Intentional Leadership and Interpersonal Effectiveness

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"Understanding where and how one can lead is something arrived at through personal choice, practice, feedback and the development of

- *Self-awareness*
- *Effective communication*
- *Understanding the role of assumptions*
- *One's leadership skills and abilities"*

Introduction to this Workshop Aid

This two-part training lesson or workshop focuses on the concepts of choosing to be an intentional leader and the importance of effective communication and interpersonal skills in that leadership.

Part One focuses on participants' personal and intentional leadership. Part Two describes two fundamental models in the area of effective interpersonal communication.

Three models will be used in this workshop. It is important for the trainer to become very familiar with these models and the theories that underlie them so as to be able to both explain and use the models for the deepest possible participant learning experience.

The three models we will use are:

·   Intentional Leadership Model (King and Lee)

·   Johari Window (Joe Luft and Harry Ingham)

·   Ladder of Inference (Chris Argyris)

These are included in the segments of the workshop to which they relate.

Time Needed: 2.5 hours – 3 hours depending on exercises used

Equipment/Supplies Needed: A pad of paper on an easel (flipchart), a whiteboard with markers, or a blackboard. It is important to have a space that is shared and visible to all on which to write. No further technology is needed.

Setting the Stage for Your Workshop

Begin your lesson by stating the *objectives* you hope to achieve with the group. I use the following objectives:

After this training experience, participants will:

·   Understand the sources of leadership and be able to reflect on their own leadership.

- Learn the concept of intentional leadership.

- Become more aware of their own communications with others and how that affects their leadership.

- Learn two models for understanding communication and interpersonal effectiveness.

Setting group guidelines at the beginning of your workshop can help create a good environment for participation. Some guidelines I like to use are:

- *Help everyone to participate and learn.*

- *Don't interrupt others.*

- *Ask for clarification when needed.*

- *Be open to new ideas.*

- *Have fun!*

You can allow participants to add a guideline or two to your list if you wish.

It is useful for participants to understand why they should think and learn about leadership and how they can reflect on their own leadership. You as a trainer should place this lesson in the context that makes the most sense for your audience. You can include information in your introduction that draws from the current environment of the libraries your participants are coming from.

Begin with a short discussion about why libraries need excellent leadership now more than ever.

One interactive way to do this is to conduct what is called a *community census*. A community census is a quick open answering of a sentence that you begin. The "stem sentence" can be something like:

"Excellent leadership is needed because…" This stem sentence is written on the flipchart or whiteboard.

As a trainer you can encourage the participants to call out their ideas to complete this sentence. You should write them on a large paper pad (flipchart) on an easel, a whiteboard, or a blackboard. This gathering of ideas about the need for leadership excellence will help you understand how the group is thinking about leadership and also will help relax them and you. In addition you will use this starting exercise to move into the content of your lesson.

In my workshops, some of the reasons for why excellent leadership is needed now more than ever are such things as: the complexity of the environment within which all libraries exist; new tools, new technologies; different and increasing expectations; changing behaviors of all stakeholders (students, the public, faculty, boards, vendors, and governing bodies).

PART ONE: Intentional and Personal Leadership

Lecturette – a lecturette is a short lecture that the trainer gives which provides some theory and concepts that are fundamental to the workshop objectives.

Begin lecturette:

How can an aspiring leader create a plan to be a "superb leader?" This workshop focuses on several key skills required for excellence in leadership at any level:

- Self-awareness

- Effective communication

- Understanding the role of assumptions in communication

- Personal commitment to choosing and developing one's leadership skills and abilities

There are personal costs to leadership: the time one must invest, the personal sacrifices one must make, the significant challenges one must meet and manage when one is in a leadership role. It is for these reasons that becoming a leader through a conscious and self-aware process of reflection and choice is preferable to leadership by drift.

Leadership by drift occurs when people assume leadership roles without much self-reflection or actual choice. Authentic and strong leaders are choosing this path purposely. And they focus on developing their skills. Interpersonal communication is one of the most important leadership skills that all leaders need to develop.

Leadership occurs at all levels of any effective organization. Everyone in the organization can and should lead. Understanding where and how one can lead is something arrived at through personal choice, practice, feedback, and the development of the skills listed above.

