# The Art of Future Ready Leadership

*Module 3: Ensemble Intelligence*

# What is an Ensemble?

Consider the trauma unit video you just viewed.

List all the behaviors that you observed in the video.

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Were any counterproductive?

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# Why Leaders Need Ensembles to Succeed

Remember the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Think of two examples of teams you have been part of or had close involvement with. These can be drawn from work or your community environment.

Choose one you would consider to be an effective team, and another that was less effective. What made the effective team successful?

Can you identify any of the behaviors of ensemble teams that contributed to this team's success? Which ones?

What made the other team less effective?

Can you identify any of the behaviors of ensemble teams that were noticeably missing?

How might this team have benefited from ensemble behaviors?

Can you name specific challenges that prevented that team from developing those behaviors?

# It Starts with Empathy

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella believes that empathy is the key to innovation. What do you think?

Reflect on Nadella's belief in the central role that empathy plays in successful innovation. Do you agree or not? Why or why not?

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Now, reflect on your own experiences working on teams. How would you characterize the importance of empathy to team success?

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# Going Far with Ensemble Intelligence

We often think of ensembles as small groups. But large organizations can also take advantage of ensemble intelligence.
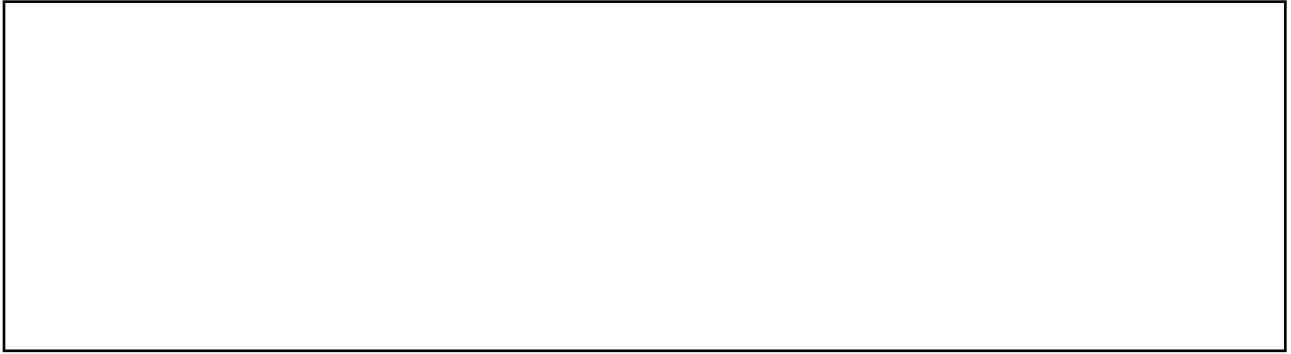
Los Alamos director Robert Oppenheimer and Amex CEO Harvey Golub were both visionary and charismatic leaders of vast enterprises. While we typically think of this type of leadership as a solo and solitary undertaking, Oppenheimer and Golub achieved their greatest successes through collaboration.

List collaborative leadership behaviors and practices described in these two case studies that seem out of the ordinary or unexpected for CEO's.
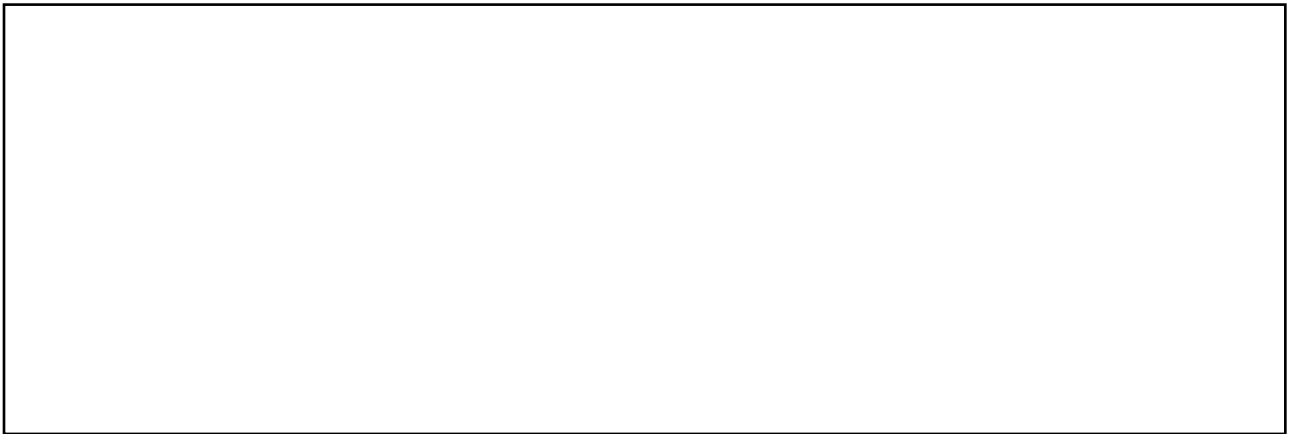
Did any of these behaviors and practices contribute to the success of these two enterprises? How?

