

NATIONAL CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP
SYMPOSIUM

Moving Beyond the Status Quo: Leveraging the “Leadership, Teamwork, & Organizational Management” Outcome at the U.S. Air Force Academy to Improve Leadership Education and Training

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Walk into any organization at the U. S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) and you will see an earnest commitment to the Academy’s mission to “To educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our Nation” (United States Air Force Academy, 2015, p. 1). In the physics classroom, civilian and military professors are teaching lessons that develop scientific thinking while mentoring students on why scientific thinking is an important part of their leadership toolkit. At the hockey rink, players learn that teamwork, as Wayne Gretzky might say, is about being where the puck will be, not where it has been. They also learn about how teamwork on the ice will translate to teamwork in combat from the Air Force officers who volunteer to work as mentors with that team. In the Cadet Squadron, the active duty officer assigned as Air Officer

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Commanding (AOC) might work with her Cadet Squadron Commander to design a major training event for the squadron and also use that as an opportunity to talk about why organizational management is critical to the success of an operational Air Force Security Forces Squadron. There is a constant emphasis in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities at the Academy on the development of proficiencies related to leadership, teamwork, and organizational management (LTOM).

This focus on LTOM is so important to the mission that the Academy has identified it as one of the nine Academy Outcomes that shape and align our curriculum. Our Curriculum Handbook states the importance of these outcomes this way, “Future Air Force leaders must demonstrate a sophisticated combination of qualities that define the character of members of a modern profession of arms. At the Academy, we operationally define these professional characteristics in nine Academy Outcomes. Every faculty and staff member serving at the Academy – regardless of their specific role – plays an important part in building Air Force leaders of character by developing the proficiencies articulated in the following nine outcomes. (United States Air Force Academy, 2018, p. 77)” Each of the Academy’s nine outcomes are guided by an outcome team populated with faculty and staff from core courses and programs committed to aligning curriculum to develop specific outcome related proficiencies. In addition, each outcome team has written a white paper describing these proficiencies (United States Air Force Academy, 2019a; 2019b). This focus on outcomes in support of the Academy mission is a model of how organizations can build alignment to an organizational mission statement. While this paper will discuss organizational processes that are specific to the LTOM outcome, the concepts discussed could easily be applied to any of the nine outcomes at the Academy or to similar work at other higher education institutions, government entities, or corporations.

The LTOM team is charged with approving, designing, and assessing integrated, developmental programming to improve desired proficiencies. However, this charge is more difficult than one might think. As is common in most organizations, we do not always agree on how to get to the goal. As a result, the good intentions of one part of the organization do not always support the good intentions of other parts of the organization. For example, a specific leadership lesson in an academic course may not support or align with a major military training event in a cadet squadron even though both may have been approved by the same outcome team. When this happens, well-meaning teachers, commanders, and coaches can disenfranchise cadets when one approach to developing LTOM proficiencies conflicts with the work of another approach in a different venue at the Academy. Despite the Academy’s dedication to the proficiencies of LTOM and our other eight outcomes, there are competing policies, ways of communicating, and uncoordinated institutional practices that impede our ability to fully develop these proficiencies.

In this paper, I will explore why an organization’s culture can impede the organization’s ability to fully pursue its mission. I specifically focus on what I see as the greatest organizational impediments to developing fully integrated, developmental, and sustainable approaches to LTOM curriculum and training at the Air Force Academy. I believe the root cause can be found in a 1968 economic theory proposed by Garrett Hardin, called the Tragedy of the Commons. Based Hardin’s theory, I will explore how the LTOM process is designed to overcome the Tragedy of the Commons and why it has struggled to do so. Finally, I will offer some ideas on how to overcome these barriers in order to develop truly integrated, developmental, and sustainable courses and programs in support of developing LTOM proficiencies.

The Tragedy of the Commons

Most cadets, faculty, and staff arrive at the Academy

with a belief that the various aspects of cadet development are integrated and purposefully designed. In many ways this is true. As described above, we have developed processes designed to integrate and assess our programs. Within specific programs, the commitment of individual staff members to their programs and courses is phenomenal. In addition, most faculty and staff across the many aspects of cadet life truly enjoy working with each other. For example, it is common to find academic faculty and military training staff serving as athletic team mentors. Each summer, faculty can be found assisting with basic training or down at the airfield serving as instructor pilots. Newly arrived members to the team frequently comment on how well everyone gets along. For example, our new faculty orientation program invites newly arrived academic faculty, coaches, military trainers, and instructor pilots to join together to learn about the Academy and effective educational practice. At a recent orientation, a new coach who came to the Academy from a civilian university mentioned how different the culture at the Academy was toward the athletic programming. He commented that at his prior university, athletics were not considered a part of the university mission but here he genuinely felt a part of the team.

