BCNET

Shared IT Services for Higher Education & Research

Conference 2017

Re-Thinking IT Leadership - A Science Based Approach to Team Engagement

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Quick Poll

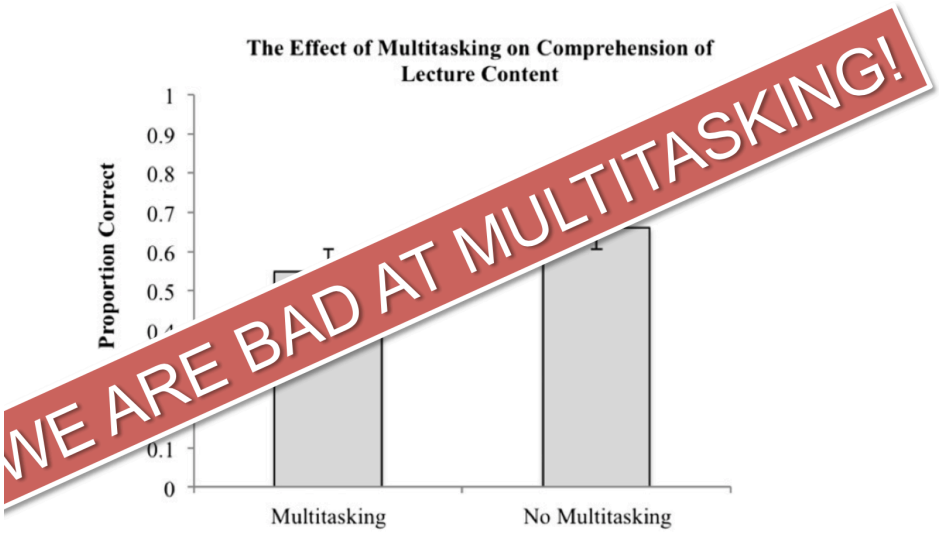
- How many senior leaders do we have?
- Middle managers?
- In the trenches?

Outcomes/Goals

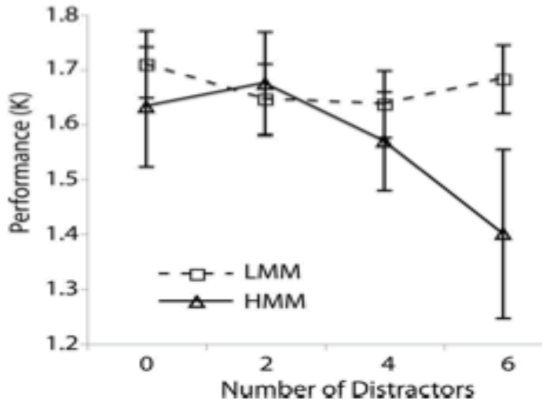
- Give you a brief introduction to brain based leadership
- Challenge the ”command and control” “old school” management style
- At least a couple actionable ideas that may help you achieve high engagement vs minimal compliance in the work place
- Uncomfortable

Logistics

- Digestion break(s)
- Cell Phones/Laptops
- Interactive



Sana et al. (2013)



Ophir et al. (2009)

Agenda

- The narrative - about me
- Typical challenges we face in IT
- An overview of Neuroleadership
- Introduction to the S.C.A.R.F
- Digestion(s)
- Example: Promoting Insight in the workplace

The Narrative

"People who lead with data are doomed for failure" - Soledad O'Brien

About Me

- Infrastructure Manager at VIU
- Never wanted to be a manager
- Alberta
- Comp Sci Degree - programmer
- K-12
- Lethbridge College
- City of Lethbridge
- Values that i work under
- Always questioned my approach

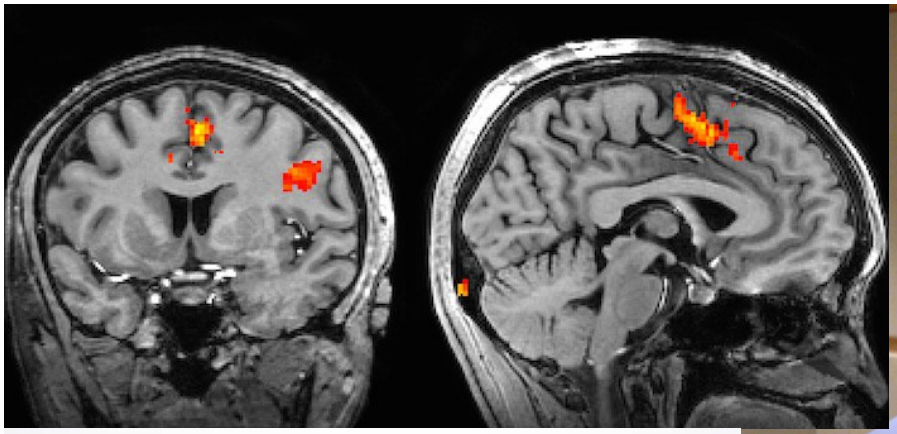
What is Neuroleadship?

