

Overcoming Resistance to New Technology in the Local Authority Workplace



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Passionate about things that
just don't work...

...and people act like they do





‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’ Hans Christian Anderson 1837



‘Willful Blindness’ 2011 – Margaret Heffernan

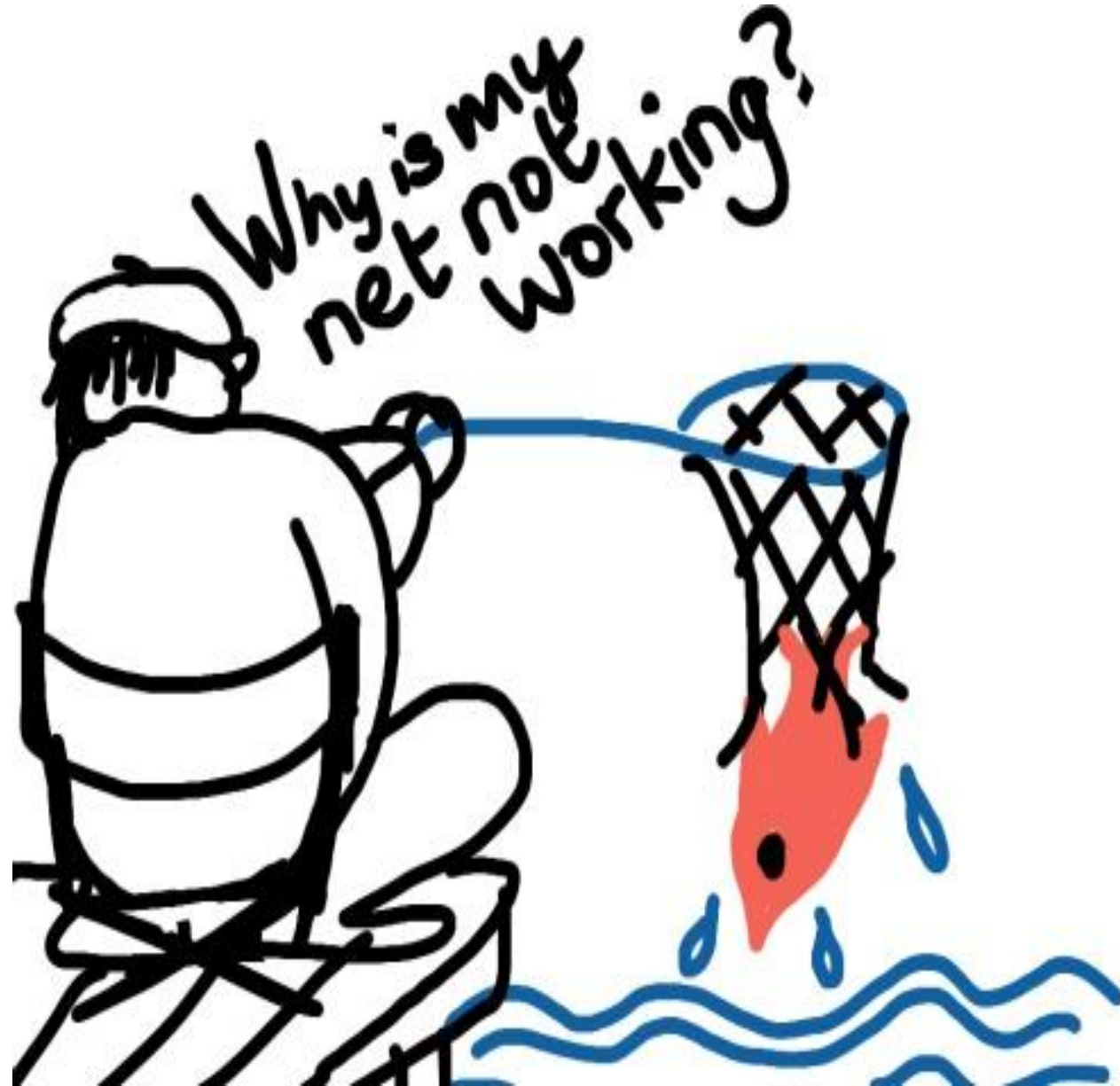
A legal term (1800s) where a person seeks to avoid civil/criminal liability for a wrongful act by intentionally keeping himself or herself unaware of facts that would render him or her liable.