But, how are leaders made, where do leaders come from? King and Lee[1] point to a variety of concepts regarding how leaders are made:

1. Leaders are born (the genetic view)

2. Leaders learn to become leaders (the learned view)

3. Leaders are courageous and heroic (the heroic view)

4. Leaders are those people at the top (the top-only view)

5. Leaders emerge when the situation demands leadership (the social script view)

6. Leaders are those people with the titles (the position view)

7. Leaders are called to be leaders (the calling view)

In reality, many of these factors combine to create leaders depending on the leader and the situation. King and Lee describe the importance of understanding both the costs and the benefits of taking a leadership role. Assuming people have this understanding they can choose leadership "intentionally."

Sara King and Robert Lee of the Center for Creative Leadership created a model that provides a framework for examining one's own intentional leadership. We will review this model in this module as well as the interpersonal skills that allow for the effective use of your leadership.

End Lecturette

Tip: Always check in with your participants to see if they understand what you are saying or have any questions. You should scan the group visually for cues that they may not understand you or might have a question.

Group Work Options for You as Workshop Leader

After presenting the initial lecturette you can have an open discussion of the seven sources of leaders; ask the group what their thoughts are about those sources. People will have very strong opinions. Your role as a workshop facilitator is not to convince them of any particular source but to help them discuss all of the sources.

Ask how situations might change what kind of leader people will look for.

Present First Model: Personal Leadership Framework – have this model drawn on the flipchart or whiteboard so all can see it and focus on it as you describe it.

Personal Leadership Framework

Changing Demands and Expectations

| Vision | Values |
| Self - awareness | Balance |
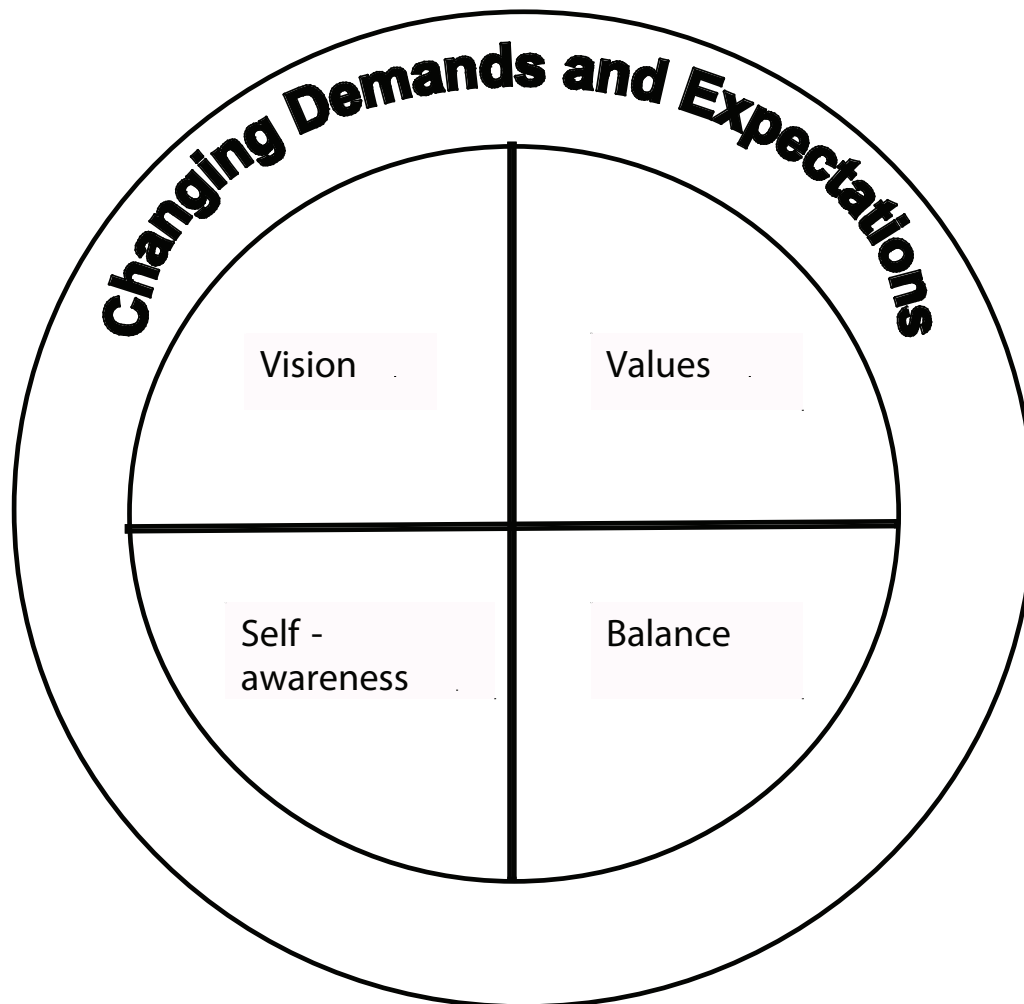
Source: Lee, Robert J. and Sara N. King. *Discovering the Leader in You.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (2000) and The Center for Creative Leadership.