Overall, it seems like an ideal environment for integration. However, it is hard to sustain these interdependent feelings in the grind of day-to-day work. Demands in one's department consume large amounts of time that challenge the ability to put in to practice the ideals of integrated, developmental programming. Limited staff and financial resources combined with frequent competition for cadet time often create a focus on the success of a specific program, often at a cost to another program in the system. In addition, institutional incentives and rewards often celebrate individual program success over integrated program development. This can lead to stove-piped programming, redundancy, and inefficiency. This pursuit of quality, but stove-piped, programming over integrated programming is the status quo in

most organizations, to include the Academy. This is not all bad. In fact, there are good things happening across the institution every day within each program and course offered. However, if the Academy were to develop a culture that valued integrated development over stove-piped programming, cadet development could be even better. The status quo might be good, but it is not sustainable in the long run. Stove-piped programming often leads to unconstrained growth and redundant processes.

Garrett Hardin described a similar competition for limited resources by well-meaning, stove-piped actors in a seminal 1968 article in the journal *Science* called "The Tragedy of the Commons." Hardin based his thesis on an obscure 1833 pamphlet by William Forster Lloyd on the impact of overgrazing too many cattle on open range land. Lloyd observed that when multiple ranchers shared a plot of public, common ground, there was little incentive to regulate the size of the herd that shared the land. A single rancher had much to gain in adding to his herd and his addition of a few more animals was perceived to have a minor impact on the ecosystem. However, as each rancher continued to grow the size of their herd, the common resource was impacted until the growth was unsustainable. Without a commitment to cooperative land management, all ranchers stood to suffer from this unfettered growth in the long run.

In essence, the theory states that people typically expend resources in a way that is to their advantage without fully attending to the overall impact on others or the system. This is not typically done maliciously. In fact, people often say that group needs are important and that they support the idea that others should also succeed. However, their behaviors frequently support individual gain over group success. As Hardin notes, people often want to maximize good but often lack common agreement on how to cooperate in a way that maximizes the good for everyone. Applied to the mission of the Academy, there is common agreement

that developing leaders of character is a common good. We have created outcomes, proficiencies, and teams committed to the common good. Yet, we lack a common commitment to an integrated process that develops that common good in a disciplined manner. To one person, the common good might be best served by an emphasis on academic education, to another it is motivational guest speakers, and to another it is played out in friendly competition on the athletic field. All are fine activities designed to promote the common good and it is difficult to measure if one activity has greater impact than another. How does one measure the value of participating in intercollegiate athletics as compared to the benefit of jumping out of airplanes or minoring in Russian to the development leaders? Creating a culture where all these activities are valued as equitable components of a highly complex and interdependent system is difficult to sustain. Only by keeping the programming integrated and sustainable can an organization hope to avoid the Tragedy of the Commons. This type of integrated outcome depends on temperance on the part of program owners to not overwhelm the system or create unnecessary inequities. But, as Hardin notes, “How do we legislate temperance?”

Temperance and the LTOM Outcome

In 2016, the Academy approved a major update to the core curriculum that established the current set of nine outcomes and identified the courses and programs aligned with each outcome. The stated purpose of this alignment was to create the institutional processes and practices that would support integrated curriculum development. As a part of this alignment, outcome teams were envisioned to be a critical part of the integration process. They were envisioned to be the group that tempers the system for the benefit of the common good.

For example, the LTOM outcome team has members from the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership and the Department of Management who

offer academic coursework; from the Commandant of Cadets Training Staff who oversee commissioning education and major military training activities; from the Athletic Department who offer team-based physical education and intramural sports activity; and from the Center for Character and Leadership Development who provide character education and conduct signature programming such as the annual National Character and Leadership Symposium. The team is led by a member from one of these areas who is vetted and approved by the Academy’s curriculum governance process. All changes to curriculum and programming require the coordination of the outcome team and the approval of the institutional curriculum governance process. This process is designed to “legislate temperance” as described by Hardin. Their charter is to ensure integrated, developmental, and sustainable progress of LTOM proficiencies at the Academy.