“The biggest threats and dangers we face are the ones we don't see not because they're secret or invisible, but because we're wilfully blind” Heffernan 2015



- **S&A process** – hurting people
- **Induction** – ticking boxes.
- **Channel Comms** – giving others competitive advantage
- Consultancy - same model
- Saw sustainable change...

....had to write it down...to bridge



*‘What principles,
when applied to a large
complex organization
(or network) help with
the flow of information
and receptivity to and
engagement with
change?’*



- 18 themes grouped into 7
 - 2 “essential” e.g.
 - ‘Understanding environment & engaging people’
 - 5 “recommended” e.g.
 - ‘Ignored ineffectiveness and the effect of effectiveness’
- Fueled by/sitting on foundational values and beliefs
 - Without which they do not effectively work

Foundational Values/Beliefs

- Seeking first to listen & understand
- Helping to mediate & translate differences
- Boldness to challenge what is not working
- Believing many answers found at grass roots
- Not doing things for show
- Constantly open to challenge & suggestion



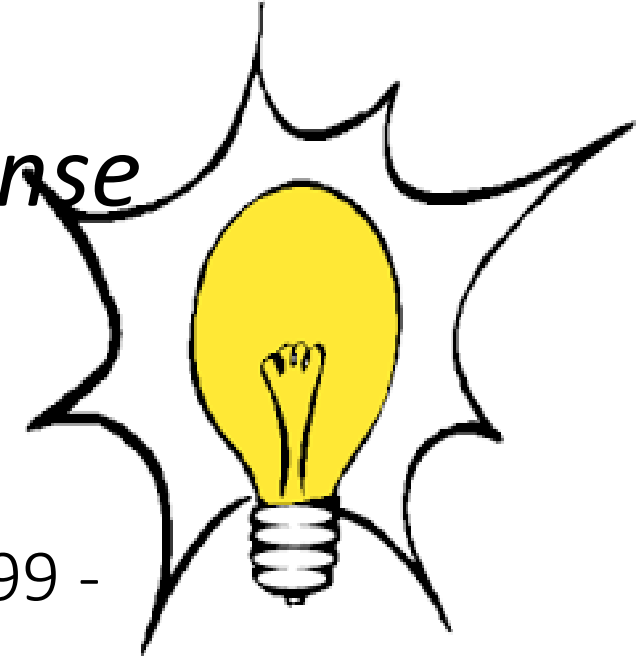
Foundational Beliefs/Values

- Doing what you say you are going to do
- A willingness to serve others' needs
- Being ready to admit fault when appropriate
- Being transparent
- Not operating from a place of fear
- Boundary lines re: what can be achieved