- Discuss the outer ring first: changing demands and expectations. The environment within which leaders act is continually changing and new demands are placed on them as leaders. Some examples in the world of libraries are: changes in how we influence our vendors; changes in copyright; changes in technologies; changes in the larger arena of publishing and information – all of these are changes every library leader has to grapple with and come to an understanding about in order to lead. It is not only in the professionally functional areas that demands change, however. For instance, the expectations of employees have changed over time making it more important to be able to communicate with that group.

- Discuss the inner four quadrants. These are the four core elements of effective and purposeful leaders, according to King and Lee.

- Begin with Vision and the critical nature of having a personal vision for one's own leadership as well as for one's organization/workplace.

- Values are the next quadrant. A clear sense of one's own values are important to leadership in that the most difficult decisions one makes are made on the basis of values. Tell participants that there are values clarification exercises (the King and Lee book contains one such exercise) as they may not know what is meant by a clear sense of personal values.

- The lower left hand quadrant is Self-Awareness. Leaders who fail often fail due to a significant lack of self-awareness. Leaders who succeed are aided greatly by a high degree of self-awareness. This self-awareness is a result of both self-reflection and of feedback from others.

- The last quadrant is Balance. In the Center for Creative Leadership's studies of leadership derailment life/work imbalance was found to be a critical factor. It is very important for leaders to have balance in their lives – understanding how different this balance may be for each individual. It is important because of the demands on the leader's energy; physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional energies are called upon. Balance helps leaders think clearly, make calm decisions, and communicate with confidence and compassion.

Here are two potential exercises. The first one is optional but can set the stage. Depending on how much time you have and what your purpose is with the group you can choose to use either of these exercises or both of them.

Participant Exercise 1:

First silently (approx 5 mins) and then as a group (approx 15-20 mins) identify and discuss the changing demands and expectations that you have experienced as a leader.

Debrief exercise by leading a guided discussion. Ask people to offer some of the things they came up with. Ask the group what their reactions are to changing demands – what is the effect on them? How do they manage to stay balanced when expectations change?

Participant Exercise 2:

Individually write down things you are sure of in your own leadership for each of the quadrants (15-20 mins).

Ask participants to pair up or form triads (groups of three) to discuss which quadrant they feel most comfortable with and which they feel they need to do some more work in (10-15 mins). Emphasize that individuals do not need to share anything they do not wish to share.

Optional instruction for groups of two (dyads) or three (triads): Create some strategies for improving in each of the quadrants (10 mins).

PART TWO – Interpersonal Skills/Communication

You may again begin this segment of the workshop with a community census. The stem sentence you write on the flipchart or whiteboard could be:

"Good communication happens when…"

Encourage the group to offer their ideas and write them on the board. This helps you make connections among things and after your lecturette and exercises you can always come back to this initial community census to validate the ideas of the participants by showing them how what they thought in the beginning actually is important.

This training segment focuses on effective interpersonal communication. Connections can be made to the Intentional Leadership segment by pointing out that the self-awareness quadrant of the King and Lee model is fundamental to effective interpersonal communication.

Lecturette

Many competencies are needed to practice leadership that helps organizations, the people in them, and the clients of that organization. Among these competencies are:

· Influence

· Self-awareness (as seen in the Personal Leadership Framework above)

· Building trust

· Establishing and fostering relationships

· Effective communication

Communication is something we do from the moment we are born until the day we die and yet is the one thing we humans have some trouble with and we are always striving to improve our communication. Good communication is an obvious good in any organization. However, good communication is difficult to achieve due to the complex dynamics of groups as well as the actual necessary communication skills needed for effective communication.

Communication is the process by which we are understood by one another. We convey what we need and want through communication and we understand the needs and wants of others through communication. Interpersonal skills contribute to group synergy. Synergy is

when the knowledge and skills of each individual combine to create something better than any one individual could have produced on his or her own.

Some interpersonal skills are:

· Active listening

· Respectful dissent

· Effective conflict resolution

· Testing assumptions

· Focusing on interests not on positions one wishes to take

In order to better understand the dynamics of interpersonal relationships we will look at a model that will help us better understand this important area. Through this model we will be able to determine how we can become more interpersonally effective in our work relationships.

