

Good morning!
Plenary 1

To do list:

- ☑ Share some observations about practitioner learning,
- ☑ Explore common compatible approaches to networked practitioner learning,
- ☑ Leave you with some ideas you might consider during the conference.

But first I want to

lower expectations



Bird Brain of Britain

In 1985,
the great nations of the
United Kingdom,
powered
by the mighty BBC,
were engaged in the
search for Britain's
brainiest bird.



Over time
that funny little program
stuck with me....



And not just me....

Bird Brain of Britain (1985)



Good egg

Posted by [Craig B](#) on 10 Sep 2010 5:37 PM

Hi people,

Does anyone remember this one off TV programme about both Blue tits and Great tits solving a series of puzzles and obstacles to get to the final reward of peanuts.

It was actually filmed by a young Simon King and at the time I was 7 years old and gripped by this amazing intelligent behaviour of these birds.

I have searched all over the web and only found a VHS copy of this but would love to know if you can watch it on the web or purchase it on DVD.

If you didnt see it, its worth a watch (if you can find it)

Craig



Posted by [Cartimandua](#) on 10 Sep 2010 6:40 PM

i do indeed remember this programme - and also one about an obstacle course for squirrels (which I think got used in an advert!)



Posted by [Lindybird](#) on 10 Sep 2010 6:59 PM

I remember all of those - great stuff! Don't know if they are available on DVD though.

In retrospect,

- * In front of my eyes was a story about learning: animal and human...
- * Nestled within what we would today call “participatory culture”...
- * Interest-driven & Peer-supported, connected learning — harnessing people’s passion and capacity to lead

Later Bird Brain of Britain came back to me in another context

And I'd like to
share that with you.

A selection from
Change Forces: The Sequel, by Michael Fullan (Philadelphia: Falmer
Press) 1999: 6-8.

In this selection, Fullan discusses an insight from evolutionary biology about social groups and their learning, as well as the balance between 'cooperative' and 'selfish' behaviors among species.

Ridley raises the interesting evolutionary hypothesis that 'cooperative groups thrive and selfish ones do not, so cooperative societies have survived at the expense of others' (p. 175).

A good example of advantage, if not survival, comes from the story of the titmouse and the robin as reported in Brown and Eisenhardt (1998):

Coadaptation is most effective when poised between too much and too little structure. The comparison of the structure of social interaction between the titmouse and red robin illustrates this central idea of coadaptation.

In the early 1900s, milk was delivered to homes in the United Kingdom in bottles without caps. Two bird species, the titmouse and the red robin, learned to drink the cream that floated to the tops of the bottles. Eventually, dairy distributors began putting aluminum seals on the bottles to solve this problem. In about twenty years, the population of titmice (about 1 million birds) learned how to pierce the seals. In contrast, the red robins did not. Occasionally, one robin would discover how to pierce the seal, but that knowledge never spread. What is the explanation?

Titmice are social. They travel in flocks of about eight to ten birds for two or three months per year. They communicate some of the time, but not always, and their flocks vary in membership. In contrast, the red robins are territorial. A male robin will exclude others from his territory. They rarely communicate, and when they do, it is usually antagonistic.

Generally, related agents adapt most effectively when they partially interact with one another. If related agents are always together, then they adapt quickly. However, they have too little diversity to cope with sudden change. If they are never together, the population of agents adapts very slowly to change and may ultimately evolve into a different species that cannot communicate. (p. 75)

De Gues (1997) also takes up the titmouse story as he traces it to the zoologist/biochemist Allan Wilson. In De Gues's (1997) words:



Specimen 1: the Titmouse



Specimen 2: the Robin



Milk once came in bottles

Find a copy of this selection from *Change Forces*

goo.gl/fYJwYP

OR

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- * Take a few minutes to read the selection
- * Highlight a sentence (or so) that stands out for you in the context of being here
- * We'll take a few minutes for you to share these with folks around you

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What resonated in this piece?

- * Share your sentences with others
- * What did you pick and why?
- * Perhaps we can hear a few in the larger group...