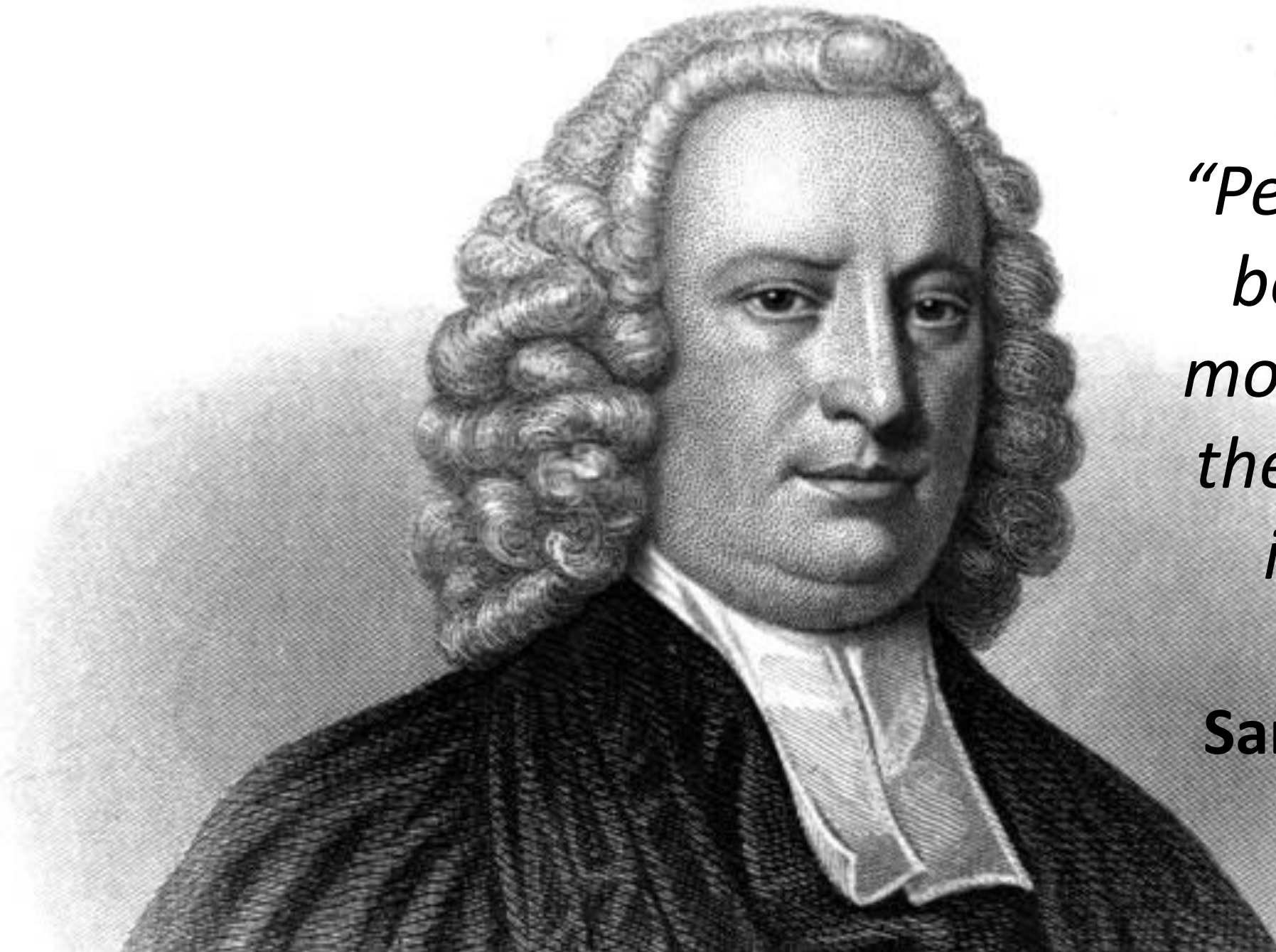
“High levels of participation, dialogue, checking of understanding and the implementation of only those changes which have been identified as a need has the potential to increase levels of trust and receptivity to, and engagement with, change resulting in both an increased sense of belonging and an increase in productivity”

(Covey, 1999; He et al., 2009; Scarbrough et al., 1999 - Yang et al., 2009; He et al., 2009)



12 years of
reflecting on the
politics of internal
organisations...