Neuroleadership: *is a term coined in 2006 by Dr. David Rock. It defines* ***the field of study and exploration involved with looking at leadership development and human performance improvement through the lens of the understanding of how the brain works.***

Neuroleadership Institute

Research driven institute

"To Transform Leadership Through Neuroscience"



3 Main Practices

Performance

Transform performance by lifting the quality of conversations

Diversity

Enhance diversity and inclusion by breaking bias

Learning

Accelerate and embed new behaviors through brain-based strategies

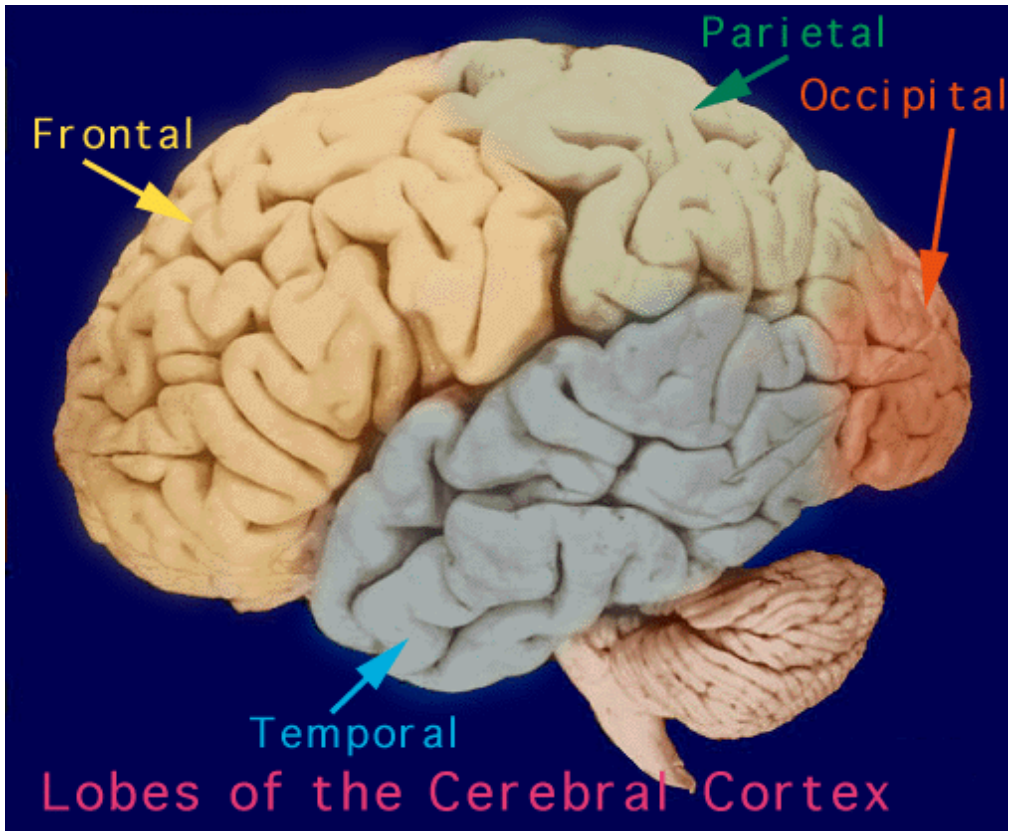
Typical Challenges of IT?

- What common struggles do we have in the post secondary Information Technology Department

- Resource Challenges = creativity
- Non Stop Change = comfort/adaptably
- Never been done before = insight
- Very complex systems = focus/problem solving

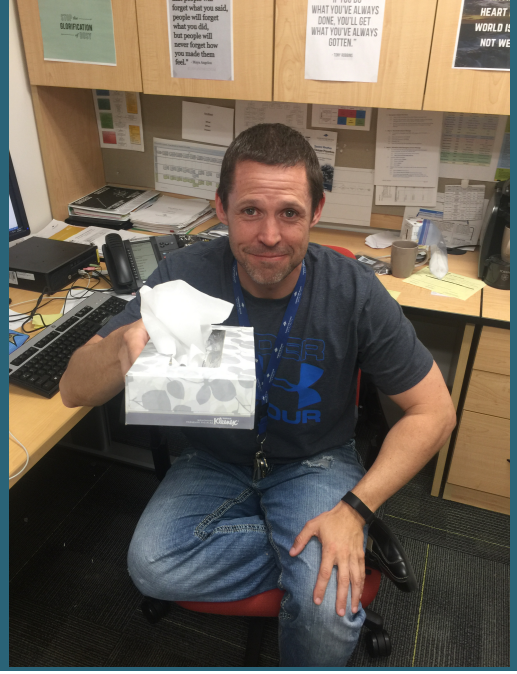
Frontal Lobe-

reasoning, planning, parts of speech, movement, **emotions, and problem solving, creative thinking**