Despite establishing the organizational structure that has the ability to temper the behaviors that lead to the Tragedy of the Commons, the Academy still struggles at creating integrated, developmental, and sustainable programming. We have created effective administrative processes that are capable of legislating temperance but lack the accountability and incentives that ensure compliance with the decisions of the outcome team. How can this happen at an organization where these processes exist and practically everyone is committed to the development of leaders of character through their individual courses and programs? One possible explanation to this dilemma was highlighted during our final discussions of the new core curriculum before it was approved in 2016.

During the final months of work that led to the approval of the new core curriculum and outcome processes in 2016, the committee leading the design of the new curriculum held a series of town hall meetings. At the final town hall meeting before the vote was taken, the committee asked this question,

“What will we need to do differently at the Academy if this new curriculum is to be successful?” A senior faculty member, who had been very active in the process and had frequently expressed criticism of the use of outcomes to organize courses and programs, gave one of the most insightful answers. He expressed this sentiment (paraphrased), “Success means that I am equally supportive and interested in the success of other courses and programs in the curriculum as I am in the success of my own course.” Unfortunately, the Academy has not fully embraced this concept in the initial years of the new curriculum. A review of curriculum change proposals in the 2 ½ years since passing this new curriculum shows a continuation of independent program growth with only cursory involvement of the outcome teams tasked to be the integrative function at the institution. Even though we created processes to facilitate integration, we hold on to old processes that perpetuate independent program and course development.

This struggle to execute interdependent LTOM programming seems to lie in how we think about the word “we.” “We” under the outcome construct should refer to the combined efforts all members of the Academy to obtain our outcome proficiency goals in an integrated fashion. However, a review of the curriculum change proposals reveals that “we” is rarely defined in this manner. During the curriculum approval process, the outcome team lead must sign a coordination document that indicates their concurrence of the change. However, once that proposal has been approved, “we” quickly reverts to the department or unit working in isolation to execute the content of the program or course. Beyond coordinating proposals, many outcome teams struggle to enforce integration ideals in a way that truly connects one program or course to another.

An example may help illustrate this dilemma. In the spring of 2017, the Academy approved a new Officership course designed to “align three previously existing

courses to meet the foundational level of the Leadership, Teamwork, and Organizational Management (LTOM)” outcome proficiencies (USAFA, 2017). The proposal stated that the new course was to be “executed in a purposefully integrated, aligned, and synergistic manner.” Further, the proposal indicated that faculty and staff involved in the course would “link learning objectives, content delivery, and assessments to provide a seamless learning experience for cadets.” The course was supposed to be designed to take several distinct but related LTOM courses taught across the Academy and link them together in an integrated, developmental program of training and instruction.

So how has it gone in the first two years of execution of the new core curriculum? To a large degree, execution of the elements of the core remain highly independent and stove-piped. While the creation of the outcome process has created an uptick in the number of times faculty and staff from different parts of the organization meet and discuss LTOM related content and assessment, the delivery of content remains only superficially connected. To be fair, this improvement in communication across competing parts of the Academy is not to be understated. There was a time in our not too distant past when we would rarely have these conversations. The creation of the LTOM outcome and team is creating a much needed opportunity for better de-confliction of competing programs and courses. However, the power of the Tragedy of the Commons still stifles the ability to create the truly integrated, developmental, sustainable course of instruction we all hope to achieve. Which leaves us with the question, how do we overcome the resistance to integration inherent in the Tragedy of the Commons as it relates to LTOM proficiencies at the Academy?

Moving from Status Quo to Integration

The question of “How?” is best approached by starting with an understanding of the system at the Academy that supports the Tragedy of the Commons. In the

Academy system, autonomy at the level of the Dean, the Commandant, and the Athletic Director is understandably strong. This culture of autonomy seeps in to all levels of the organization. For example, in over a decade as the Permanent Professor and Head of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, I was responsible for two core courses taught to over 2,000 cadets each year. One course was a traditional behavioral sciences introductory course taught to freshman and the other was a leadership course taught to juniors. Both courses contained content that was directly applicable to other courses and programs at the Academy. Despite this applicability, I was rarely asked about the content or educational approaches of these courses from any other department or unit at the Academy. The department could increase or decrease workload, change assessments, or change lesson content without coordinating with any other part of the organization. As long as we didn't ask for more time or change the course substantially from the course description in the Academy's Curriculum Handbook, we made changes without scrutiny. This was not done in a spirit of ill-will. These changes were made out of a passionate commitment to our courses and academic discipline. When attempts to integrate were made, they were often met with lukewarm interest at best and there was little commitment to fundamentally changing how we do business. We talked about integration often, we pursued it rarely. Like many other departments and units, our "we" only referred to internal department teams working on specific department curriculum. We talked about the system, but we acted as an independent rancher. We was not the big "WE" of the entire Academy system.