Benefits of Regular Flocking

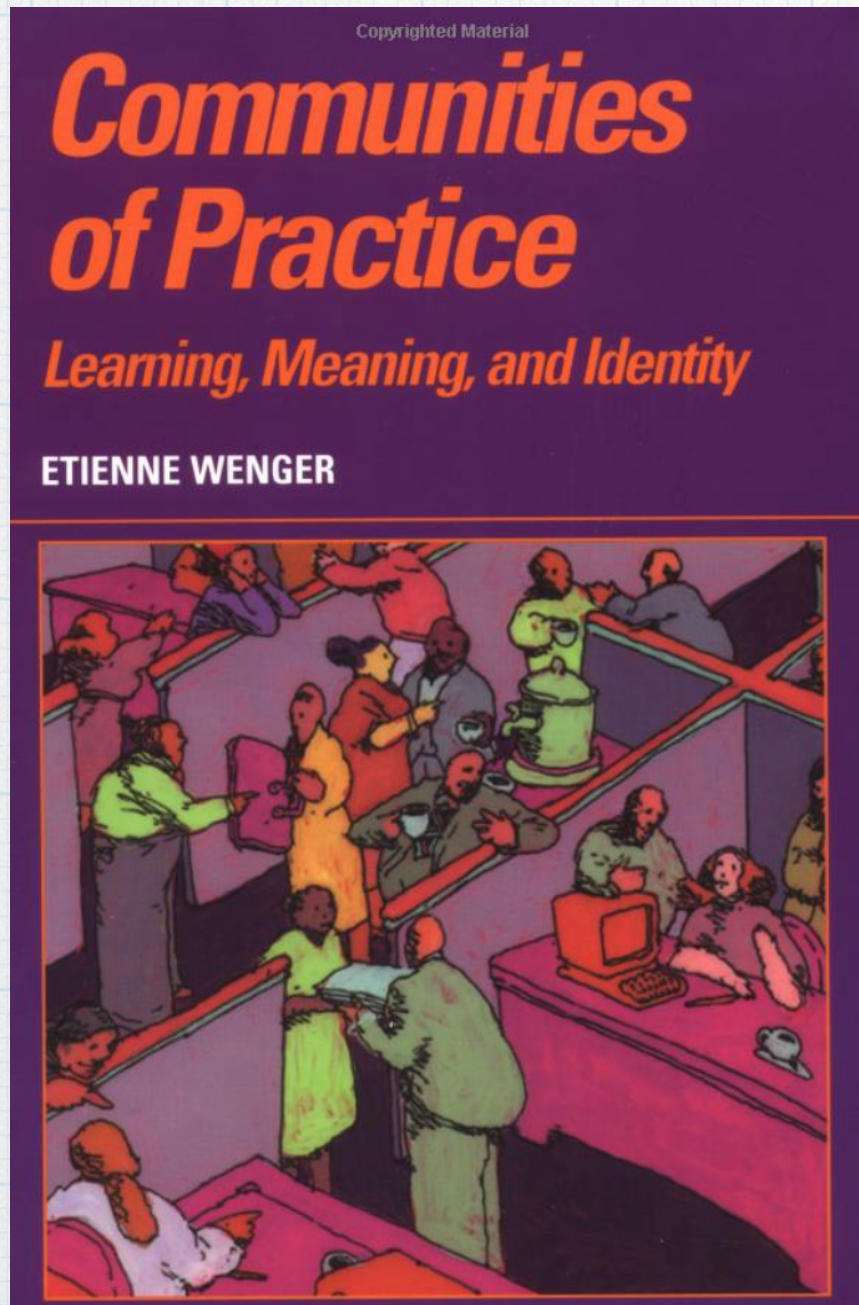


And ideas about
Effective flocking

Flocking in the context of work

- * Communities of Practice
- * Improving Improvement
- * Networked Organizations

1. Communities of Practice



Etienne Wenger
Cambridge University
Press
1998

Jean Lave
Situated Learning:
Legitimate Peripheral
Participation,
Cambridge University
Press
1991

Communities of Practice

- * Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn, both formally and informally, how to do it better.
- * Working together over time they can develop an integrated model of complex practice.
- * Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice.
- * Over time, they can improve their performance, but also reconceptualize the ‘practice’

