

Leading Teams Through Transition: Humanistic Tools for Success

Sarah Harendt, PhD; Lisa Uherick, MD; Jamie Hollimion; Rebecca Pauly, MD; Lee Learman, MD, PhD



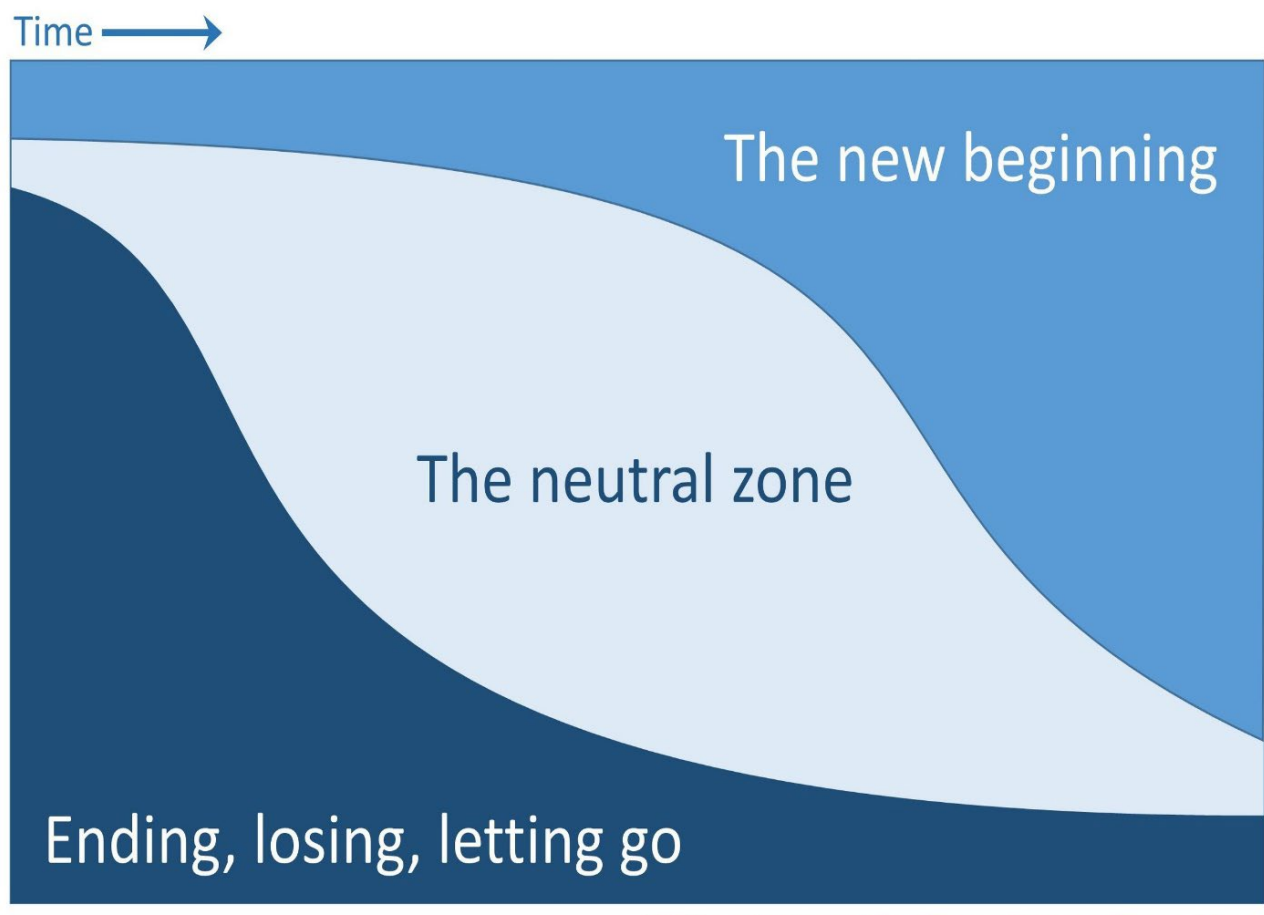
INTRODUCTION

Change in academic health centers is inevitable; thus, change management models have been utilized to guide organizations and their leaders through the process.¹⁻⁴ Model application can often be unclear.⁵ The Bridges Model defines “change” as external to the individual and “transitions” as the human response to change. According to this human-centered model, transitions can be better understood and managed when readiness for transition is evaluated, appropriate attention is given to how affected humans are experiencing transitions, and coordinated strategies that promote communication and build trust are implemented.

Changes and transitions at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCsOM) encompass curriculum innovation/redesign, accreditation renewal, strategic enrollment growth, and new building construction. We developed a Transition Monitoring Team (TMT) to understand, identify, and manage the nuanced transitions that comprise “change” and support team members’ well-being, engagement, trust, and retention.⁶

MATERIALS & METHODS

The purpose of the TMT is to oversee, monitor, and, at times, guide the individuals through the three phases of transition (Figure 1). It is important to note that senior leadership, not the TMT, was not responsible for creating solutions in response to feedback.