Developing systems thinking that focuses on the big "WE" is an enormous challenge to most organizations. Systems thinkers take a long view of problems facing the organization and work to understand the interdependent nature of that future. Unlike typical behavior under the Tragedy of the Commons that focuses on individual, short-term gain over long-term

community good, systems thinkers work to develop community effectiveness that leads to gains for all. This practice requires self-discipline on the part of members of the organization and, most importantly, a commitment by the organization to incentivize integrated work over individual gain. An organization that lacks discipline in its processes often accepts the unconstrained growth the plagues the Tragedy of the Commons.

Jim Collins (2009) highlights the threat of undisciplined growth in his book *How the Mighty Fall*. Collins describes five stages of decline that he and his research team have found to be common when great companies fail. Stage 2 in this model is "the undisciplined pursuit of more." In 2, companies typically have solid numbers and are aggressively pursuing rapid growth. However, they are doing so with a lack of discipline resulting in a focus on short-term gain over long-term, sustainable growth. Each new product, program, or idea becomes an obsession to the exclusion of the corporate values that made the company great in the first place. Like cattle on the common grazing land, undisciplined pursuit of new ideas in the moment without concern for integrated sustainability can quickly create stove-piped program development and competition between units that keeps the Tragedy of the Commons alive and well.

Tempering the Tragedy of the Commons is done by applying practical, systems thinking tools to the goal of integrated, developmental, and sustainable program and curriculum development. The LTOM framework includes a helpful, developmental model known as the PITO Model (United States Air Force Academy, 2014) that can be used to turn systems thinking in to systems action. PITO stands for four interconnected stages of leadership development – Personal, Interpersonal, Team, and Organizational Leadership. Personal Leadership refers to how one leads oneself in ways that enhance mission accomplishment. Interpersonal Leadership is the ability to lead one or more other

people. Team Leadership is the ability to lead an interdependent group toward accomplishment of a common goal. Finally, Organizational Leadership is guiding an organization of many teams within a larger institution and environment (United States Air Force Academy, 2019).

All levels of the PITO framework can help us knock down the barriers to integrated, developmental, and sustainable education and training. All leaders and followers have some role to play at all of the PITO levels. However, each individual likely sees themselves as operating mostly in one of the four levels. For example, if you are an entry level leader, you may see limited ability to influence your organization's struggles with the Tragedy of the Commons. But there are several ways you can practice personal and interpersonal leadership to change the conversation in your sphere of influence. Likewise, leaders at the team and organizational levels can also put in to practice helpful behaviors and attitudes that can move the organization to a new future. In fact the LTOM and PITO frameworks were designed specifically for these purposes. They are not models simply to be used in classroom or training simulations. They are practical concepts that can be applied to build integrated, developmental, and sustainable curriculum. Therefore, let's explore how we can use the PITO concept in the LTOM outcome to temper the Tragedy of the Commons.

Leadership (Personal and Interpersonal)

In the summer and fall of 2010, I was assigned to the Pentagon as the Air Force's lead writer on the Department of Defense (DoD) study that preceded the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). The Secretary of Defense, The Honorable Robert Gates, directed us to write two reports. The first was a study of how repeal might affect morale, cohesion, effectiveness, recruiting, and retention of units within the DoD. The second report was a plan that would lay out how we would implement the repeal in the DoD

should the law change. I was tasked to lead the writing effort for this second report. As part of that process, we wanted an effective bumper sticker that would aptly summarize the key implementation message of successful repeal. We decided on these three factors: Leadership – Professionalism – Respect. Of these, we wrote "leadership matters most" (Department of Defense, 2010).

This concept that leadership matters most may be the most important first step in overcoming the Tragedy of the Commons. Leadership does not exclusively apply to the senior leaders of the organization. In fact, the most important work must be done within the relationships that exist at all levels of the organization. Leadership matters most in the professional relationships leaders establish. These personal and interpersonal relationships must be built to create the foundation needed for effective team and organizational change. If you are ready to take on the challenge of being an integrator, here are a few personal and interpersonal leadership ideas to get you started.

