2009)

- Availability of people at the moment of learning and problem solving matters more than anything else (Eraut, 2004; Brown & Duguid, 1991)

- Pattern recognition skills (Eraut, 2004)

DESIGNING FOR SUPPORT

WHEN THINGS ARE OR ARE NOT ROUTINE

EVERWISE

ROCKET FUEL FOR TODAY'S WORKFORCE

www.geteverwise.com

Adam Neaman
VP, Learning Architecture

MOST LEARNING IS INFORMAL AND ON THE JOB — THUS A DESIGN PARADOX

Q: How do we design for learning that is informal, self-directed, and on-the-job?

ANSWER: SOCIAL LEARNING + SUPPORT FOR REAL WORK

Build around mentoring relationships: Assign real work, then support it with people, activities, and content

How It Works…

TIME BOUND AND GOAL ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

MISSION-DRIVEN AND CONCIERGE GUIDED PARTNERSHIPS

CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND MEASURED OUTCOMES

Establish Development Goals

1

Connect with Mentors / Missions

2

Track Progress & Acquire Skills

3

EVERWISE

How It Works…

TIME BOUND AND GOAL ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

MISSION-DRIVEN AND CONCIERGE GUIDED PARTNERSHIPS

CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND MEASURED OUTCOMES

EVERWISE

Establish Development Goals

1

Participants complete a simple on-line assessment to help us understand protégé goals, objectives & career development

Connect with Mentors / Missions

2

Protégés connect with an experienced **Mentor** and conduct personalized **Missions** based upon goals, industry, role, etc.

Track Progress & Acquire Skills

3

Protégés work with their mentor on personalized missions to achieve specific goals and enhance their skills / experience
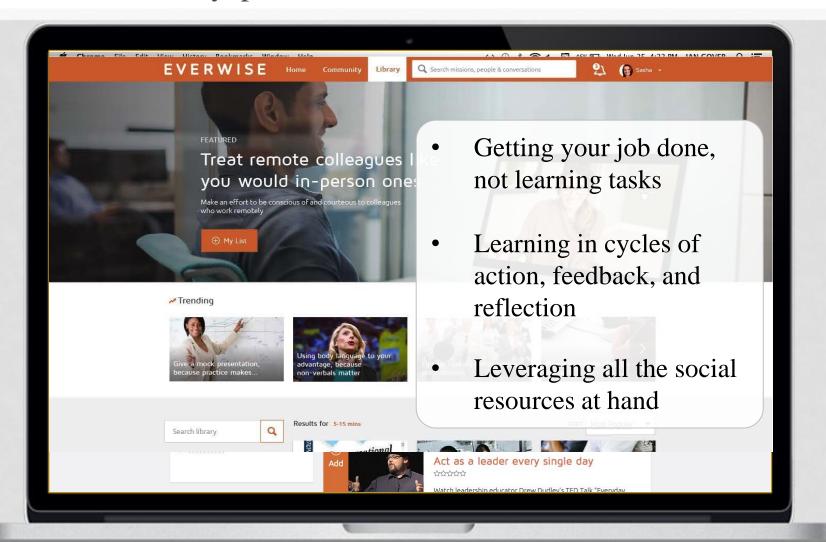
Development Goals & Key Focus Areas

Users are guided to describe professional goals for specific development areas where they would like to focus

Missions

On the job learning assignments sourced from and curated by our mentor community, partners, and customers

- Getting your job done, not learning tasks

- Learning in cycles of action, feedback, and reflection

- Leveraging all the social resources at hand

MISSION IMPACT STEMS FROM LEARNING COLLABORATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF REAL WORK ASSIGNMENTS

Protégé assigned real work (creates pull)

SUPPORTING CONTENT
All forms of media (articles, videos, checklists, etc.)

CHEAT SHEETS
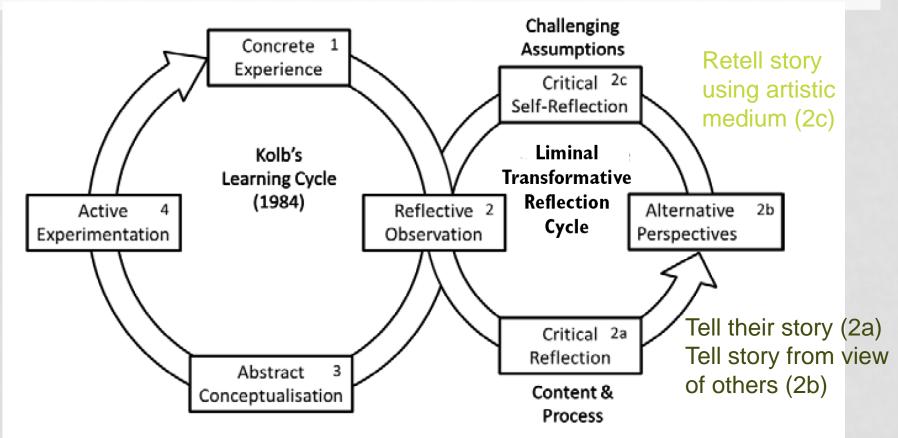Tips and traps from the community + synopses of mission support materials

