

EPISODE 29

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:05] ANNOUNCER: You're listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world with Rick Torseth and guests.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:20] RT: Hi, everybody. This is Rick Torseth. And this is 10,000 Swamp Leaders. A podcast where we have guests on who have made some decisions in their life and in their career to choose to lead in some pretty difficult and challenging environments. And today is no exception to that. It's my good fortune to have Julia Fabris McBride on. Julia is the Interim President and CEO of what I think is one of the more important enterprises and leadership in the world, the Kansas Leadership Center, of which we'll talk a little bit about here. But she's been with them a while. She's designed leadership program. She's done this really complex work of adaptive leadership and taught it to many people around the world. She's got some very good information for us. And for those of you who are looking how to lead in more complex situations, this is a woman we need to listen to. Julia, welcome to the swamp.

[00:01:12] JFM: Thank you very much, Rick. I think the swamp is where I'm most at home. I love this.

[00:01:19] RT: Perfect, perfect. I do want to say, before I give you a chance to tell people who you are, that there's a cool thing happening in January, that you have a new book coming out that you cowrote with Ed O'Malley. And so, we want to get into that a little bit because I know that that's something you're quite proud of. And the world needs to know a little bit about it before it actually hits the street in January. Let's begin with you just telling people what you think they need to know about you in order for us to get oriented here.

[00:01:44] JFM: Thank you. Yeah, I think people need to know that I live and breathe the KLC mission. And the KLC mission is to foster civic leadership for healthier, stronger, more prosperous communities in Kansas, and beyond.

And I live in Kansas. In fact, I live just outside of a town of 42 people, in the Kansas Flint Hills. There are 3.5 people per square mile in Chase County, Kansas. And I learned a lot about leadership from living on the outskirts of Matfield Green, Kansas.

My husband and I moved to Kansas 15 years ago from the city of Chicago. I went from 20 years right in this – two miles west of Wrigley Field where the Cubs play, to Matfield Green, Kansas. I work every day in Wichita. I have a 15-year-old. I'm 61 years old. I've been an actor in Chicago. I went to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in the same class as Ralph Fiennes, and Jane Horrocks, and Imogen Stubbs, and some others.

[00:02:56] RT: My goodness.

[00:02:59] JFM: And so, it's been an interesting ride. And I just feel so privileged to be able to work on the team at the Kansas Leadership Center, and yes, to interact with thousands of Kansans every year, as well as do leadership and leadership development as far afield as Melbourne, Australia. And I've been to Myanmar with the work for KLC. And also, over the last few years, we, our team, has grown and we've been able to touch people and make our ideas so much more accessible through our books. And now online.

[00:03:41] RT: I think it's important for listeners here to understand a little bit of the history of Kansas Leadership Center, because it's quite unique. And I'm guessing, it's the only one like this. Tell people a little bit about how you came to be, and why you came to be, and what's happened since that started?

[00:04:00] JFM: Yeah. And I'll tell you, we are unique. And some of our connections with people around the US and around the world are to nurture other places where people are doing leadership development at scale for the purpose of creating cultures where we can work across factions to make more progress on the things that matter most.

We were founded and initially funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. And the Kansas Health Foundation is our state's largest philanthropy. By the early 2000s, they had been at the business of giving away money to foster the health of Kansans and Kansas communities. They've been at

that for 25 years. And actually, they've been at it for 15 years at that point in the early 2000s. And they were realizing that their dollars went farthest in communities and with organizations where there was good leadership and where leadership was pervasive. Where leadership wasn't maybe just focused at the top of the community or the organization, but where many people felt empowered to lead.

The Kansas Health Foundation decided to make, you said the word unique, a once in a lifetime kind of risk, a bet, an investment. They invested initially \$30 million. Now it's getting close to \$60 million in launching and building the Kansas Leadership Center. And they hired Ed O'Malley. His birthday was January 2nd, 2007. He started by listening. And he started by listening to Kansans, to everyday Kansans, to a wide variety of Kansans, and a little bit to leadership experts around the world.

And he started, and his team started, with the question, "When you think about the future of Kansas?" And sometimes he'd adjust that to your community or to the nation. "But when you think about the future of your community, what concerns you the most?"

And people would talk about the things like immigration issues, and health, and water. Lack of water for agriculture is especially an issue in Kansas these days. They talk about those big issues. And then he'd ask, "What are your aspirations, again, for your community?" And people would talk about the kind of thriving community that they wanted, where there was plenty of water, where people could come in into the community and be welcomed. Where everyone had a job. Where everyone was healthy.