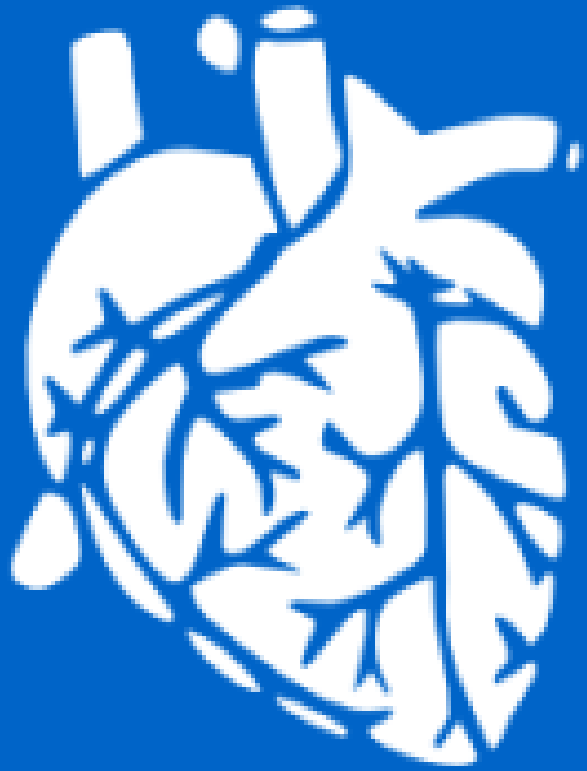
*“People need to
be reminded
more often than
they need to be
instructed”*

Samuel Johnson



The case against...

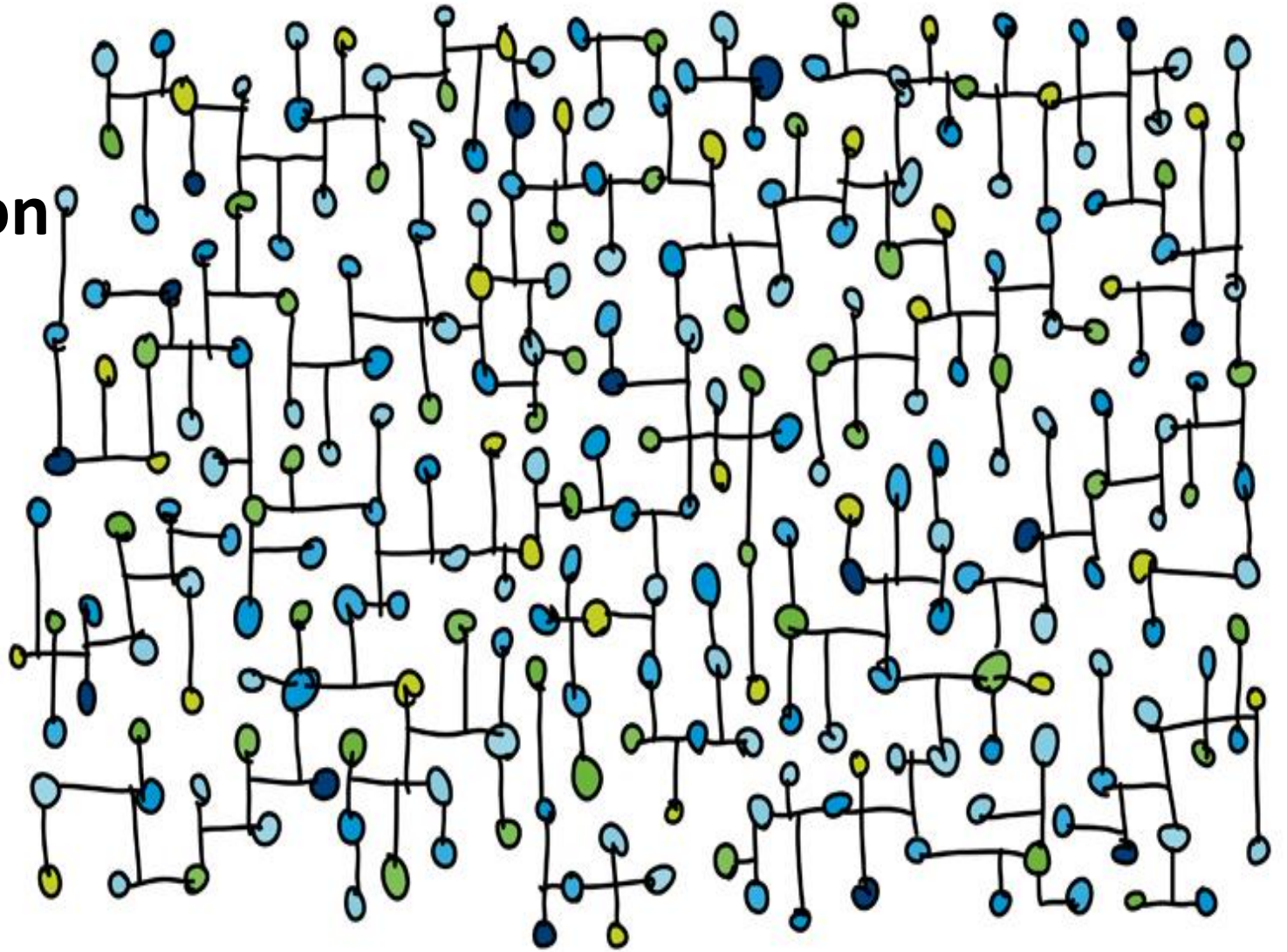
The case for...