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
- Mentors
- Managers and other colleagues
- Online communities
- Advisors (keep things moving)

GOING DEEPER WHEN LEARNING IS LESS ROUTINE

- Opening up space, time, one's mind and imagination
  - Exploring what is not yet recognized or put into words — "presentational knowing" through story, the arts, etc.
  - Tap into others' perspectives

ALTERNATIVE STORIES OF POLICE IN ENGLAND & WALES

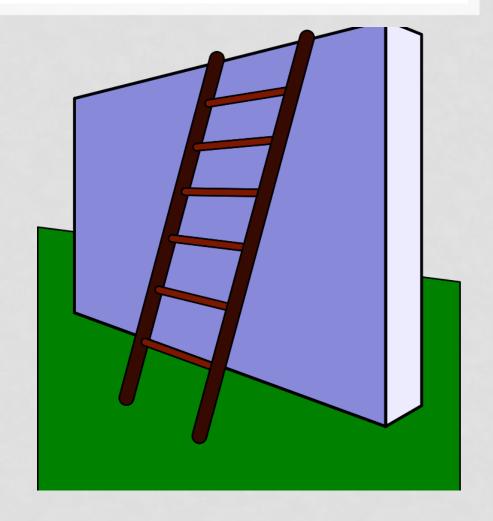**(RON LARSON, JAMI BLYTHE, GARY SHAW, 11TH INTERNATIONAL TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING CONFERENCE, 11/23-26/14)**

Retell story using artistic medium (2c)

Tell their story (2a)
Tell story from view of others (2b)
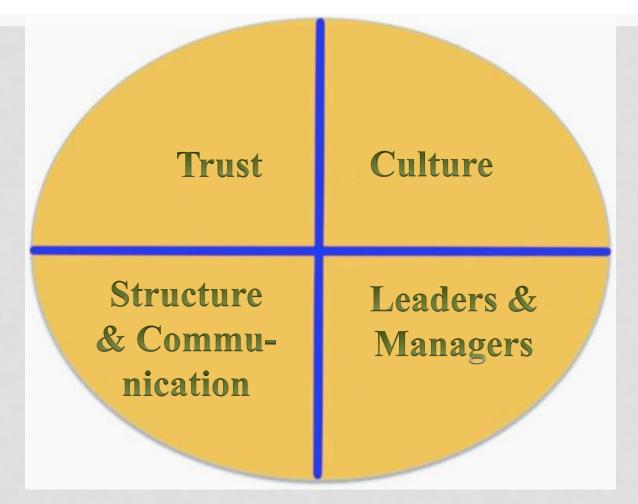
Transformative Reflection Model:
Liminal Space for Tapping into Imaginative Knowing & Others' Perspectives

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SOCIAL & ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

When people are highly motivated, organizations get results when they get out of the way and let people take charge of their own learning … but they need to provide supports and remove barriers

SOCIAL & ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS: THE BIG 4

Trust | Culture | Structure & Commu-nication | Leaders & Managers

KEY CHALLENGES

SOME CHALLENGES

- Openness to ambiguity — in one's own learning and in the environment
- Ability to see—and change—biases, assumptions (ladder of inference)
- Negotiating power differences

SOME CHALLENGES

- Working across boundaries

- Rewarding the right things

- Scaling up … without "over-formalizing" or controlling individual choice

Danke

marsick@tc.edu

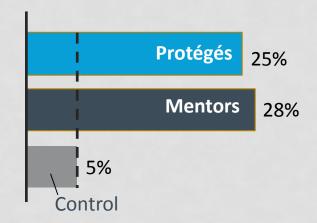# Thank You!

marsick@tc.edu

APPENDIX SLIDES

BENEFITS OF MENTORING
QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE VALUE IS BROADLY ACKNOWLEDGED

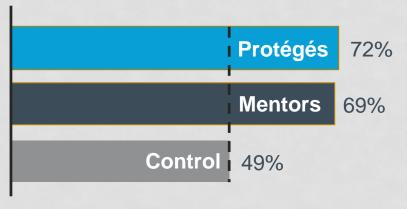**Promotion** likelihood

5x higher
vs. control group

Additional benefits

- Increased engagement
- Greater productivity, competence
- Enhanced professional confidence
- Reduced job-related stress
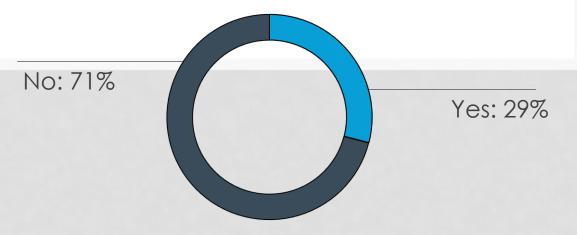- Better interpersonal relationships