Present Second Model: The Johari Window
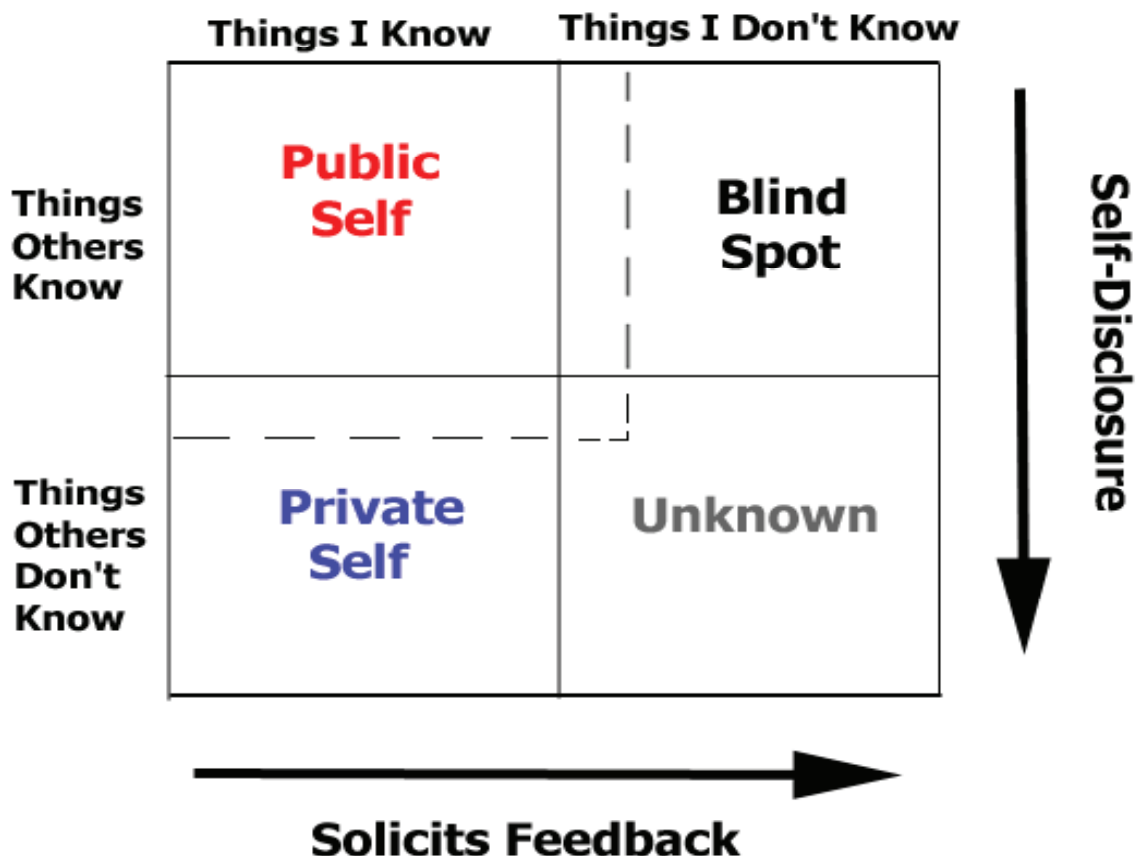
JOHARI WINDOW

Source: The Johari Window form *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics* by Joseph Luft by permission of Mayfield Publishing Company. Copyright © 1984, 1970, and 1963 by Joseph Luft.

This model was created by two social scientists: Joe Luft and Harry Ingham. This is why they named the model Johari!

The purpose of this model is to help explain the dynamics of effective interpersonal relationships. Help participants understand this model by stepping through each part of the model with them as follows:

· Describe it as a window with four panes.

· Explain that the two vertical columns are labeled "I know" and "I don't know."

· Explain that the two horizontal rows are labeled "Others know" and "Others don't know."

· Move to the first pane: Public Self – this pane describes what I know about myself and what others know as well.

· Move to the second pane below Public Self – the Private Self; this arena reflects those things I know about myself but that others don't know.

· Move to the upper right-hand pane, the Blind Spot – this pane reflects those things others know about me but that I do not know.

· Move to the lower right-hand pane, the Unknown – explain that this is a place in all of us where we don't know parts of ourselves and others don't know things about that either.