All boils down to...

the **potential of connection**
and potential pain of
disconnection

- Getting 'under the skin'
- Seeing organisations as 'Living Systems'
- Irrespective of sector...
people in organisations



make a connection

How you take people with you and enable them to competently challenge, rather than achieving a mere 'working to rule'...?





‘The Sun and the Wind’ Aesop 1909-14

...More recently

- NHS Trusts and Digital ('Paperless 2020'), Universities, DfE, DWP, UK Aid spending departments
 - Digitisation of Government Services
 - Improving Performance
 - Improving service quality (more sensitive to the public)
- Ambulance drivers – “out of coverage”
- Workarounds with SmartCards – “the fudge card”
- Dispensing doctors - “What we do is fine thank you, why change!?”



But...

it's going in one direction...

and...

..the potential is **huge**



“...send me in on the front end”...to...

- Build trust
- ‘go under the skin’
- understand structure, processes, legacy systems, concerns, key players, obstacles etc...
- Present back a picture no one can see in its entirety
- What needs to be a focus, what has to change and what needs connecting to what to encourage a receptivity to the digitization?
- What, **in this particular context**, will take people on that journey?

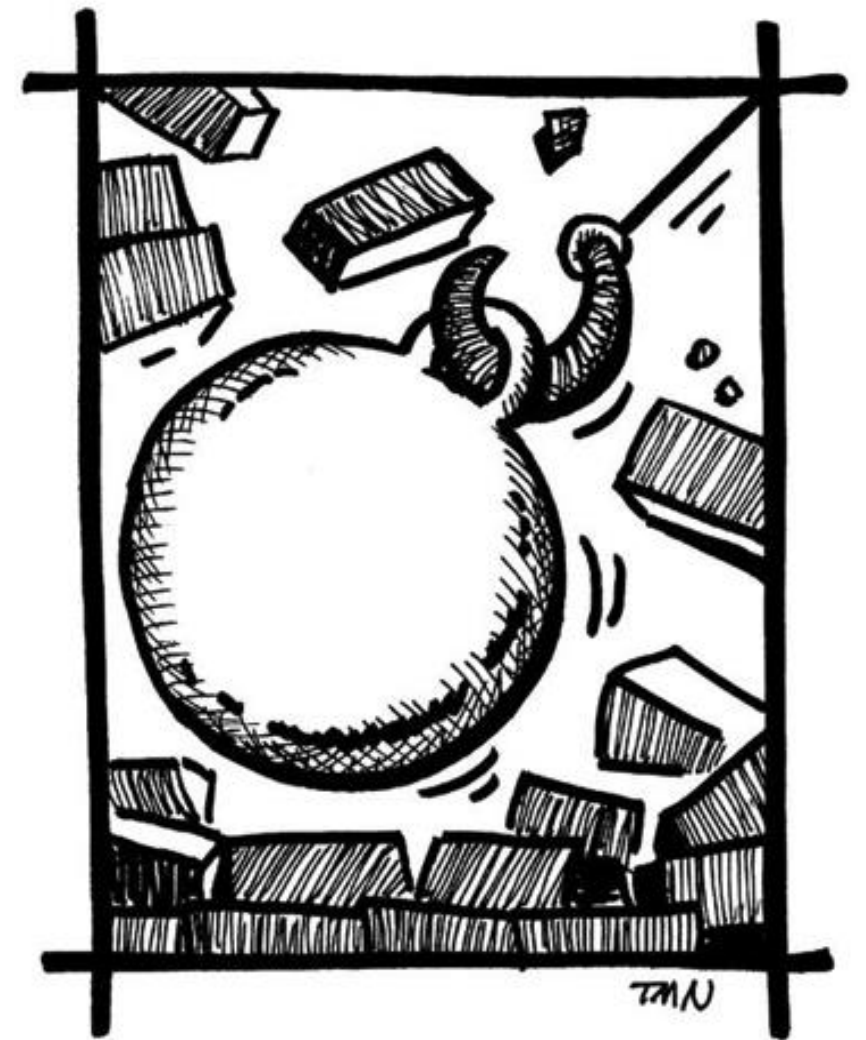


“A technical solution may, potentially, be the panacea for all kinds of organizational inefficiencies and challenges. Without receptivity to it and a willingness to change what needs to be changed internally, from heart attitude to process, it will only result in workarounds and ‘working to rule’, if indeed it is even taken out of the box”



‘Impression
Management’

VS.



‘Appreciative
Enquiry’



The power of having 'been there' and not losing touch
or humility to learn from those who are/were
Giving time – really, **REALLY** listening
Seeking wisdom, insights and skills of the team and beyond
Not making assumptions

The 'front line'?
The 'grass roots'



MIND THE GAP

Marketing

Academics

ATOS PIP Assessor

Claimant 🙄

GPs

Cust Services/Back Office

Drivers?

Entrenched Perspectives – “*them up there*”