Merit-based **salary** increases

Protégés 25%

Mentors 28%

Control 5%

Employee **retention** (5 year)

Protégés 72%

Mentors 69%

Control 49%

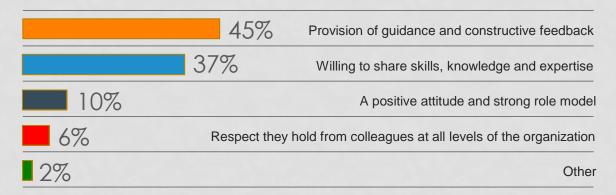# 83%

of employees say they would benefit from being in a mentoring program

Does your current employer currently provide mentoring?

No: 71%

Yes: 29%

What attribute would you most value in a mentor?

45%	Provision of guidance and constructive feedback
37%	Willing to share skills, knowledge and expertise
10%	A positive attitude and strong role model
6%	Respect they hold from colleagues at all levels of the organization
2%	Other

Source: Robert Walters Employee Insight Survey 2013

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WHY AND HOW IT WORKS

- Non-transactional
- Personalized
- Just-in-time
- On the the job
- Social
- Occurring over time

- Mentoring +
- Peer support +
- JIT performance support
- Embedded in process to drive engagement & get most from these resources

EVER-WISE DESIGN COMPONENTS

CHALLENGE

- Finding the right mentor

- Getting the most out of the relationship

- Making the most of the community's evolving expertise

- Getting frequent, insightful feedback and collaboration

- Accessing just-what-you-need learning resources, just-in-time

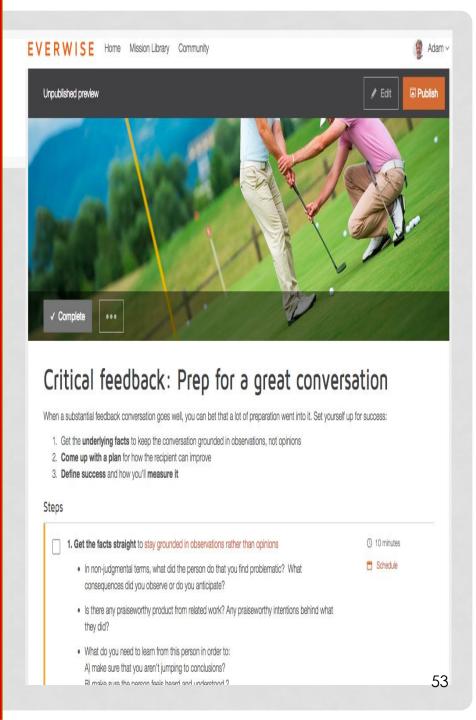- Sustaining engagement between planned interventions

APPROACH

- Proprietary algorithm plus human tuning; inter- or intra- organizational matches

- Guidance from relationship managers, missions, and community; all built on past successes

- Content and missions continually sourced from what's working for mentors and protégés

- Real work and missions create opportunities for feedback; mentors and colleagues provide it

- Curated, fresh online content, organized around goals and questions

- High accountability goal setting, community, relationship managers, missions, reminders

MISSIONS CAN BE USED AS INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES OR CURRICULA

- Protégés can do any mission they want
- Sets of missions can be assembled into curricula (e.g., New Manager, currently in development)
- Curricula are suggested pathways, but protégés work with managers and mentors to figure out which missions will be helpful to them

MISSIONS ASSIGN THE WORK YOU ALREADY NEED TO DO, THEN PROVIDE RICH SUPPORTS FOR DOING IT

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EXAMPLE OF A MODERATELY COMPLEX MISSION, BROKEN INTO FOUR TASKS

Deliver critical feedback to a team member who needs it

1. CONSIDER THE BEST APPROACH
Understand the most effective mindsets and explore some models of feedback to select what will work for you in this situation

2. PREPARE
Collect your thoughts (and data) on the feedback you want to deliver and practice your delivery with a colleague or mentor

3. HAVE THE DISCUSSION
Deliver the feedback and then debrief on how it went with the same colleague or mentor

4. FOLLOW UP AND REFLECT
Follow up with the feedback recipient to see how it's going, make adjustments as needed, and learn from the experience

LEARNING VARIES BY CONTEXT

- How can busy people be supported when learning about relatively routine tasks?