· Explain that this model's dynamics are made possible by the interaction of two very important things: the seeking of feedback (this is depicted by the left to right hand arrow in the model) and the disclosure of self (indicated by the vertical arrow to the right of the model). We open our "public self" window when we engage in self-disclosure and the acceptance of feedback.

· The idea is not to open the public self entirely but to open it enough so that others can understand and know better where you are "coming from" and how best to work and communicate with you. The model also points out the importance of self-awareness through feedback and the impact of this self-awareness on interpersonal communication.

Make certain that people understand the model and ask if there are questions about it. A very good strategy to use to clarify the dynamics of the model is to use yourself as an example. For instance you can ask the group what they know about you – this will reveal your "public self." You can then tell them there are things about you that they do not know (the "private self") and actually tell them one thing, for instance that you are the kind of person who likes people to be on time. Point out that when you do this they now know more about you and the horizontal bar in the model is lowered somewhat allowing the "public self" to open up. This allows them to work in a more effective way with you. Then point out that there may be some things that they have noticed about you that you do not know about yourself and that if they were to tell you something you don't already know about yourself that this would open up your "public self" by biting into the "blind spot" and giving you information you didn't have before. This occurs through the process of feedback.
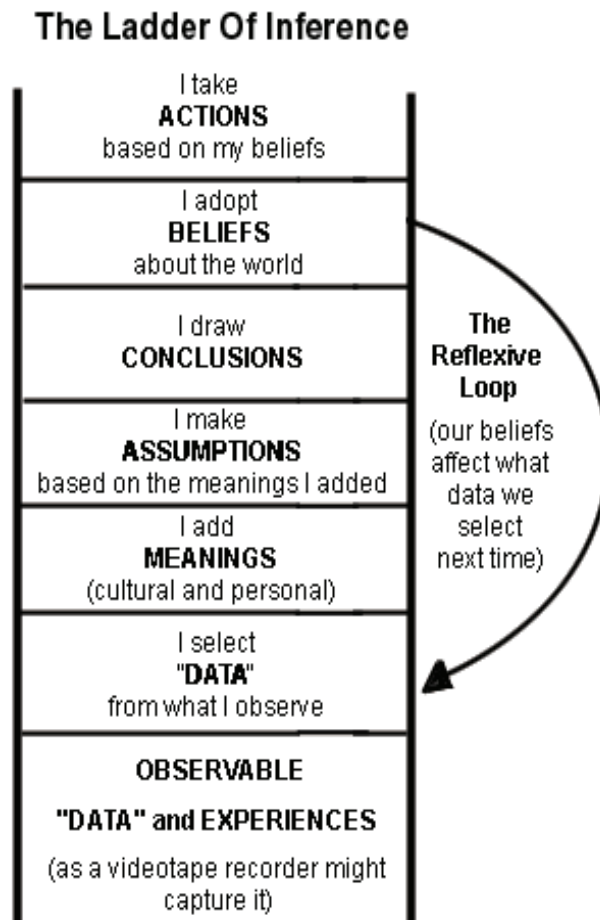
When you draw a dotted horizontal line about four inches below the original horizontal line and then another dotted vertical line a few inches to the right of the original one you are, in effect, opening up the "public self" and this is a very important aspect of effective interpersonal communication. Additionally you should point out that when you open up the "public self" pane you automatically dip into the "unknown" pane – this is the reason for the occasional "ah-ha" moments we have when we suddenly learn something new about ourselves.

Participant Exercise: First silently (5-7 mins) and then paired with another person (15 mins), consider things you could share with those you work with in order for them to understand you better. Then discuss strategies for getting feedback from others.

Debrief this exercise by asking people to offer their personal insights.

Explain that you will now be moving into looking at a new model that relates to how humans of all cultures are able to think and make leaps of meaning because of the human ability to infer meaning given situations or other stimuli.

Present Model III: The Ladder of Inference

The Ladder Of Inference

I take
ACTIONS
based on my beliefs

I adopt
BELIEFS
about the world

I draw
CONCLUSIONS

I make
ASSUMPTIONS
based on the meanings I added

I add
MEANINGS
(cultural and personal)

I select
"DATA"
from what I observe

OBSERVABLE
"DATA" and EXPERIENCES
(as a videotape recorder might capture it)

The Reflexive Loop
(our beliefs affect what data we select next time)

Source: Senge, Peter et al. (1994) *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook.* New York: Doubleday Currency.

Lecturette

This model was created by Harvard professor of communication, education, and organizational behavior, Dr. Chris Argyris. It describes the natural process by which human beings move from input (cognitive, visual, auditory, etc.) to beliefs and action. This powerful model helps participants see how easily they jump to conclusions and make assumptions and how these feed into their behaviors.