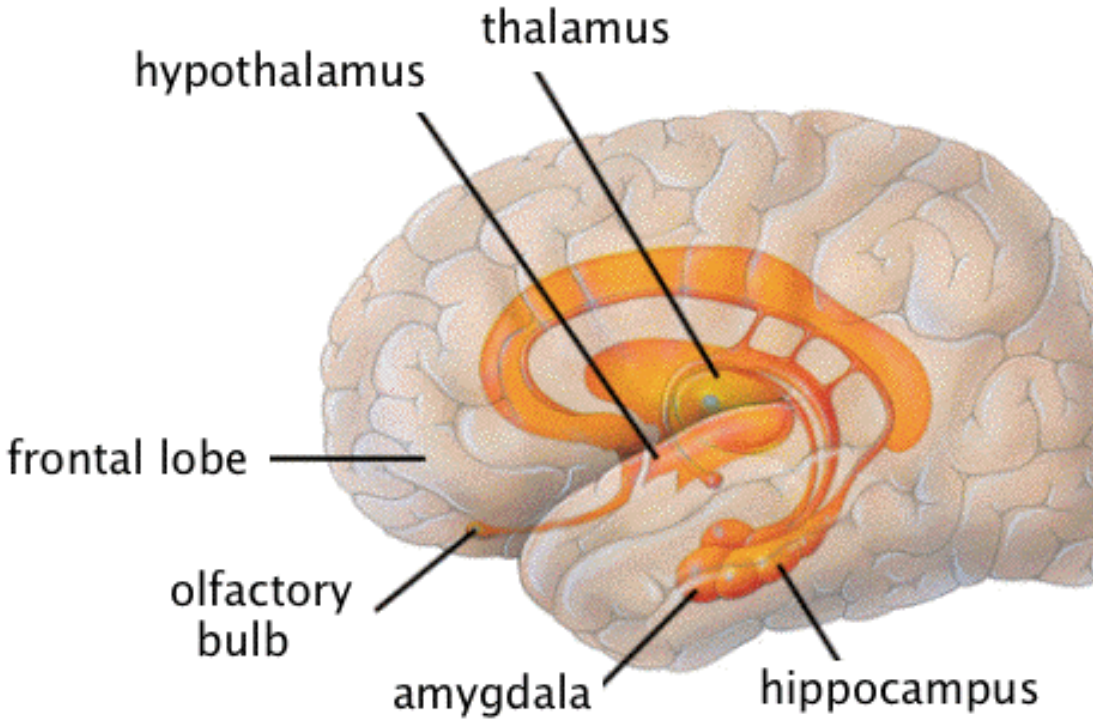


Parietal Lobe- associated with movement, orientation, recognition, perception of stimuli

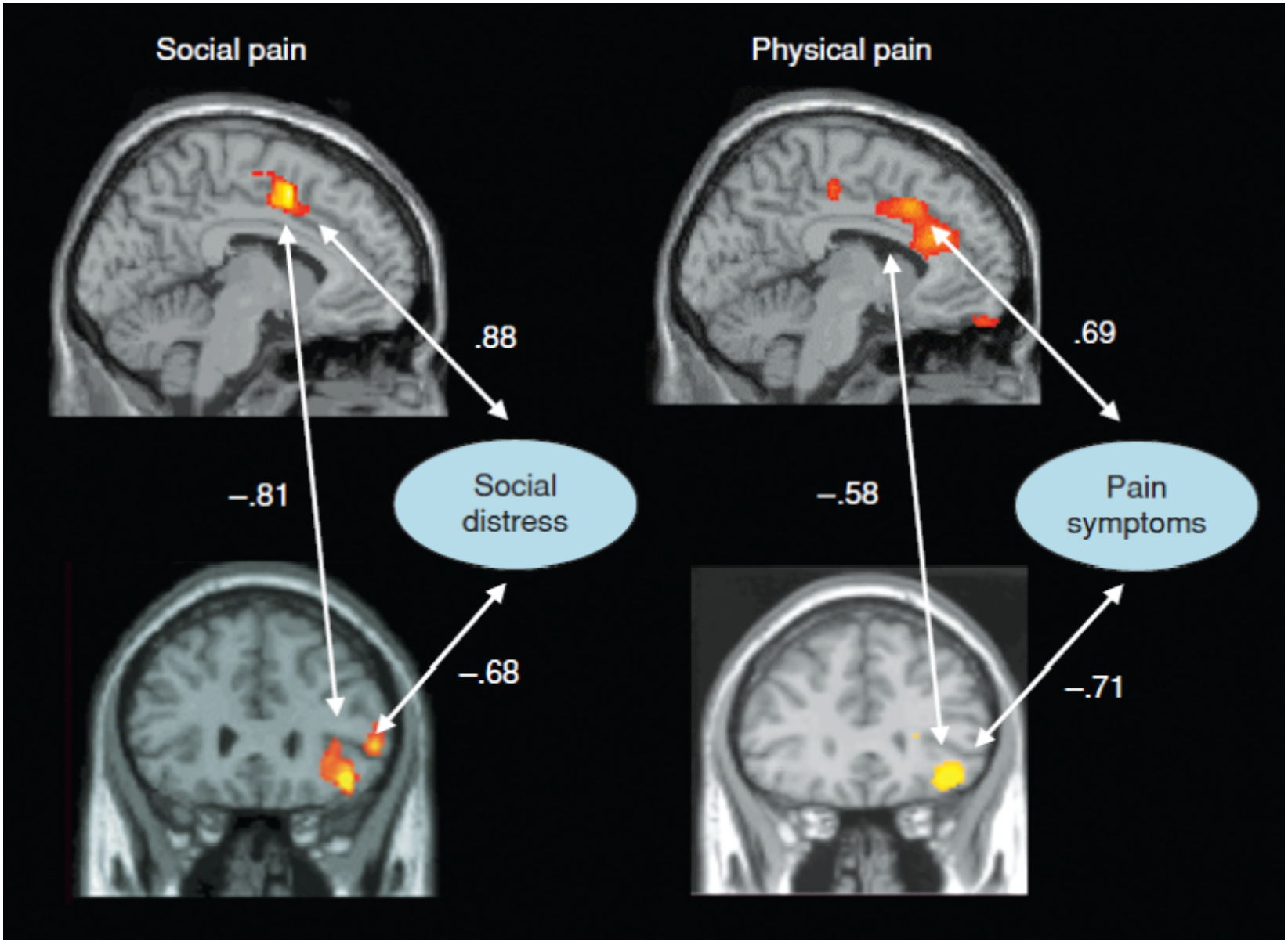
The Limbic system



- includes evolutionarily
- primitive parts of the forebrain.
- It was recognized by early anatomists as the “emotional” system.