1. A good place to start is with this Journal and the Air Force Academy's National Character and Leadership Symposium (NCLS) to be held at the Air Force Academy February 21 – 22, 2019. The articles in this journal will improve your understanding of LTOM and provide new ideas you can implement in your sphere of influence. If you are attending NCLS, choose speakers that will provide you with tools you can use to develop culture changing relationships. If you have already attended or did not attend NCLS, you can access video on demand after the event.
2. Set aside time on a recurring basis to define what integrated, development, sustainable work looks like from your point of view. Make a list who you would need to have on your team

in order for your programs to go beyond your discipline or niche in the organization. Make an appointment to meet with the people on your list. Who are your allies and who do you need to grow as allies?

3. When you meet with people on your list, ask them, "Who else should we add?" Build your network and have regular time together. Talk about how integration happens at your level. The dialogues that happen at this level, if sustained and developed, often are critical to organizational change. It is this type of dialogue that started my journey toward leadership integration over 20 years ago. As a brand new instructor at the Academy in 1994, I struck up a conversation with a new civilian philosophy professor at the Academy. During our first year, we decided we wanted to team teach an integrated class that combined my Behavioral Science Department's leadership class with his Philosophy Department's ethics class. A bold move for two brand new faculty members, but we were able to get approval to teach the class in our second year on the faculty. I learned a lot of philosophy, he learned a lot of social science, and our students learned how these two courses supported each other. Over the years, several of those students have reached back to me and thanked me for the experience. One even became a faculty member. More importantly, it still fuels my passion today.
4. Read. At this level of leadership, there are two books that have been most influential to me at the personal and interpersonal leadership level. Both works contain many practical ways to gently provoke organizational change.
 - a. The book I turn to most often is Debra Myerson's (2008) *Rocking the Boat: How*

Tempered Radicals Effect Change Without Making Trouble.

- b. A second helpful book is Carol Dweck's (2011) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.*

Teamwork (Team Leadership)

Perhaps one of the biggest impediments to overcoming the Tragedy of the Commons is prioritizing time to understand and appreciate the challenges and successes of other parts of our organization. To see other teams as allies and not as competition. In a system that is built on an outcomes based model such as the nine outcomes at the Academy, there is perhaps no more important team leader than the outcome team leader. How this individual approaches integrated development is vital to the work and attitude of the outcome team. The members of the outcome team also serve as team leaders for their program or course making the outcome team a team of teams. Coordinating the work of a band of team leaders is hard. Success means bringing together multiple perspectives and negotiating difficult compromises amongst colleagues who have a big investment in their personal programming. Here are a few ideas on how to be successful at the team leader level.

1. Time management may be the biggest challenge to outcome team leaders. Not only are team leaders responsible for the success of their own programs and courses, they are responsible to assist other team members with their program successes. They also need to be in tune with these programs in order to facilitate conversations on creating opportunities for integration.
2. Team leaders at this level should work to improve skills such as effective communication and delegation. In addition,

they need to routinely communicate both the successes and challenges of their team to more senior leaders. They advocate for all members of the team and are truly guardians of the ideal that “your success is my success.”

3. Team leaders are sandwich leaders who are trying to influence organizational management up the chain while nurturing the productive relationships needed for the work of the team at their level and below. Burnout can be high. To stay the course, build an effective network of supporters who can empathize with your challenges while holding you accountable to your goals. Team leaders cannot afford to be lone wolves.
4. For team leaders, I recommend three books. Each of these books do a wonderful job of breaking down the barriers to effective team work and provide helpful suggestions to help team leaders be more successful.
 - a. L. David Marquet’s (2012) *Turn the Ship Around!: A True Story of Turning Followers Into Leaders*. His leader to leader concept is a powerful approach to empowering your team.
 - b. McChrystal, Collins, Silverman and Fussell’s (2015) *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*. The team of teams concept is tailor made to the challenges of outcome team leadership.
 - c. Patrick Lencioni’s (2002) book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. Written in a very accessible style, this work is an excellent reference for starting conversations on effective team dynamics with your teammates.