And then he – and then it became we would ask, "What makes leadership difficult in that gap between your concerns and your aspirations?" And these are questions that we still ask, because what people start to name there, they start – When you ask, "What makes leadership difficult? They start to name competing values, that there are as many interpretations of the problem as there are people with a view of the problem.

And so, they started. Actually, you'll know this, Rick. They started naming the characteristics of adaptive challenges. And that came a little bit later, naming it, the idea that this was adaptive work. So then there was a fourth question that we asked of Kansans and that we asked of

people who had been successful in bridging that gap and making progress on those tough challenges. What kind of leadership will it take to make progress on those challenges?

And out of that came some ideas of what the Kansas Leadership Center would teach. And around that time, we got connected to Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky. So, Ed went to a program at Harvard. And I remember Ed describing an aha moment where he thought, “These people are talking about what Kansans have been telling us.”

We started then – by the time I got connected with KLC, which was in March of 2008, Marty Linsky was in Kansas. Kristin von Donop and David Crislip were two other kind of important outside teachers. And we were all talking about leadership is an activity. It's mobilizing people to make progress on tough, daunting, what we now we're calling adaptive challenges. That's the birth.

And I remember talking to Ed in 2007, 2008, and this was right when my husband and I had moved to Kansas, and I just had a baby at 46-years-old. And Ed was talking about, “We're going to serve a thousand Kansans a year.” And I had been doing leadership development in Illinois and in St. Paul, Minnesota, and with some companies. I was coaching one on one. And I was just blown away by this number. I mean the leadership programs that I had worked with, if we were serving 60 people a year, we were feeling great about it. And a lot has happened then since Ed first told me in 2007, “We're going to serve a thousand people a year.” And now we're reaching through our leadership development programs and our civic engagement close to 7000 people a year.

[00:10:23] RT: A year. Let's make explicit a little bit this influence of Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, and many people who are part of that group there.

[00:10:31] JFM: Mm-hmm. But those two especially. Absolutely.

[00:10:34] RT: They are the headwaters.

[00:10:35] JFM: Yup.

[00:10:36] RT: And people who have listened to my podcast know that an apostle, or I don't know what you call it, of Ron and Marty's, not because of anything other than I think it's some of the most important leadership work to deal with the most complex issues in the world. And me, and you, and many other people have figured out some ways to help people build the capacity to do and face those challenges and make progress.

Talk for a little bit, if you would, about that moment. I mean, you talk about meeting these guys and going as if it was 56 steps. But it was really a big step in a moment. So, what happened?

[00:11:13] JFM: Yeah. Well, I'll talk about my own personal experience, because, yeah, it was March of 2008. And I was invited to KLC's first event. It was 150 people in a downtown Wichita hotel. And it was anybody that Ed and his – He had a couple more people on staff by then. But anybody they'd met who was in Kansas and was teaching, coaching, facilitating or consulting around leadership. And I was a leadership coach new to the state.

And it was my first time out in the world after having had a baby eight months before and living in this tiny little town, right? As 42 people. And I'm already just jazzed because I'm meeting people and I'm connecting with a lot of people who look different – Different ages, and genders, and races, and from all over Kansas who care about the kinds of things that I care about. And again, we have this big dream of a thousand people a year.

And Marty's up there facilitating. And there was an exchange between me and Marty, where I felt the heat, Rick. I felt the heat of what they talked about as the productive zone. And I was learning. And I was learning in a way that I had never learned in the classroom. I was having an aha moment about risk and experimentation, and what the activity of leadership looks like.

And, again, I was 46-years-old. And I had been teaching leadership in big companies. I taught at the University of Chicago's Graham School. And all of a sudden, he's saying leadership is an activity. And it's mobilizing people to make progress on tough, adaptive challenges. And it all clicks into place. Because I've been teaching people like maybe some useful things. But it was never something that people could really go out and do and apply.

Marty was talking about leadership as an activity. And he was engaging me in this conversation in front of a bunch of the 150 people that felt like we were all being lifted up. We were all being engaged in a mission to foster civic leadership for healthier, stronger, more prosperous communities around the world. And it was leadership. And it was progress in that moment. And I felt it. And I immediately started changing how I taught about leadership.

[00:14:00] RT: Yes, you did.

[00:14:01] JFM: Yeah.