Practitioner Inquiry

- * Inquiry groups
- * Action research
- * Cross-visitation
- * Studies of student work (*assessment)
- * Design-based research
- * Feedback routines



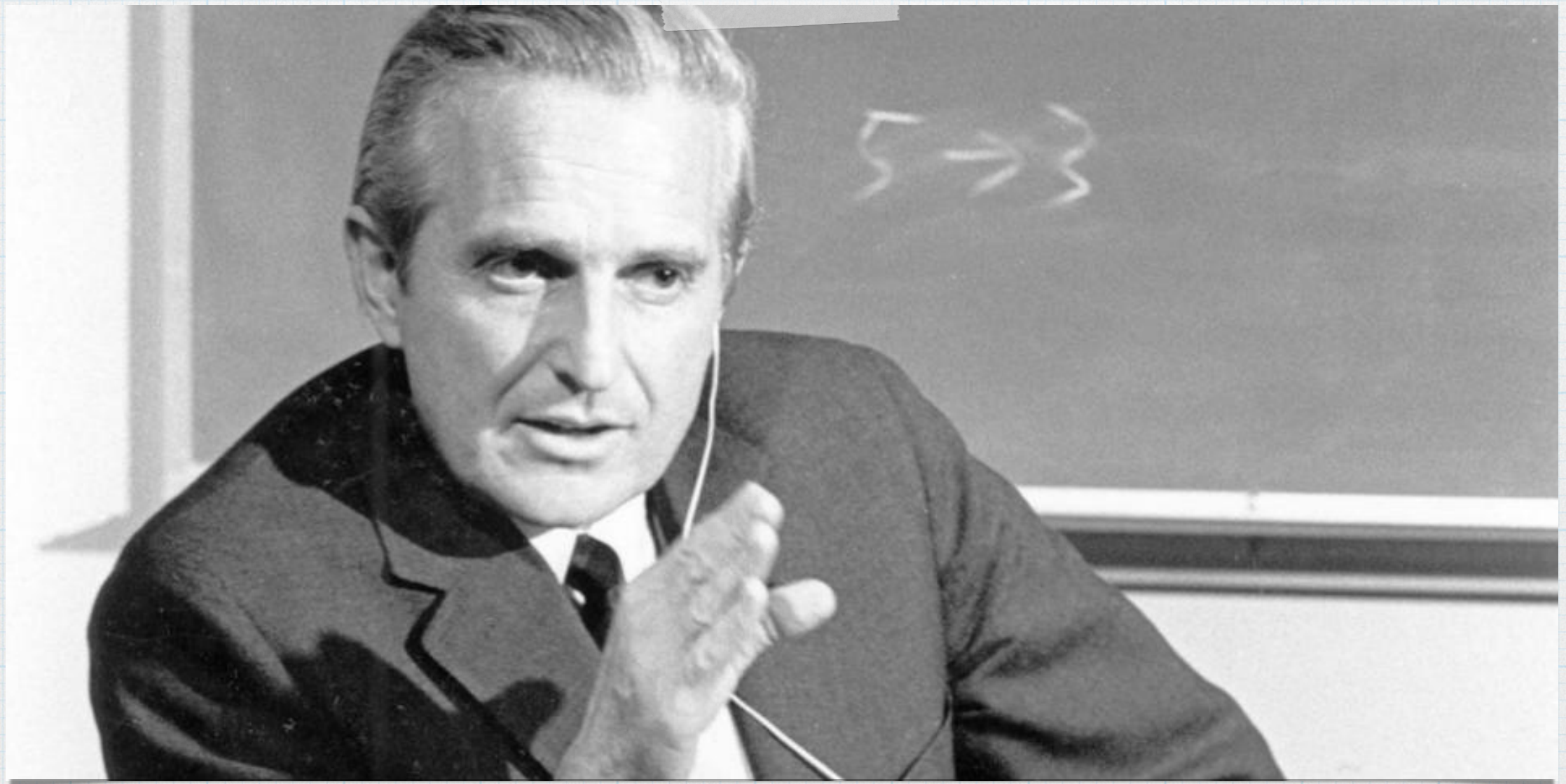
COPs with staying power maintain an appreciative dialectic between their values / theories of action and the actual enactments of practice.