Relationship and trust

+

Challenge

=

Receptivity

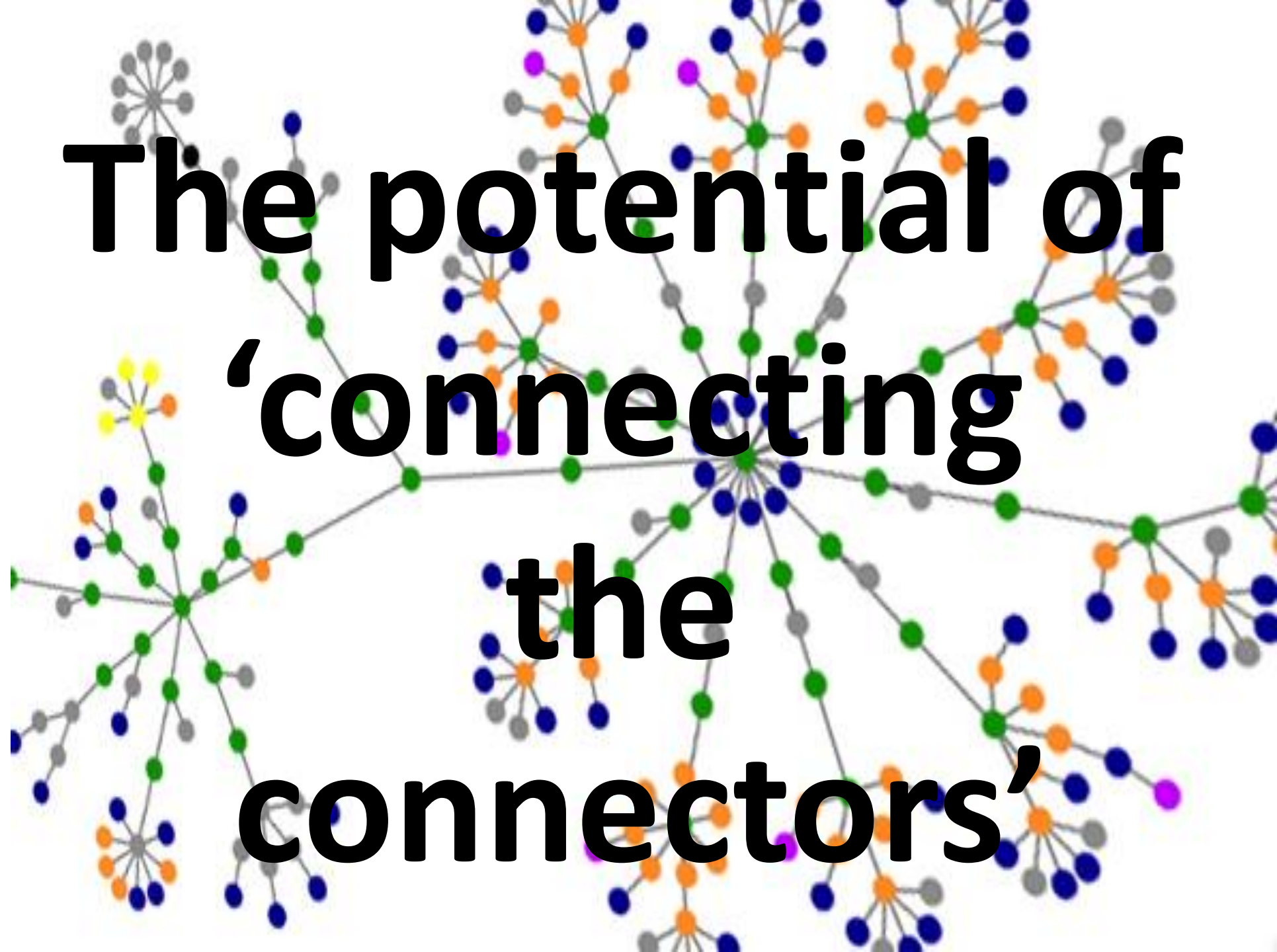
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Stronger Relationship



...what has been a key factor?