[00:14:03] RT: I'm curious about that moment in that room with all those people and where you're talking about leading is an activity and a choice rather than a position. And I imagine mixed in there is some distinction around authority and a confusion that people make about those two roles. And so, when you say the room, or people in the room, or maybe not all of them, but people were having similar experiences and ahas to you. I mean, Marty is a great guy, and he's great in front of a room. But he's not that most charismatic guy in the world. What's going on in the room in the distinction that wakes people up that has them start to see a whole new way of thinking about this thing of leading?

[00:14:41] JFM: Rick, he was engaging in some case-in-point teaching. And I wish I could really replay it was the right word. But what he was doing, he was using something that was happening in the room. It was certainly an exchange that was happening among lots of people. He was highlighting a moment. And he was inviting me to intervene in the moment to pose a question to the group, maybe, or to date a more provocative interpretation in the moment.

And I felt myself do that and just somehow move the group forward, or at least move myself forward in a way that then energize me to actually go out and help people learn leadership in a completely different way. I'm really glad you're asking this, because I haven't dissected this moment with anyone, actually, in this way, probably ever. Because I think what happened there was – With adaptive work, right? It's not person-centric. It's challenge-centric. There's a challenge at the center. And our shared challenge was how do you energize – Our shared challenge was we've got to energize more people to intervene more effectively to raise the quality of discourse and the quality of life in this state. And we've got to do that starting right

now, in this moment. It was case-in-point. Like, the case is here. If we can't do it here, we're not going to be able to do it out there.

[00:16:29] RT: I think I know the answer your question here. This is maybe for the listeners more than for you and me. Is that part of what's going on there is the recognition or the explicit stating that we are part of the problem? And if we're not able to engage ourselves to address it, we have no hope externally to deal with it. Is that a fair way to think about it?

[00:16:51] JFM: Yeah, that's exactly right. I mean, partly, I was part of launching a new organization – Like, right in that moment, I was part of launching a new organization in Matfield Green. And I was recognizing in that moment, or maybe it came a little bit later, “Hey, we're not moving forward. And I'm part of the mess.” I haven't been willing, in that case, to state my fears of what we stand to lose if we actually move forward with this. Or if we don't. I haven't been willing to be vulnerable with this group. I'm new in town. I haven't been willing to be vulnerable. I have to be willing to be vulnerable. I have to be willing to be vulnerable if this organization and this mission in Matfield Green, which was around community building and bridging factions between ranchers, and environmentalists, artists, and locals. If we're going to be successful, I've got to start being vulnerable in a different way. So yeah, I'm part of the mess.

[00:17:55] RT: Yeah. And now, part of the solution.

[00:17:57] JFM: Yes. I also imagine, I'm trying to think, “Jeez! I'd like to spend a lot of time in a room in a hotel in Wichita right there.” But something happens with this convening that Ed produced with Mart Linsky there that altered, I'm guessing, or at least amplified the work of Kansas Leadership Center.

[00:18:11] JFM: Oh, yeah, I mean, the purpose of this meeting – and it was so cool that they had decided, Ed, with his colleagues at the Kansas Health Foundation, and there was a board being put together, a board of directors, who would guide this new organization. They had decided we are going to have Kansans at the front of the room by 2010.

Actually, the board just expanded the mission last Friday to actually state Kansas and beyond. In the beginning there, the mission was foster civic leadership for healthier Kansas

communities. And it's evolved since then. But Ed knew and the board knew that if we were going to be effective in that, we had to have Kansans at the front of the room.

Marty, and David, and Kristin were there to mentor and develop our skill from 2008 to 2010. They were going to have Kansans in front of the room by 2010. And so out of that, 150 were selected a group of 23 who then went through a year-long course with Marty, and David, and Kristin, and learn case-in-point, and learn these ideas and practice. And then, from there, were selected people who would teach and coach for this growing Kansas Leadership Center.

[00:19:44] RT: Alright. So, I'm going to make a plug here. You co-wrote with Chris Green a book called *Teaching Leadership*, which is perhaps the most understated title for a book that's got so much important stuff in it. And people can't see this. But this book sits on my desk. It has for years. And I've relied on this probably like an addict relies on their next fix sometimes. But you do a remarkably great job of helping people start to understand a different way to get at teaching and developing leaders than what they're used to.

Say a little bit about. And then I would like for you to advance Kansas Leadership Center's impact story a little bit more into where we are today, because it's important for people to know. This case-in-point teaching methodology is not like anything else, in my experience, around how you learn. Can you help people who don't even know what case-in-point means? Give them just a bit of a flavor for what's going on with the group of people in a room when this work is getting done.