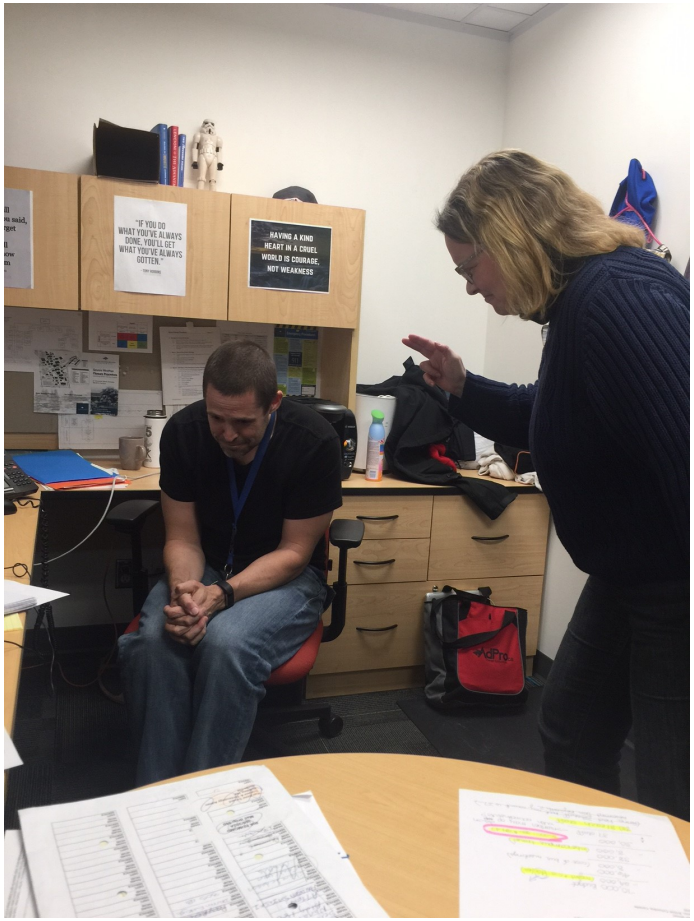


Evolution of our brains…..


Social pain
Physical pain
.88
.69
−.81
−.58
Social distress
Pain symptoms
−.68
−.71

My Daily Tongue Lashing

- Less likely to be able to solve complex problems
- More likely to make mistakes
- Reduced cognitive performance



“Threat literally makes people less smart “ - David Rock

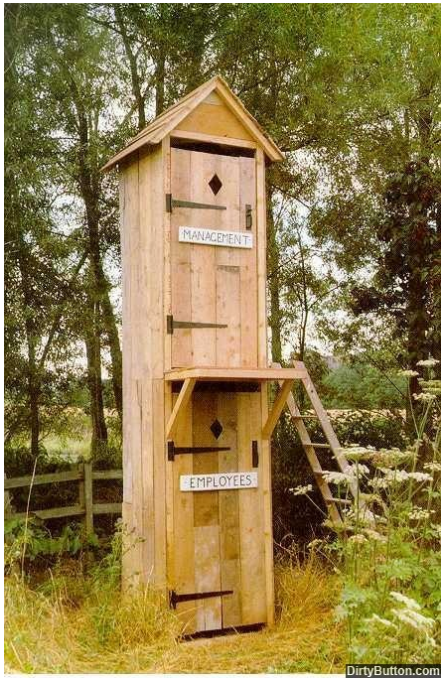
How did our current style of management evolve?

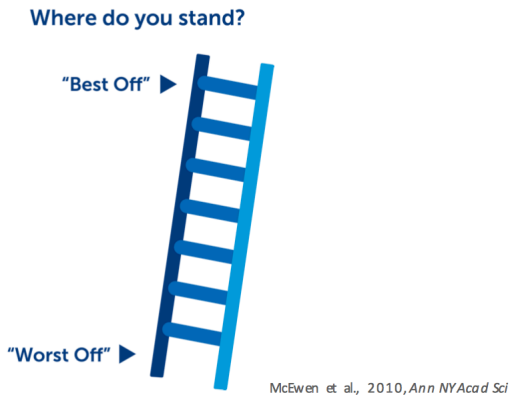
SCARF - A model for collaborating with and influencing others

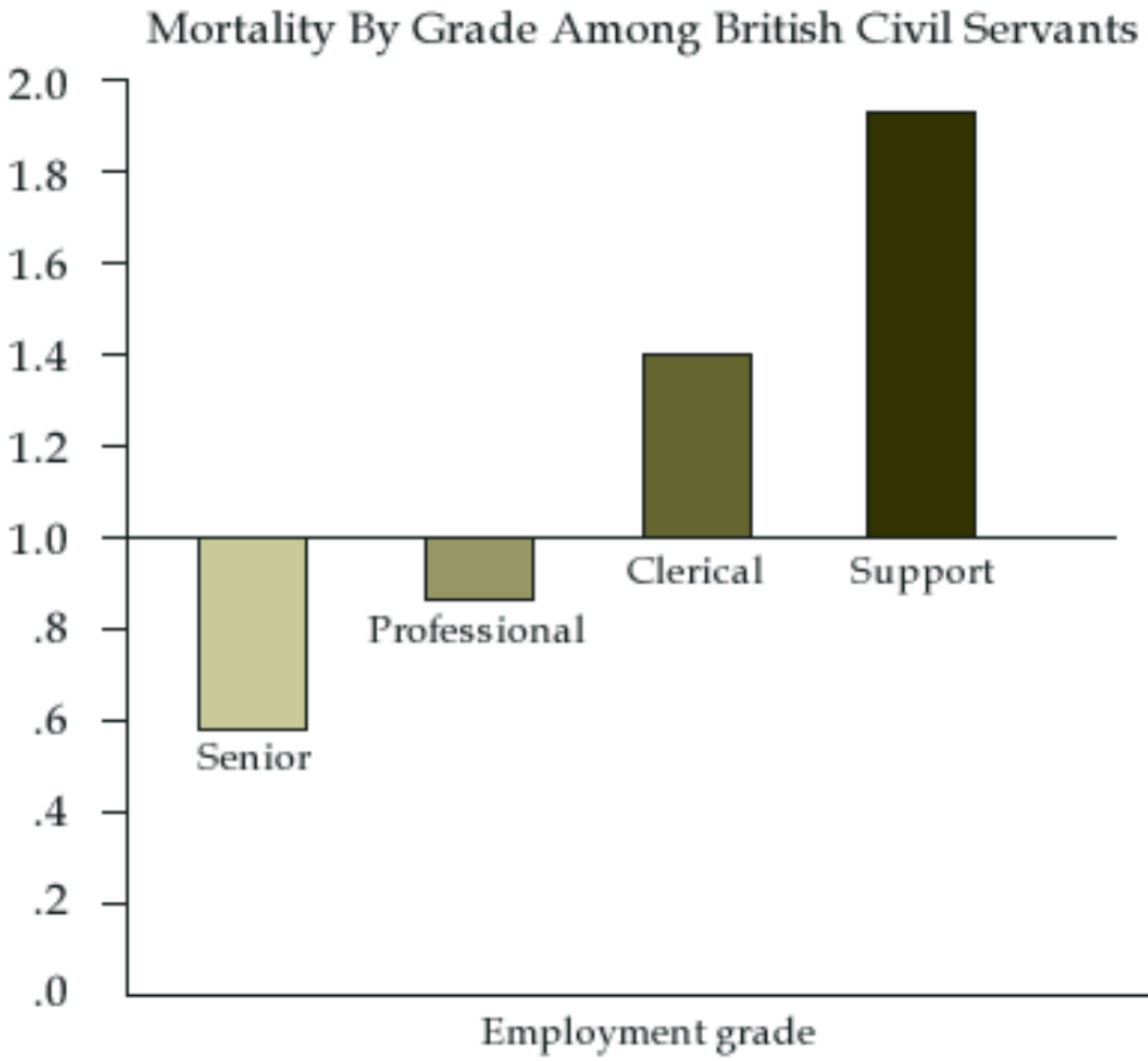
- Maximize reward is also known as engagement
- Engaged employees far more productive than dis-engaged
- I believe our job as leaders is to find out how to move employees into that max reward state