Members of the original TMT included 18 Faculty, Staff, and Student representatives from across VTCsOM who were known to be trustworthy, approachable, well-connected within the institution, and engaged.

TMT solicited feedback in four ways:

- Email to TMT@vt.edu
- QR code linked anonymous electronic form (Figure 2a and 2b)
- TMT box for paper submissions (Figure 3)
- Conversations and insights of the TMT members

TMT shared feedback with VTCsOM senior leadership, who then assigned the concern to a subgroup leader, based on the area of change. Within two weeks, the leadership team responded with action steps based on feedback.

MATERIALS & METHODS (cont.)



Figure 2a



Figure 3

Feedback Form Questions

1. What area does this question, concern, suggestion, or triumph affect?
 - Facilities, Accreditation, Curriculum, Enrollment Growth, or TMT
2. What is your question, concern, suggestion, or triumph you would like to submit to the TMT?
3. What is at least one solution you would like to see as a result of Question #2?
4. Is there anything about the Transition Monitoring Team or the TMT process you’d like to see improved (or something we are doing well)?
5. Can your contact information be shared with Full TMT members or kept private by the TMT co-chairs?
 - Yes, share with SMT & SLT: Name & Email
 - No, please restrict to co-chairs only: Name & Email
 - No, anonymous to all

Figure 2b

OUTCOMES

Most feedback was gathered through direct conversations with TMT members in private, one-on-one settings or small groups. Feedback was noticeably absent via other intended communication pathways (e-form, paper form, and email).

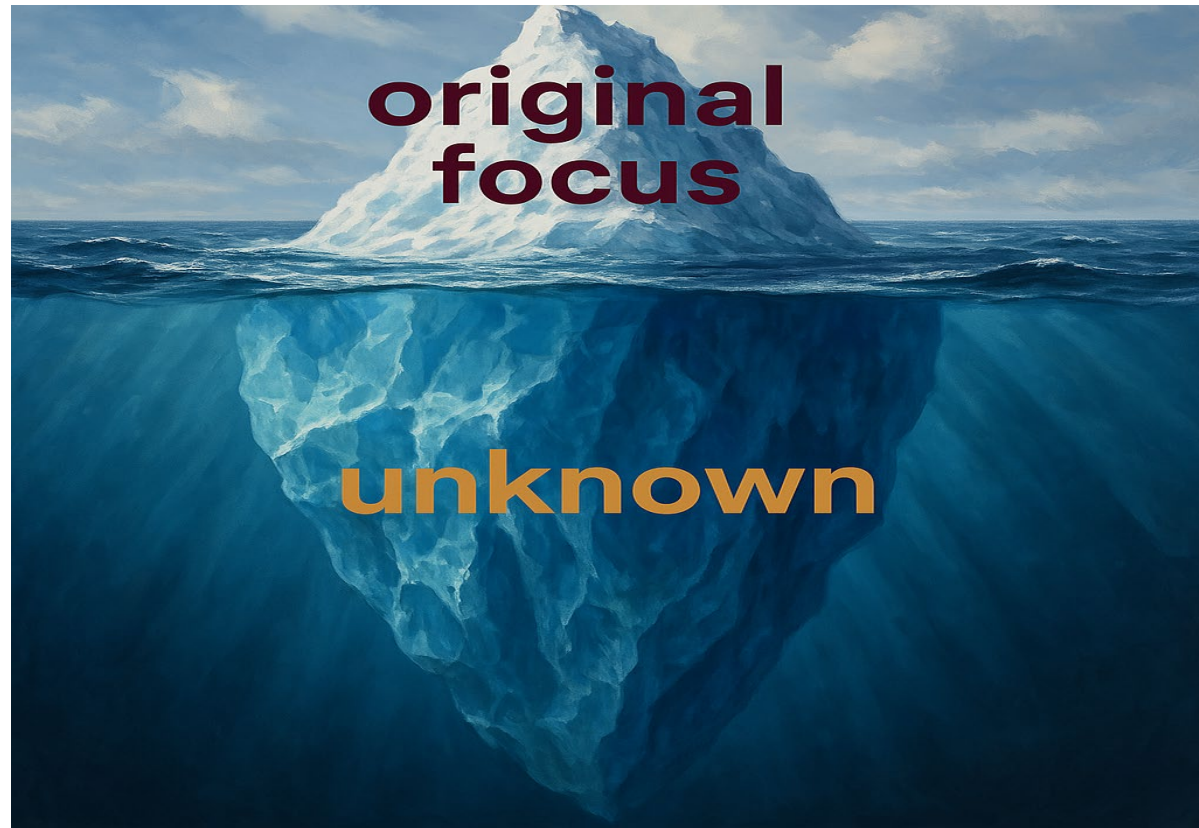


Figure 4

Feedback Themes:

- Communication – effects of lacking or incomplete communication and broken feedback loops will surface early in the process, and any existing communication gaps will be amplified.
- Power dynamics—real or perceived — play a role in sharing feedback and to whom it is shared. Power dynamics must be considered to get accurate feedback.
- Transparency – Transparency builds trust.