Think 'praxis' and 'phronesis'

**Q1: How/where are you
maintaining a dialectic
between our values and
the experience of
practice?**

2. Improvement infrastructure

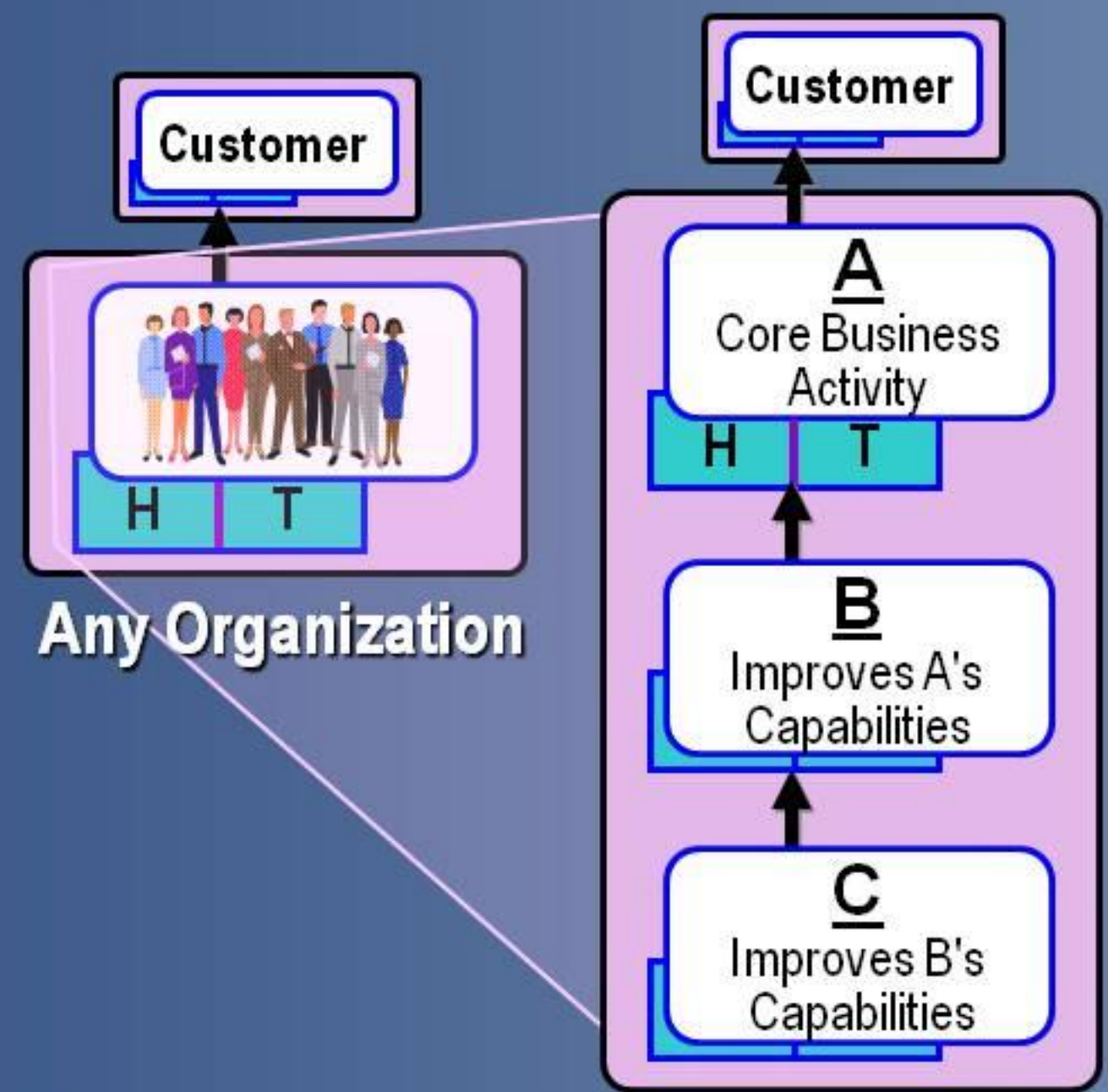