Status

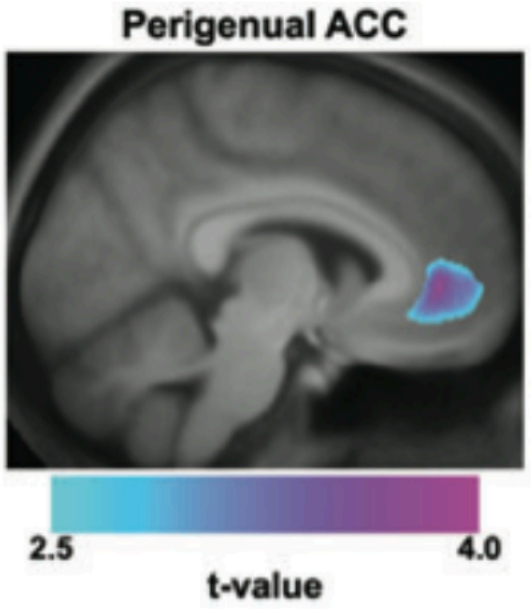
- Sense of worth
- Where we fit into the hierarchy both socially and organizationally
- What were those people in the coffee room thinking?

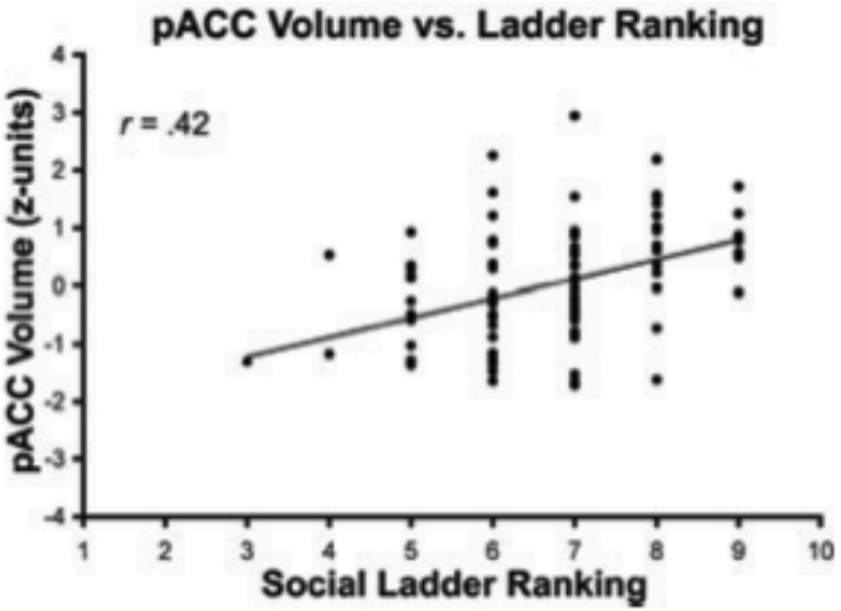






Marmot et al, 1987





Lower status = chronic stressor => reduced volume

McEwen et al., 2010, *Ann NY Acad Sci*

Many new managers operate in a threatening way creating a danger response putting status at risk. Or maybe they know the job well and give lots of feedback also putting status at risk.

Certainty

- Being able to predict the future.
- When surroundings are uncertain, then the person's brain activity increases and creates a stress response.
- Why do we strategically plan?

Many new managers don't understand the importance of clear expectations creating uncertainty.

Autonomy

- Autonomy provides a sense of control over events
- Feeling safe/trust
- Less autonomy, more situation is treated as a threat
- Example: micro-managing

Many new managers micromanage, threatening autonomy.

Digestion

"Name ways in which we can help people be in a "towards" state for certainty or autonomy."