Unexpected Insights:

- Resurfaced dormant biases and conflicts regarding power dynamics.
- Feedback received may represent an individual’s bias and not the group’s true feelings.
- Themes discovered were signs of the organization’s overall well-being and not limited to the specific transition.

OUTCOMES (cont.)

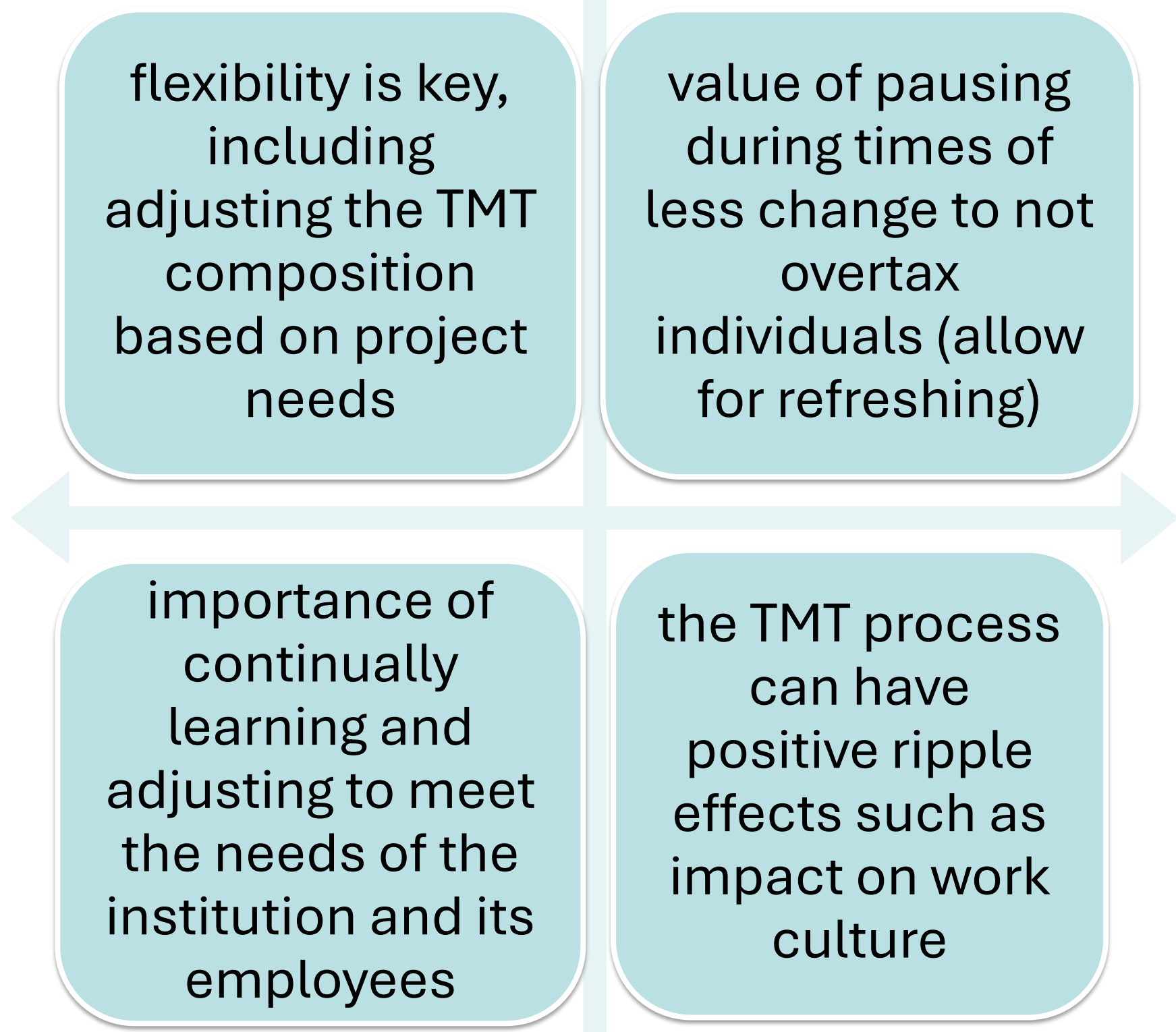
Action Items:

- Created transparent process timelines that delineated “we are here” and “this is where we are going”
- Built a “Feedback” team for information gathering and bilateral communication with stakeholders to address communication breakdowns related to the building timeline process
- Improved communication updates via multiple pathways (townhalls, email, meeting restructuring), eliminating barriers and increasing transparency

Conclusion/Next Steps

- The TMT is a useful structure to promote bidirectional communication and support team members through transitions.
- Direct conversations with TMT members were the most used way to gather feedback.
- The TMT process was effective in partnering with senior leadership to implement several timely interventions in response to feedback.

Lessons learned that direct next steps:



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