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From: Wingham Rowan <[REDACTED]>
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at 5:36 PM
To: Adrian Haro <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER]
Subject: Aligning the Design Sprint

Hi Adrian, [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER],

I have a nagging sense we're currently on slightly different tracks in the Design Sprint. I'd like to get my concerns out in the open to see if alignment could be accelerated. I want to lay out (a) where I think there's a culture gap between our organizations (b) my ideal for how we work together.

This is absolutely not confrontational. If there's any hint of that in this email it's a factor of it being written at pace with nuances not thought through. Adrian, the reason I pushed for us to have monthly one-in-ones was to create an informal channel for this kind of philosophizing.

And ultimately, at this end we're committed to the golden rule: whoever has the gold makes the rules. So, if there's any hint of a dispute, we do things the TWL way. But I think there could be opportunity to increase TWL's gains from the sprint in some of what I want to suggest.

a) Our culture gap

Bottom-up, tech-driven, government-leveraging, system change is hard. Not "we may have to lay some people off" hard, but "under-resourced to the point where people work for years without salary" hard. That has bred a culture of "Extreme JFDI" at this end. Everything has to be done directly and imperfectly, or it doesn't get done at all. Every possible point of leverage must be exploited. Avoiding adding unnecessarily to colleagues' - or your own - workload is critical. Productivity killing "context switching" between tasks must only happen in a crisis or sudden opportunity.

We have one exception to all this: technology development. That has to be done thoughtfully.

I'm not whining about the above. It's just what is. But we've had arm's length relationships with funders in the past, so the JFDI-on-steroids approach has become ingrained without deep exposure to a more mature organization. Partnering with TWL has thrown up sudden culture shock around issues like:

- 1. **Resource allocation:** I have been staggered by the effort/care put into [REDACTED - CITY] from TWL. It's one expansion option and we're protected by a relationship with [REDACTED] in case of a badly received presentation (no amount of prep can totally mitigate that risk). I would much rather that time went into developing a [REDACTED] - like champion in [REDACTED], the national umbrella bodies or other prospect cities, with urgency.

- 2. **Agendas:** I've never had anyone else set an agenda for internal meetings before. At this end we just turn current progress/learning/ideas/agreed actions on each of our critical success factors into the prioritized talking points. I can't remember when I last attended meetings like last Friday's with advisors when there was no resulting decisions or actions, apart from commitment to talking again. (I can't actually remember what we discussed; I just know the success factors I was tuned in for weren't there.)
 - The advisors' May 8 all-day in [REDACTED] encapsulates this aspect of the culture gap. I have to explain to a [REDACTED] project manager spending his own money on essential marketing materials and an Operations Admin with no guarantee of work beyond June why our "\$1m funder" is flying advisors in for – by their standards – a bacchanalia. Do I say I think it's a great idea which suggests indifference to their situation? Or 'fess up that I'm going along with it as an obligation to TWL, which points up my limited ability to steer the project's direction? Haven't figured this one out yet.
- 3. **Inadvertent creation of work:** I wanted [REDACTED] to attend our [REDACTED - FEDERAL AGENCY] meeting so he could answer "what can ETA do to support WIBs on this?" Because he wasn't there, I had to take [REDACTED]'s question, ask him about it later, write that up, then get it confirmed.
 - The advisors' meeting was then a perfect opportunity to run the answer past [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] / Adrian who all have complementary insights into [REDACTED - FEDERAL AGENCY]. But other items took precedence. So now I have to chase [REDACTED] about it. It sounds like a little task, and I know Adrian's offered help. But I experience it simply in terms of repeated context switching, adding to voluminous To Do lists. This isn't an isolated example.
- 4. **Time taken:** Wording an announcement of TWL's support for us took, I think – 8 weeks. At this end we'd have done it, and had it circulating, in 45 minutes. It wouldn't have been perfect, but it would then have given us 2 month's lead in building dialogue with cities, which attracts DOL interest, which gets funders excited, which eases pressure in Long Beach and so on. Running down the clock with layers of decision making is anxiety-inducing at this end.
- 5. **Outsourcing:** [US STATE]'s finest, \$[REDACTED] p.h. employment lawyers obviously know their stuff. But they're not fast, possibly because their advice is so portentous. And they're another culture shock for us. I serve as frontline lawyer at this end. I don't like it, it just is. If we did unavoidably need an attorney, we would be shopping for \$250 an hour people in low-rent communities around California. We certainly don't have PR companies or comms consultants. It's all just me. Not saying that's good, just highlighting a gulf in ways of operating.

Realistically, there may be internal-political, financial, or other issues that explain some of the above at TWL. My point is, at this end we don't have any choice about our culture. It's how we got this far (in a foreign country). It won't change until we've passed the tipping point to unlock resources commensurate with our opportunity.

I get that TWL needs to workshop, ice-break, ponder, micro-manage. But I also have no doubt what moves this program along is a never-ending machine of targeting, researching, approaching, reminding, engaging, selling, following up, re-selling, responding, and supporting. Parts of that have to be no-thought replicable, the “pitch to a new city” for example. Refining that machine with new contacts or increasing its capacity with new talent are the issues that excite at this end. If TWL is to be the thinkers on this sprint and we are to be the do-ers like this we will always be on parallel tracks.