2 minutes to discuss

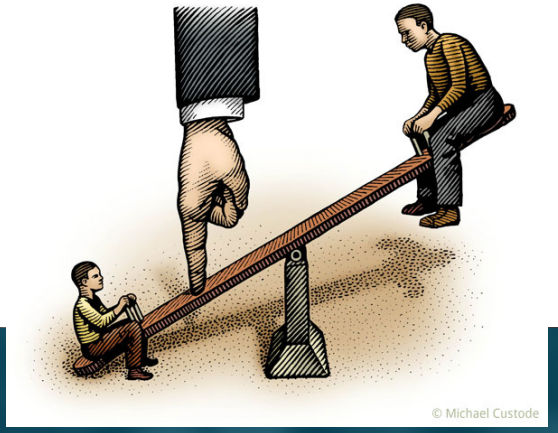
Relatedness

- Sense a safety with others
- We are social animals, and we naturally form social groups and build relationships
- These groups build mutual trust against the unknown.
- It helps build the team.

Many new managers don’t connect with people on a human level. Concerned about feeling to close.

Fairness

- Is the perception of being treated justly
- When a person perceives they are being treated unfairly, threat response
- Reducing Threat - Try introducing greater transparency

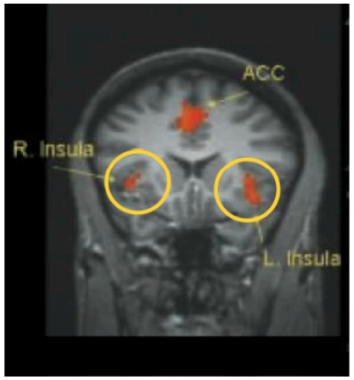


The Ultimatum Game

Typically, responders reject unfair offers (< 20% of the total stake).

Unfair offers activate “disgust” region

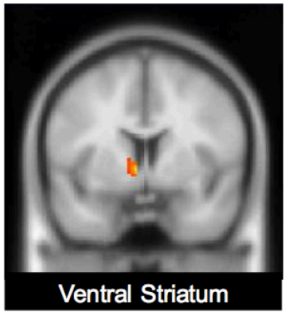
UNFAIR: $2 out of $10
vs.
FAIR: $5 out of $10



(Sanfey et al., 2003; also Tabibnia et al., 2008)

Fair offers activate “reward” region even when there’s no additional $ gained!

FAIR: $5 out of $10
vs.
UNFAIR: $5 out of $20



(Tabibnia et al., 2008)

Many new managers don’t understand the importance of fairness.

Scarf Take Aways

- Be aware of how the minds work and have evolved and use this with interactions with other people

- Mind is like teflon frying pan. Good stuff isn't remembered. Bad stuff sticks with you. We are negativity biased

What if your manager….

- Showed you what is great about you = **S**tatus
- Set clear expectations = **C**ertainty
- Let you make decisions = **A**utonomy
- Trust and Human Bond = **R**elatedness
- Treated you fairly = **F**airness

SMARTER + MORE EFFECTIVE + MORE PRODUCTIVE + MORE ENGAGED

Digestion

“Stop giving your staff feedback”

2 minutes to discuss

Complex Problem Solving with Insight

A sudden solution to a long-vexing problem, sudden recognition of a new idea, or a sudden understanding of a complicated situation

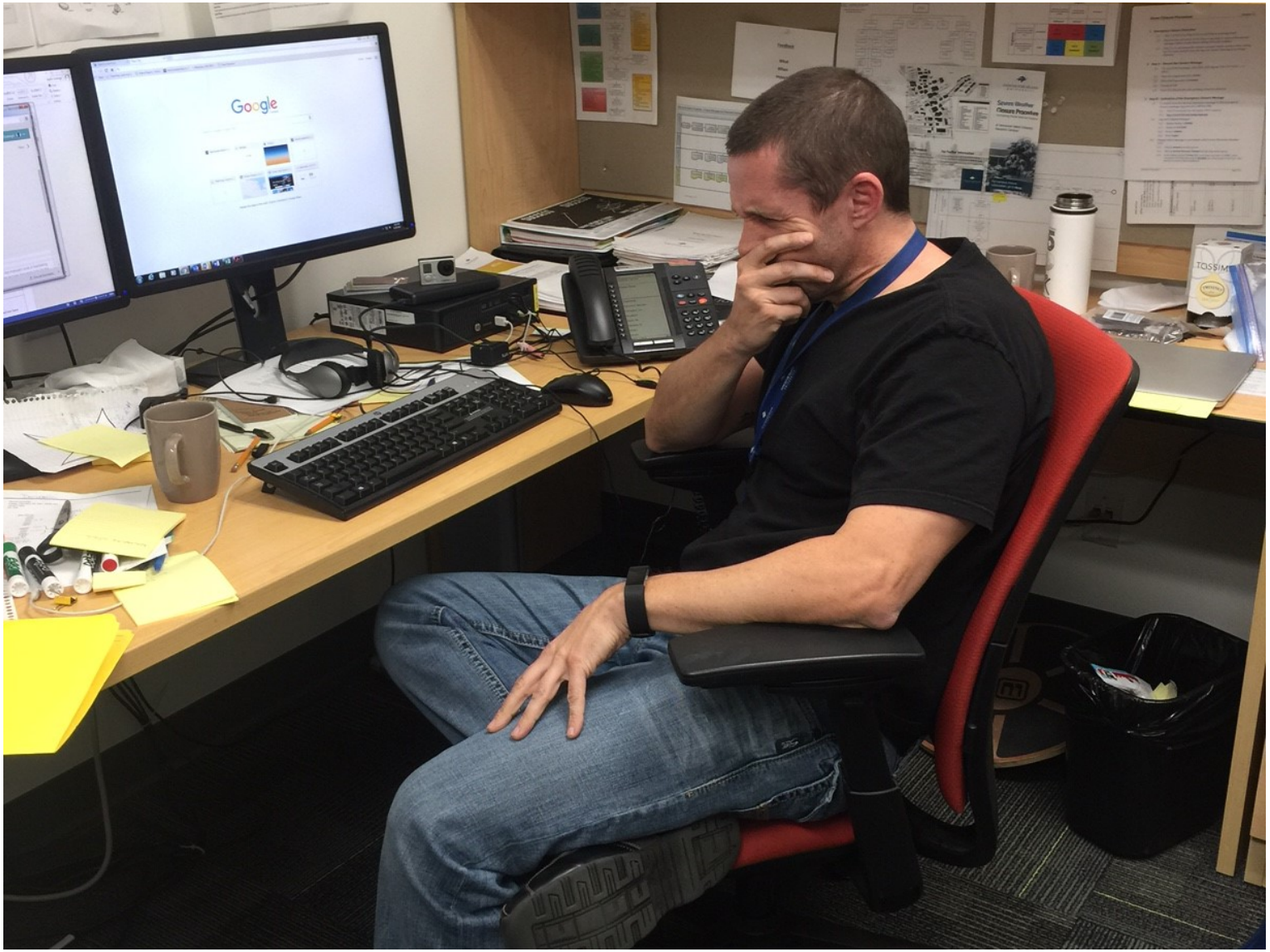
Problem Solving (Linear vs Non Linear)