- What happens when the challenges they face are not easily categorized … or not yet identified or recognized?

- How can adults learn who need to become aware of, and break, subconscious habits, biases, or assumptions to learn productively?

"DEVELOPMENT IN PLACE" (MISSIONS) NOT NEW BUT JUST STARTING TO GET TRACTION ONLINE

Online learning by doing real work

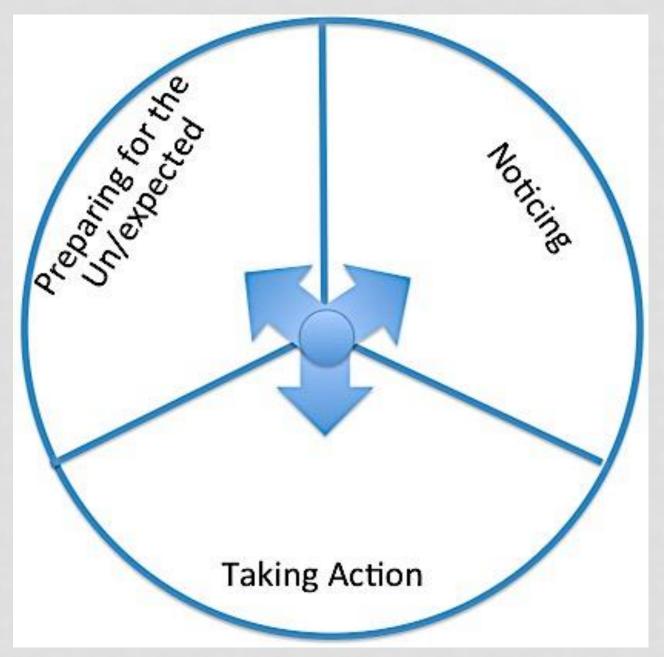|		
Google	Sales	Sales reps engage with real leads and customers
?WhatIf! Innovation	Innovation	Product teams employ innovation techniques on the Job
Newt Gingrich's "Diana" project with Socratic Arts	Legislative leadership	Newly elected state legislators start to implement their agendas
Global management consulting firm	Responding to business trends	Partners make concrete preparations for specific client projects

Full impact of this approach can only be realized when experts and community are fully engaged

GOING DEEPER WHEN LEARNING IS NOT ROUTINE

- Deep questioning
- Enhancing situational judgment
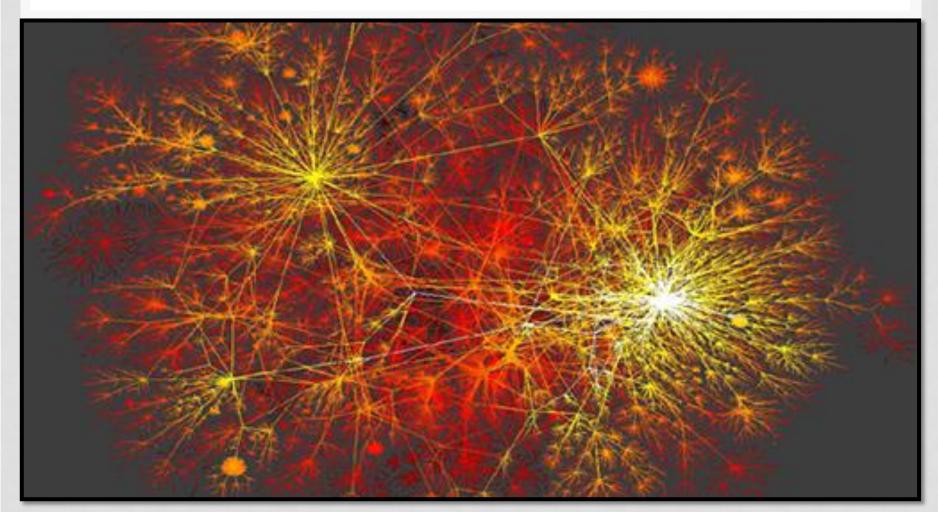 - Example: master teachers

SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT

SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT

VUCA—RELYING ON SELF-ORGANIZING SYSTEMS

CONTEXT: $B=f(P,E)$

Kurt Lewin's heuristic formula (not an equation):

***B**ehavior—and Learning--is a **f**unction of the **P**erson and his or her **E**nvironment*

Individuals learn by interacting within a "system" that shapes them … and that they shape directly or indirectly

Kurt Lewin 1890–1947

DEFINITION (MARSICK & WATKINS, 1990)

- Informal learning: outside of formally structured, institutionally-sponsored classroom-based activities
  - Often non-routine
  - Intentionality
- Incidental learning: byproduct of some other activity
  - E.g., task accomplishment, interpersonal interactions, trial-and-error