Briefly describe an example of a large-scale collaboration that you're familiar with, that successfully incorporates elements of ensemble teamwork. Which elements of ensemble teamwork does this collaboration use, and how are they implemented at scale?
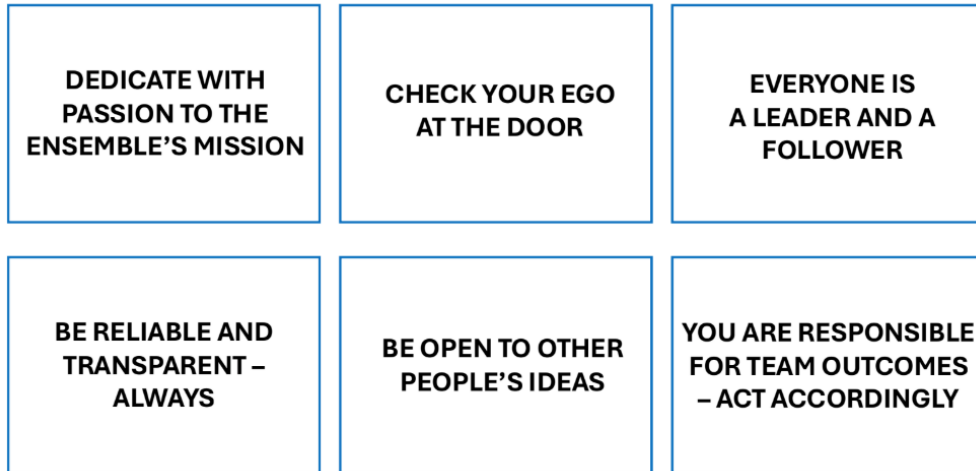
In what ways were they different?

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What can you learn about ensemble intelligence from this comparison?

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# Rules of the Road

Consider these six "rules of the road" for ensemble teamwork.

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|---|---|---|
| **DEDICATE WITH PASSION TO THE ENSEMBLE'S MISSION** | **CHECK YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR** | **EVERYONE IS A LEADER AND A FOLLOWER** |
| **BE RELIABLE AND TRANSPARENT – ALWAYS** | **BE OPEN TO OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS** | **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TEAM OUTCOMES – ACT ACCORDINGLY** |

These rules provide the foundation of effective individual behavior on ensemble teams. Taken together, they become the behavioral norms of successful ensembles.

Spend one hour observing a working meeting of a team that you do not serve on. Then answer the following questions about the behaviors you observed:

To what degree were each of the rules present or absent in the team collaboration?

Were team members continually engaged and focused, or did you see examples of people doing unrelated activity (side conversations, social media, browsing the internet, catching up on email, etc.)?

Did one person do most of the talking and dominate the meeting, or was there a flow of discussion involving all team members?

Were people generally open to new ideas or were those discouraged/shut down?

Did the team meeting seem productive to you? Why or why not?

What impact did the absence or presence of these behaviors have on the success of the collaboration?

# Art and Empathy Dance Together in the Brain

Think of a time when you told a story to another person or a group.

How did your audience react to your storytelling?

How did you know? How did they manifest their reaction?

What impact did their reaction have on you? How did you feel? What did you think?

Did their reaction effect your behavior?

What might you learn from your responses to these questions?

# Innovation is a Team Sport

The myth of the hero innovator has a powerful hold on our imaginations, but the reality is more nuanced.

You have just read about significant and wide-ranging collaborations in the very different fields of business, science and the arts:

- The Beatles
- Thomas Edison and the electric light bulb
- Alexander Fleming and penicillin
- Claude Monet and Impressionism

What qualities did these collaborations share?

What made them work?