- Linear (Analytical) Problem Solving (networks already built)
  - Systematic
  - Incremental
  - Focused attention
  - Deadlines and reasonable threat or pressure can be effective

- **Non-linear (Complex) Problem Solving (new networks)**
  - **More intuitive, insight – Sudden**
  - **Less focused attention, diffuse cognitive processing**
  - **Deadlines and reasonable threat will hurt the ability for creative new solutions**

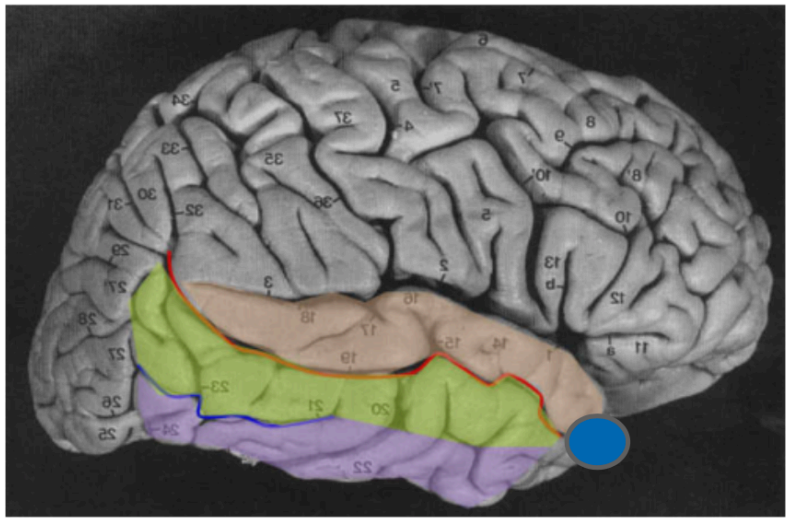
POLL: Where do you have your best ideas?

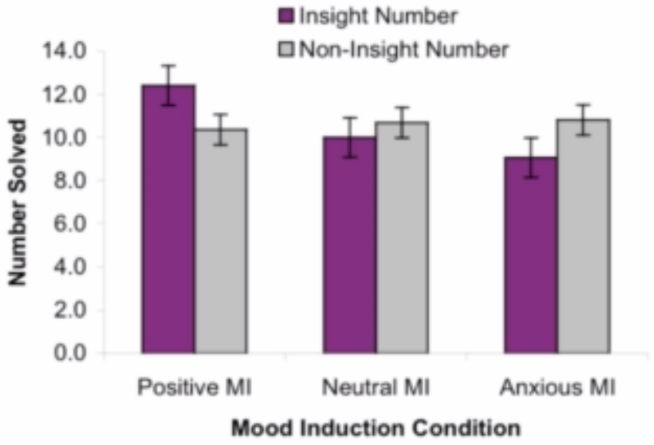
- shower
- desk
- coffee shop
- while exercising
- just before falling asleep or waking up
- going for a walk
- other