Organizational Management

At no place does leadership have the greatest potential for change than at the organizational level. Organizational level leaders influence incentive programs, manage discipline to process, decide how resources are allocated, and assess progress toward institutional goals. Unless organizational leaders have practiced collaborative, systems thinking at lower levels of the organization, they are unlikely to effectively manage as a senior leader unless they take the time to learn these concepts. Organizational leaders must be the systems thinkers who reward discipline to process and commitment to integration. Without institutional commitment to align processes, resources, accountability, and incentives to the desired outcome of integrated, developmental, and sustainable LTOM courses and programs, the Tragedy of the Commons is likely to flourish and the organizational leader may not even be aware it is happening.

1. Ask more questions and give fewer directions. If there is one thing I have learned as a senior leader, it is the importance of asking questions that help other leaders carefully consider their positions and beliefs. I am not saying I practice it as well as I would like, but I am working on it. One of my favorite questions is, “Whose voice is missing from this conversation?” Challenge stove-piped thinking by asking effective questions.
2. Accountability and Incentives – If there is one theme that I think is most important to fighting the underlying causes of the Tragedy of the Commons it is the ability to align organization practice with the desired outcome of the organization. A good place to start with understanding the criticality of this concept is with Steven Kerr’s (1975) classic article *On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B*. Senior leaders should

meet regularly and ask themselves, “Are our reward structures and accountability methods truly aligned with our desired goals? What evidence do we have to support our beliefs?” For example, if the organization values interdisciplinary work but uses its resources to exclusively hire disciplinary experts then leaders should not be surprised when integration is slow to develop. If integrated development is truly the top goal of the organization, then resources should be allocated to the interdisciplinary work of the outcome team over stove-piped programming.

3. Assessment. If alignment is the most important influence on organizational culture then reliable assessment is the most important tool in the organizational manager’s tool kit. Sustainable and useful assessment is one of the most difficult challenges to organizational management. Without evidence, conversations are driven by belief systems which tend to sustain stove-piped structure over boundary crossing innovation. If change is to happen institutionally, then reliable evidence needs to be collected, discussed, and, most importantly, used to make decisions.
4. A helpful technique to assist with integrated development is the use of program reviews. Program reviews at the outcome team level, give outcome teams the opportunity to brief how they are using resources to drive integrated programming. During these reviews, senior leaders should listen carefully for opportunities to provide resources and guidance that support integrated innovation. The Higher Learning Commission, the accrediting organization for the Academy,

offers helpful information on how program reviews and strategic planning can be used to support institutional outcome development (2015).

5. For organizational managers and leaders, I have the longest reading list. This is appropriate since leaders at this level have the biggest role to play in establishing a corporate culture that tempers the commons with integrated practice.
 - a. The most influential body of work for my personal development has been the work of Jim Collins and his colleagues. Certainly his classic *Good to Great* (2001) is one I think should be on every leader’s bookshelf. That said, I actually find myself going to two of his other books more frequently. *Great by Choice* (2011), written with Martin Hansen, describes the attributes of successful, change-oriented leaders, whom he calls “10x leaders” because they lead companies that outperform the competition at least tenfold. But, *How the Mighty Fall* (2009), is the book I turn to most. It is his most reflective book and his five stages of organizational decline are very helpful guideposts for any senior leader looking to combat the Tragedy of the Commons.
 - b. Edgar Schein’s (2017) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, written with his son Peter Schein is a classic and invaluable to the understanding of systems, change, and leading.
 - c. John Doerr’s (2018) book *Measure What Matters: How Google, Bono, and the Gates Foundation Rock the World with*

OKRs, is one of the best books on assessment on my shelf.

Final Thoughts

We have covered a lot of ground over the pages of this article. But, in reality, we have only scratched the surface. The Tragedy of the Commons is a strong force and overcoming it requires the unified efforts of PITO leaders across the LTOM spectrum. To be successful, “we” needs to be big “WE” much more often than it is little “we”. Assessment must provide us with useful information and we must have the institutional courage to act on the evidence we have collected. We must deliver rigorous and purposefully developed content, but we must do so in partnership with other members of our team. The team’s success must outweigh personal success. Simply put, we must take the Air Force’s Core Values of “Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in All We Do” and make them more than words on the wall. We must get comfortable with being uncomfortable. We don’t need more sayings or new programs or stove-piped effort. Only systems thinking, dogged persistence, and boundary spanning relationships will get us there. I hope you will roll up your sleeves and jump in. WE will all be better if you do.

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