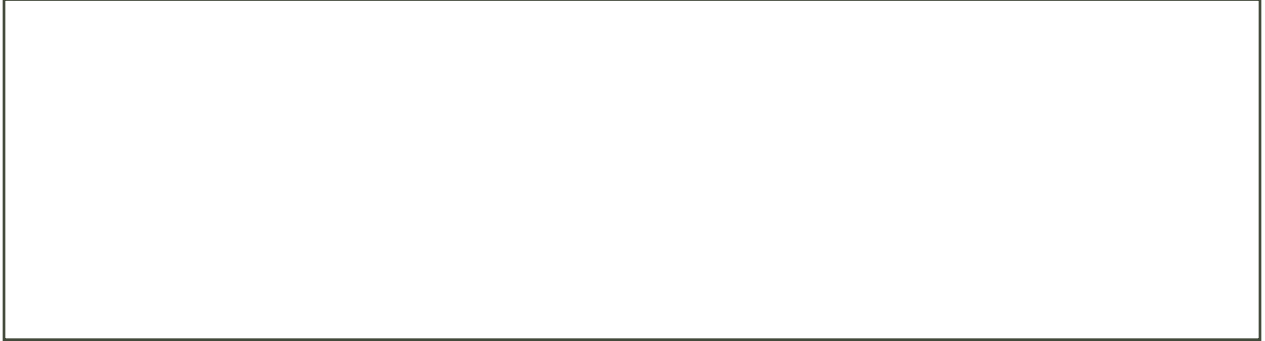How did these common elements contribute to innovation?

Are the practices you can adapt to your own leadership context?

List at least two recent projects that you've worked on with other people, that included or resulted in some amount of innovation.

Project 1 – What was the innovation? Where did the key idea(s) come from? How did it move from idea to implementation?

Project 2 – What was the innovation? Where did the key idea(s) come from? How did it move from idea to implementation?

What can you learn from these experiences that you might apply to current or future projects?

# Ensemble Skills

The best way to set a team up for success is to make sure it brings together people with the right set of skills and attributes, working together with proven and effective collaborative operating principles.

An ensemble audit can become a power tool to help you assemble a new team or strengthen an existing one.

Set up three ensemble audit worksheets:

Sheet 1: Down the side, list all team members (or potential members for a team in formation). Across the top, list the following individual attributes:

- Openness
- Curiosity
- Trustworthiness
- Willingness to switch from leading to following
- Ability to both talk and listen
- Reliability/dependability
- Flexibility and adaptability

Mark your assessment of each individual, in each category, as strong, average, weak or unknown.

Sheet 2 (for existing teams only): Use the same rating system to assess the following team characteristics:

- Mission-driven
- Aligned on vision and goals
- Focused
- Engaged
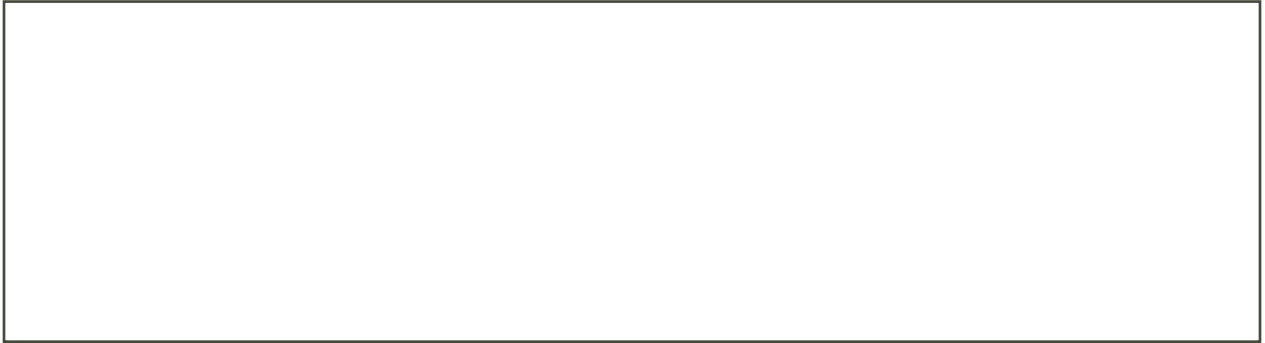- Disciplined
- Adaptable

- Open to new ideas from all team members

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Sheet 3 (for existing teams only): Use the same rating system to assess the team's operating culture:

- Participants are encouraged to play multiple roles
- Team welcomes constructive conflict, rather than avoiding it
- The team puts authority and responsibility in the hands of people doing the work
- Constant experimentation and iteration is built into team workflows
- Transparency – everyone understands the big picture
- Openness – everyone is encouraged to contribute and help shape the big picture
- Adaptable
- Open to new ideas from all team members

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Review the data you've compiled on these sheets. What have you learned?

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How can you apply these learnings going forward?