Plus, I genuinely think there’s much we good guys can learn from the way bad guys like Amazon strive for a bootstrapping “Day One” culture even when monolithic. I try to inculcate everyone who comes into our orbit with this mindset of constant reappraisal and frugality. I’m not suggesting TWL should change, I just want to flag what seems like a cultural gap to be jointly managed.

b) My ideal

The most important aspect of my job is the part nobody externally has any interest in: operational memos for prospects (like City Hall depts.) and business specifications for platform functionality based on what we’re learning in Long Beach. This is deep, thoughtful, down-in-the-weeds stuff. If we get it wrong, it creates an incoherent program and huge extra work down the track.

Very happy to share some of these documents but they’re pretty unpickupable if you’re not embroiled in our thinking. Crucially it’s dangerously unproductive to do bits of them here and there among other tasks. I try to carve out days to immerse myself in for instance “Proposed configuration of CalFLEXI for Parks & Rec. Summer Programs” or “New Pooled Worker table columns for agency superusers”. As of now, I need two days to complete the operational memos needed and am a terrifying 10-12 days behind on specification tickets.

My ideal situation with TWL recognizes the importance of devoting thought and focus to this backlog. That doesn’t mean I stop doing other stuff, it just means my unique experience is leveraged as much as possible for TWL’s learning, for the Long Beach team and for expansion.

Specifically, I dream of:

- 1. **Standard meeting agendas:** This project will live or die on, in order: (a) resources (b) tech. (c) Long Beach launch (d) expansion areas (e) policy change at DOL (f) our ability to learn and refine as we go. Those six headings form the agenda for every weekly meeting between [REDACTED - EXTERNAL PARTNER] and I. Within each point, we discuss our latest insights, ideas and attributed actions, making sure we helicopter into details and back out to big picture on all of them over 30-40 minutes.
 - I would dearly like agendas for TWL meetings to follow this format rather than TWL generating what is – to me – a randomly curated list of often minor talking points. Can I originate the agendas for our meetings?
- 2. **Leveraging the advisors:** I tell anyone coming into our orbit there’s no room for passengers on this journey. Everyone learns by doing what it takes to move this along. I don’t know what’s planned for the advisors’ convenings, but I would like them to focus on what advisors collectively can – and will - do, specifically on (a), (d) and (e) above. Ideas like workers’ co-operatives are nice. But if we can’t get the six points above right, they will remain just whimsical thoughts.

- 3. **Education campaigns:** I don't know how [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] is managed or bonused. But I would like to get him engaged around CalFLEXI personally, see if I can get him excited and satisfied his concerns have been addressed. I'd like to then talk through the blocks of text I've honed for application forms that he might want to lift or repurpose. That might speed his funding search.
 - I'd also like to see if he will promote us as a "background briefing" for funders and people who influence funders ([REDACTED] for example). Likewise, could we build a list of 10 of Adrian's connections we'd like to unthreateningly offer learning on WIBs gearing up for evolving labor markets?
- 4. **TWL learns from driving:** Could [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER]'s dynamism be directed not at fine-tuning [REDACTED - REGION] but opening up other possible areas for expansion? I'm always on hand to help but I don't want the drive behind our expansion efforts to die if I go into alternate days of monastic seclusion to get the documentation backlog cleared.
- 5. **Taming the context switching:** I know you guys will fire off an email whenever there's a need. But if anything not hyper-urgent could just be slotted into the appropriate part of next week's agenda, it allows time for concentrated focus at this end.
 - One example of context switching: Last week's emails seeking amendments to individual para's within the [REDACTED - EXTERNAL FUNDER] application. I get a block of text with no context (What points have been made in earlier blocks? What's the word count? What aims are we aligning with?) and have to stop to get my head round the whole thing, to then have to do the same a few hours later on other paragraphs. Far better to build a combined vision with [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] so we share a context, then schedule a call to go over details that we both clear our heads for.

To reiterate: nothing hostile here. I love working with you guys and remain very grateful for your support. I carved out time to write this not to pick a battle or prove a point but to see if it can deepen our relationship over the next year at this formative stage.

And at the risk of over-sharing:

Four weeks ago I was closest I've ever been to collapse from the sheer relentlessness of 60-hours-a-week bombardment by queries, worries, mistakes, missed deadlines, uncertainties, additional hurdles and corner-cutting.

My husband has come out to Long Beach and I'm back on even keel. But I still worry enormously about the end-of-June cliff in funding. So, for example, should I devote time this week to the fast-turnaround [REDACTED] funding opportunity? If I do, a key Pooled Workers screen won't get scoped so that project will be slowed, frustrating developers and City Hall officials. This is life. Anything TWL can do to make this more manageable hugely appreciated.

But no-one said this path would be easy and I couldn't do anything else with my life. Fear not, we will forge on and the golden rule is preeminent at all times! There is no problem here, just friendly suggestions.

All the best

Wingham