Doug Engelbart



**For all our talk about
improvement, how can we
improve improvement itself?**

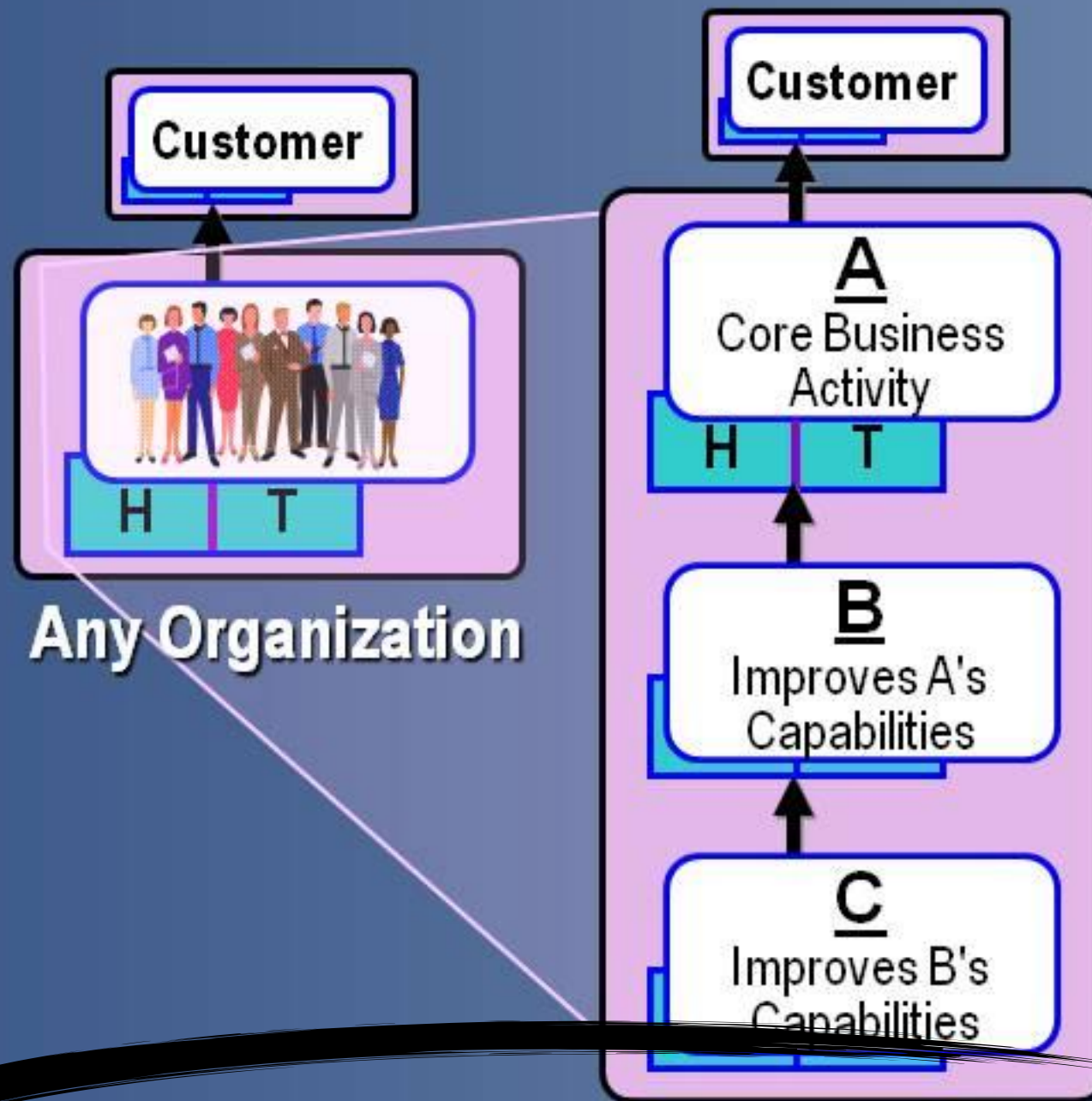
How can we get better
at getting better?