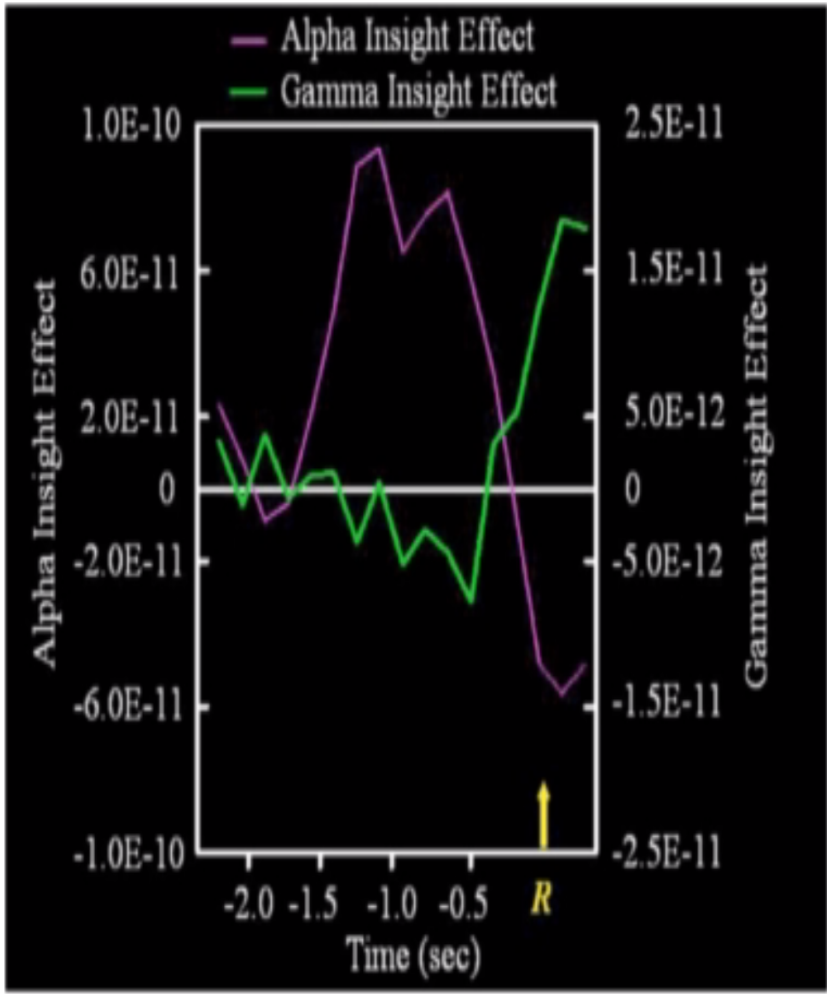

Google

AHA!

Sudden burst of activity in the right anterior, superior, temporal gyrus

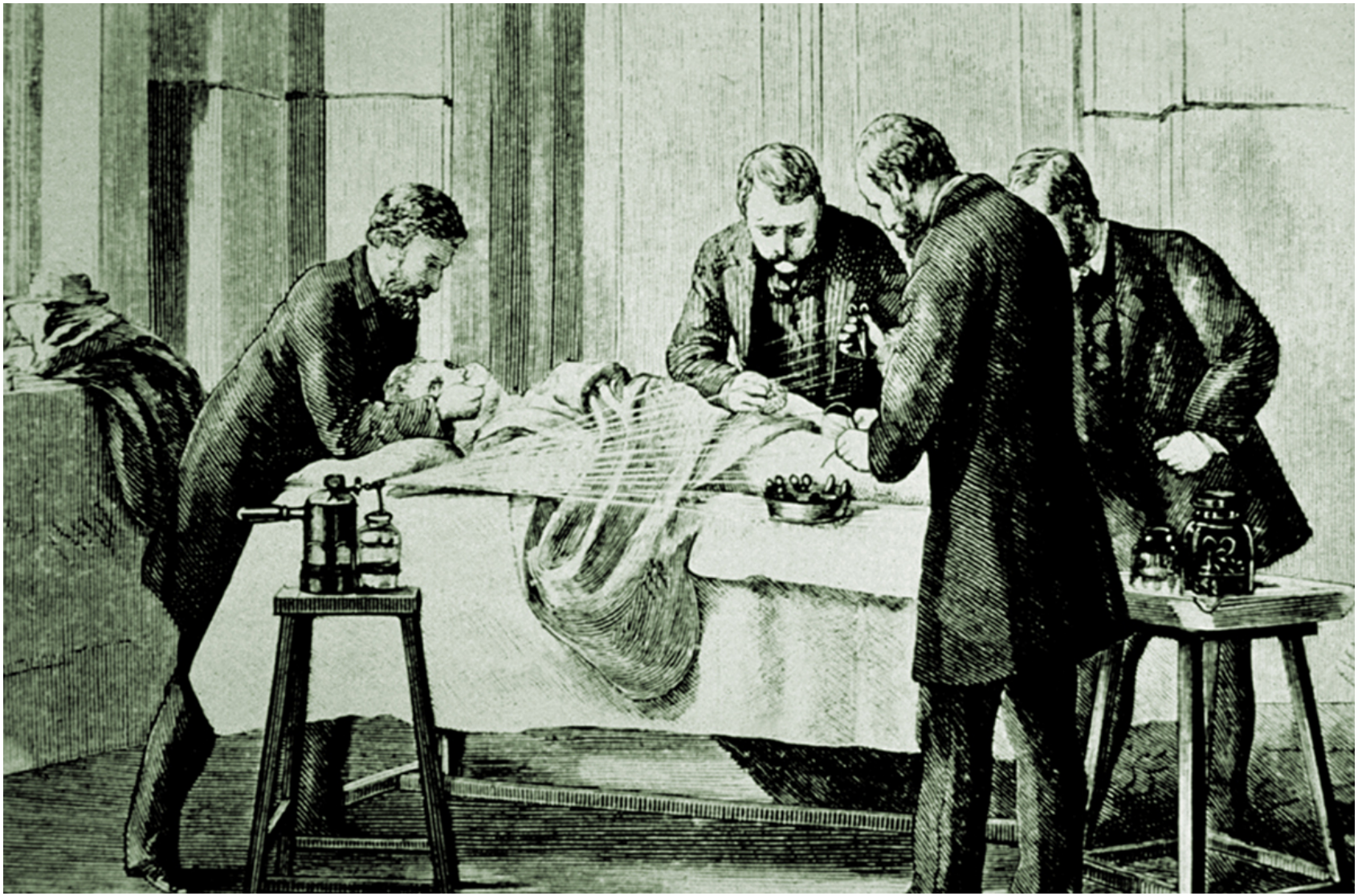






Insight Take Away

- NOT RANDOM OR FLUKE, Insight is a PROCESS
- Different conditions for different type of complex decisions.
  - Quiet
  - Inward looking
  - Slightly happy
  - Not working directly on the problem



Robert Kegan, Ph.D. Harvard Business School