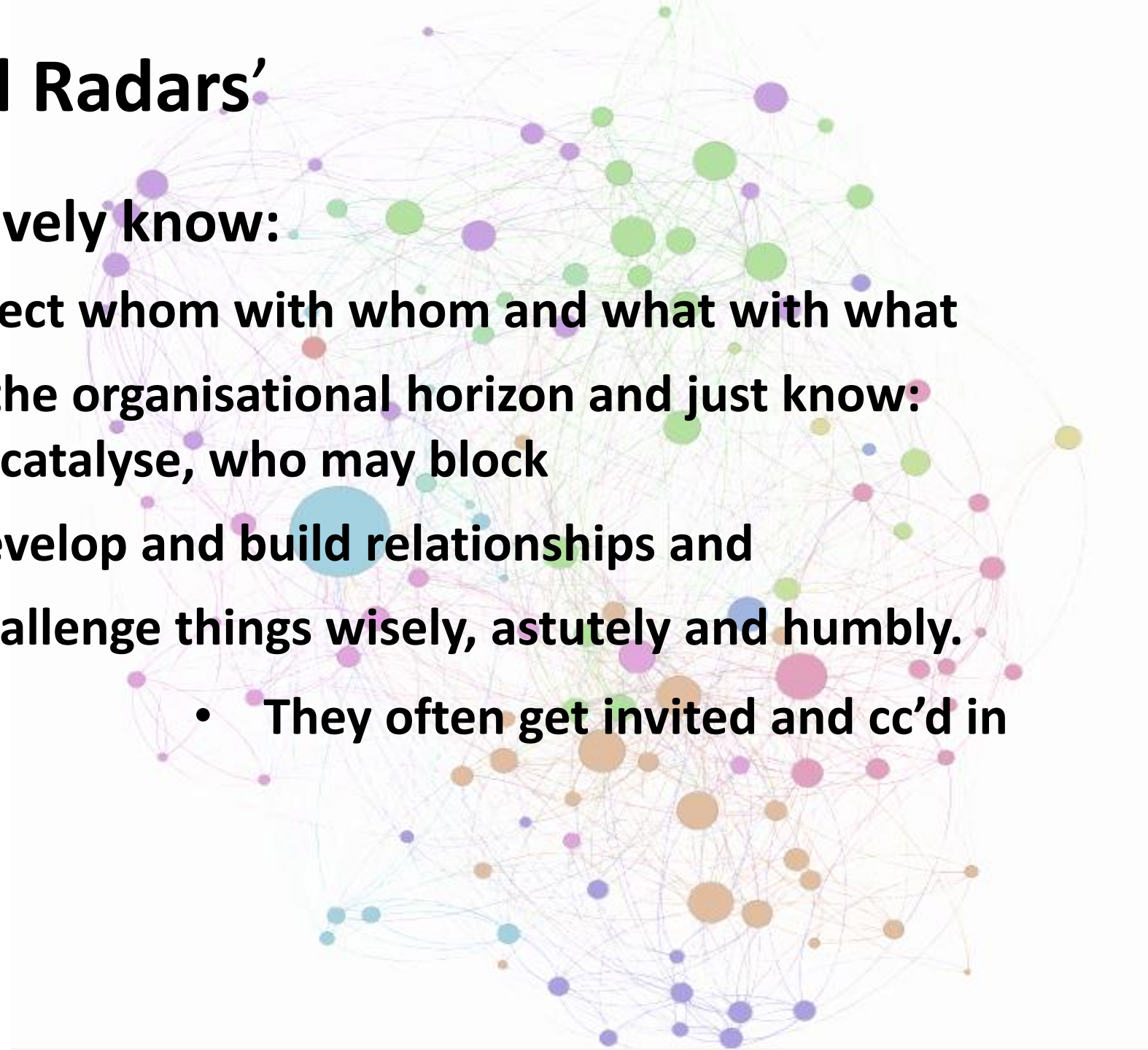


**The potential of
'connecting
the
connectors'**

‘Relational Radars’

They instinctively know:

- **How to connect whom with whom and what with what**
- **They survey the organisational horizon and just know:**
 - **Who may catalyse, who may block**
 - **How to develop and build relationships and**
 - **How to challenge things wisely, astutely and humbly.**
- **They often get invited and cc’d in**



Finally...



Harnessing the grapevine...



A rife, and negative, force?

Rumours and the grapevine are reported by employees to be a major source of information about their company

(Foehrenbach & Rosenberg, 1983; Garnett, 1992; Harcourt et al., 1991)

“It adds to, and partly replaces official communication; gives ‘flesh to the bones’ and has an extremely important task as a creator and maintainer of human relations.

Tukiainen (2001)



‘Uncertainty Reduction Theory’ - the vital importance of
“uncertainty reduction” in “almost any communicative
transaction” (Berger, 1986:.35 and Hargie et al., 2002)

“As uncertainty increases, information needs are
heightened” (Sias & Wyers, 2001)

“A link between reducing uncertainty and increasing trust”
(DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998)



“The astute manager learns to deal with the Grapevine successfully and to take advantage of the positive elements” (Wells & Spinks, 1994) by:

- Eliminating inaccuracies
- Eliminating secrecy
- What about the places where drivers meet?



The Grapevine:

- Is the main source of organisational information.
- Exists in every business; information moves along it rapidly;
- Is 75-95% accurate
- Answers all unanswered questions either correctly or incorrectly.
- Inaccuracies of 5-25% may have serious consequences, as those inaccuracies are usually bad news.
- Examine these characteristics and take advantage of them