ABC Model of Organizational Improvement



Capabilities augmented by the Human (H) and Tool (T) systems

ABC Model of Organizational Improvement



Capabilities augmented by the Human (H) and Tool (T) systems

Improvement Infrastructure



An improvement infrastructure promotes intentional design and improvement of a practitioner learning and inquiry community.



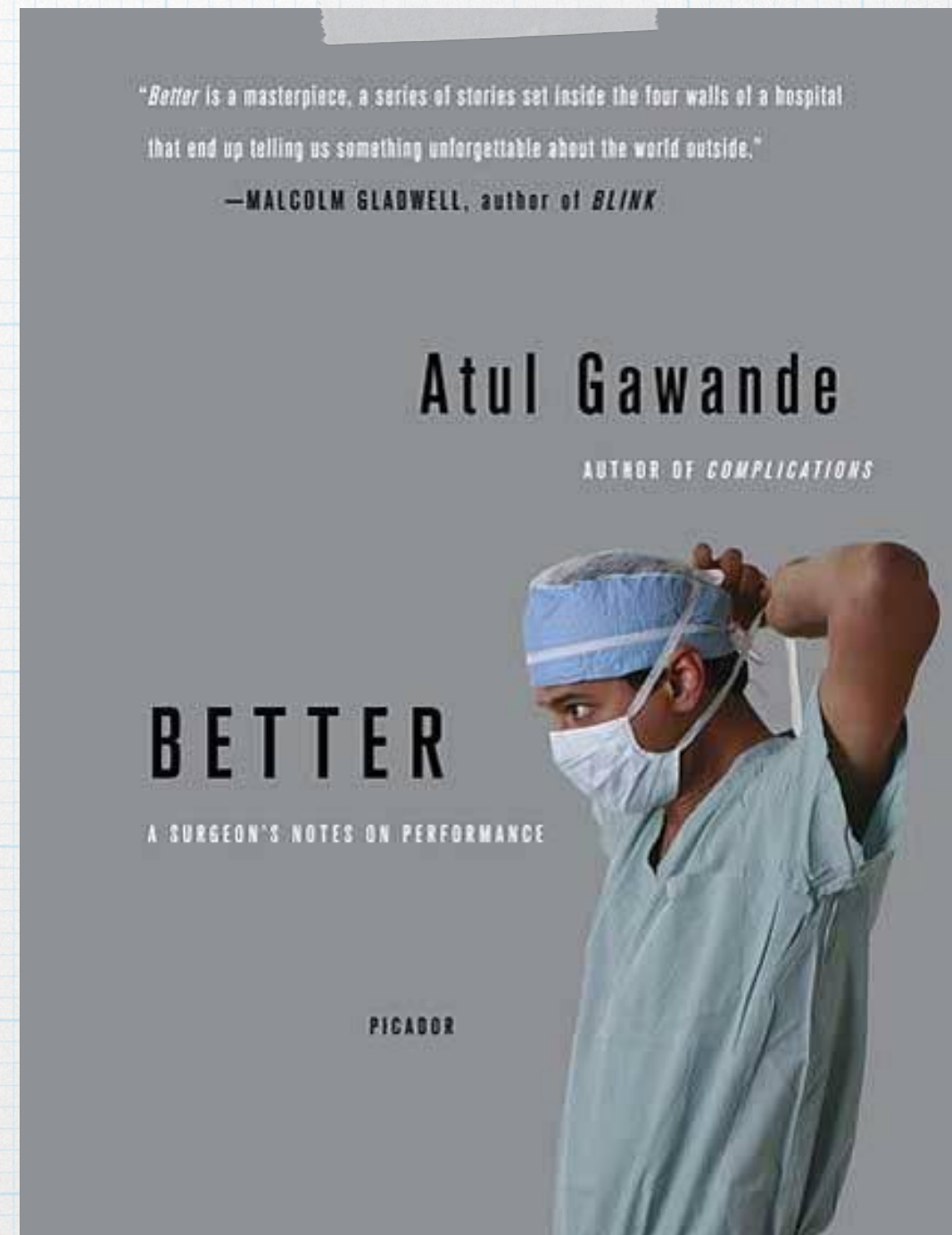
Who, me?