The connection between the Ladder of Inference and the Johari Window is that we are unable to open up our Blind Spot and to learn from others if we cannot actively slow down our race up our personal ladder of inference.

Key points:

1. Inferential thinking – that is, being able to infer something from a set of indicators – appears to be a skill unique to the human race.

2. Inferential thinking is important to our being able to function in our everyday lives.

3. In spite of the usefulness of inferential thinking it has a downside when people are trying to communicate with one another. Often people are at the tops of their ladders assuming that others are right there with them when, in fact, others are on completely different ladders making assumptions, drawing conclusions, and speaking and behaving out of the beliefs that these create.

4. Learning to introspectively think about what is causing you to say or do something is helpful in interpersonal communication And seeking out the thought patterns of others is equally important in creating an effective communication.

5. To explain this model begin by suggesting that participants imagine that there are 360 degree microphones and video cameras in the room collecting all the available data about what is going on in the room. No one can assimilate all that input. So our minds "select" the data we are going to pay attention to. Point to the bottom of the ladder where it says "I select information." Then describe that the way this model works is by reading it up from the bottom. On the second rung of the ladder, we add meanings to the data we selected. These meanings can be informed by our backgrounds and cultures. From that point we make assumptions based on the data we are selectively observing. After that we draw conclusions which then lead to adopting beliefs and from there we act or speak.

6. One of the most important aspects of the Ladder of Inference is that the cognitive process of inferring happens extremely quickly. We "race up the ladder" when we infer meanings. This happens in split seconds.

7. At this point you should ask the participant group what parts of the Ladder are visible to everyone in the room. Most participant groups figure this out quickly. The only visible to all parts of the Ladder are the bottom "Available Data" and the top "I act or speak." What this means is that all the other cognitive steps we take are invisible to others making it difficult for others to understand how we arrived at the conclusions that we have.

Example for Ladder of Inference: I typically use a story that displays how people can end up being at the tops of their ladders and not realizing that they have sped up them and are not even on the same ladder. A story I frequently use is this:

> *Examples and stories are very good teaching tools. You should collect as many of these as possible so that you can use them at appropriate moments in your workshops.*

A search committee has been named to help in the hiring of a new public services librarian at an academic library. There is one application and cover letter in the pool that is completely on target and that everyone is very excited about. Other candidates are interviewed as well but this one candidate is the one the search committee is really looking forward to. The candidate comes and does an excellent job in the interview answering the questions in imaginative and knowledgeable ways. Afterward the search committee meets to discuss and debrief the candidates. During this meeting one of the committee members, Jane, suddenly expresses misgivings about the favorite candidate by saying "I don't think that he is really service-oriented enough for what we need." Other committee members seem puzzled at first but then Jane says "Did you notice that he never once looked any of us in the eye when we were asking him questions? I just don't think he can be public service oriented if he is so shy." Please note that Jane has run up her ladder and has made assumptions and drawn conclusions based on the data she selected (the candidate's down-turned eyes). Fortunately someone else, Dan, says "well I don't think he is shy; he is Chinese and in his culture when someone in a greater position of power over him addresses him he keeps his eyes downcast as a gesture of respect. I think he is very service-oriented and I would like to recommend that we appoint him!"

This story points out how the meanings we attach to the data we observe can often be based on our own cultural background. Jane ended up at the top of a different ladder than Dan did. And the same could probably be said about all the members of the committee.

Ask people if they have ever been in situations where they feel the person across the table from them is crazy. Point out that it is very likely that this reaction could be due to the fact that the two individuals are at the tops of two different ladders of inference and therefore have completely different takes on the same situation.

Summarize the segment by connecting the concepts of inference to the concepts of self-disclosure and feedback. Knowing more about the thinking processes of others and about where they are coming from can help us communicate more effectively and satisfactorily.

Workshop Closure

Sometimes it is nice to have a short discussion at the end to help participants "connect the dots" of your lesson. You can return to the original objectives and ask your participants if they feel they have learned what you had set out to help them learn. A short discussion can help them feel like the workshop has returned full circle to the beginning.

End the workshop by reiterating the critical nature of communication skills in the practice of leadership. Thank the participants for their participation and eagerness to learn and wish them well as excellent leaders of libraries across the world.

[1]Lee, Robert J. and Sara N. King. *Discovering the Leader in You.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (2000) and The Center for Creative Leadership.