Q2: How might we build
on our learning
experience to get
better at getting
better?

3. Networks

Better:
A surgeon's notes on
performance

Institute for Healthcare
Improvement (IHI)



Network Organizations

What can we learn from networks in action?



Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement of Teaching

Flat...

Nimble...

Work-dependent...

Generative...

Allow for agency...

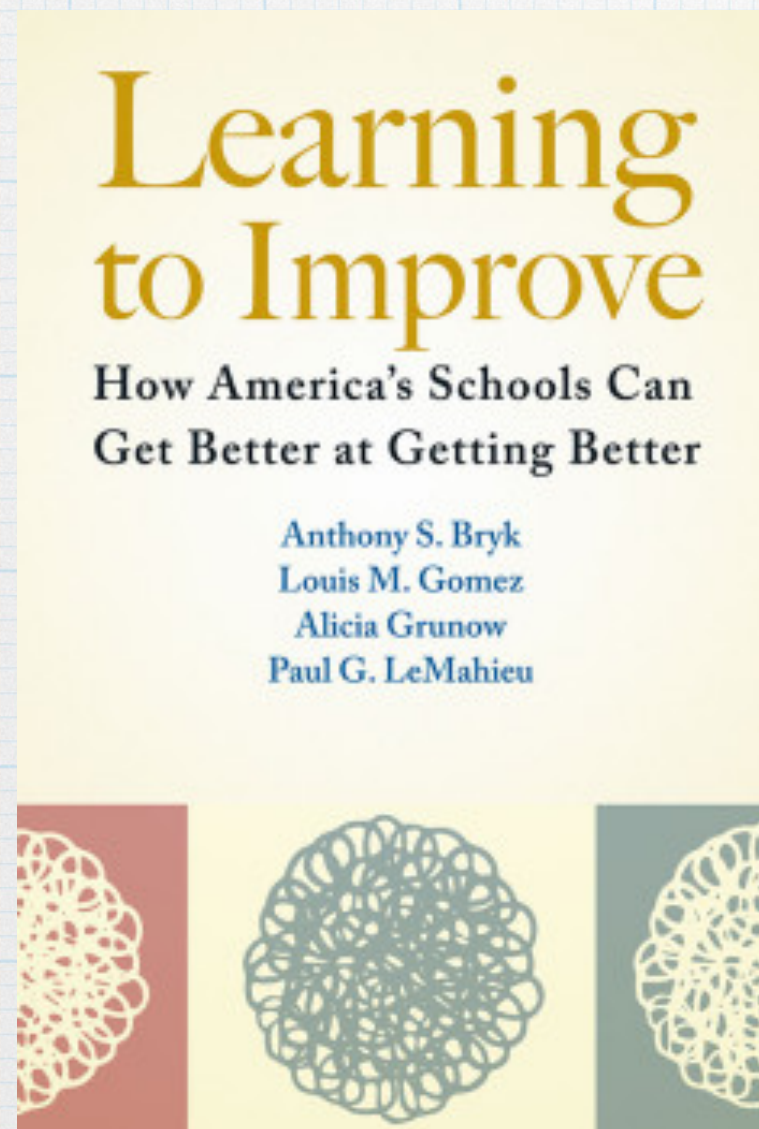
Distinct leadership style...

Network Organization >>

**Providing the Improvement
Infrastructure for >>**

Communities of Practice

Networked Improvement Communities



Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching



**PDCA Cycles about
High-leverage Questions**

**Q3: What are your
high-leverage problems
of practice?**

Three questions

- * What can you learn from the dialectic between your theories of practice and your experience of practice?
- * How can you get better at getting better?
- * What are your high-leverage problems of practice? And how might you act on them collectively?

**Lowering
expectations**

**Without Lowering
Ambitions**