[00:20:45] JFM: Yes. Case-in-point is, again, a teaching method that assumes that all of the things that get in the way, of the barriers to leadership that are out there in the world, when you go back to your company, or when you go back to your community, all those barriers exist in the room. All the personalities or insecurities that you'll face when you go out there to try to make progress on something are in the room. And including your own vulnerabilities, and triggers, and abilities to intervene differently to make progress.

Case-in-point, the role of the teacher or facilitator, and usually we do this work in pairs, is to create a container where the group can actually do adaptive work. Say, where the group can attempt to make some progress. And often, we're trying to make progress on practicing

leadership skills. Or we're trying to make progress, say, perhaps bridging factions in the room. We don't talk about what it's like to bridge, say, liberals and conservatives. We actually bring it in the room.

Or more likely, it's – Well, it's bridging people who think about leadership as an activity and people who think about leadership more as a position. How might we actually make progress not in changing anybody's mind right away, but in understanding where somebody's coming from? It's the role of the facilitator to ask questions and perhaps make provocative interpretations that cause people to intervene differently.

I mean, it's what Marty was doing in that room. He was asking questions. And actually, using a lot of silence where I felt compelled to ask a different kind of question myself. And when it comes down to it, so much of the exercise of leadership is asking a different kind of question, making more and tougher interpretations, and trying little things, small experiments. In the classroom, if I'm a student or a participant, what's going to happen if I actually go over and sit next to somebody who thinks differently than I do about the activity of leadership? Or about – we might be working on how do you bridge between the younger generation and the people who are veterans or elders in their careers? How do you bridge that? You don't talk about it. You try to do it in the classroom.

[00:24:11] RT: Yup. Let's add a different angle to this work. And that is the nature of the problem. I mean, you hear people talk about adaptive challenges or technical problems. And they probably even can begin to figure out a little bit about what those are. But I'm interested in your thoughts about what it takes for those of us who are trained, wired to get the right answers and rewarded and recognized for knowing answers to problems? What does it take to build this capacity to do this thing called diagnosing? Because we're pulled to go fast. We're pulled to get answers. And these challenges have an amazing capacity to reject those quick fix solutions. What did you learn for yourself? And what did you learn as a teacher of this work to help people build this diagnostic capacity?

[00:24:56] JFM: Maybe I'll start with a failure story that's actually in our new book *When Everyone Leads*. I was on the school board in our small rural community here in Kansas. And I

was elected, what felt like a mandate, to get a new consolidated school built. To replace two old schools. And I joined the board that also felt like it had a mandate to get some new schools built.

We push that through. Had a bunch of community meetings, but they were really information sessions. And Rick, this is all the while I'm working at Kansas Leadership Center. But the pressure, and the mandate, and the feeling that I had that I knew what was right went overrode everything I know about diagnosing a situation. And maybe also my sense that, "I'm new here. I need to just go with the flow." overrode what I know about anyone can lead anytime, anywhere.

And we push that thing through, and we lost something like 784 to 326. I mean, it was tragic. And then after that, I stepped back, we stepped back, and I started going around and like asking people who would give me a straight answer, "What's the story people are telling about me in this community?" And I heard, "Well, I mean, they think you mean well, but you don't really have a clue."

And I started talking to people who thought differently than I did. And I heard about them about where we actually did share common ground about what we wanted for the kids of the county. And then I started talking to board members about what would you be willing to give up or to do differently in order – to make sure we win this next time?

And we engaged. Then we engaged the task force that represented all the factions. All the relevant factions. And that was able. We gave them time. We gave them a container to do tough work. And came out the other end with a plan. And it ended up being a plan for renovation of the two buildings. And along the way, I learned that the values I brought from the big city were very different. Not better. But very different than the values around historical preservation and frugality that exist in the place where I live.

And so, that's what I just told you about the way we did it the second time. And the bond past that time. We got the tax money to do a smaller project that honored that sense of we don't build new. We upgrade, and we all care about our kids.

The second part of that story is what diagnosis looks like. And the first part of that story is about the traps that even well-meaning and people who should know better the kind of traps we fall

into. Because we think we know it all. We think we're put in a position of authority to do something and do it now.

[00:28:30] RT: Yup. I appreciate you. That's such a clear example of rushing. And then, that's great. But to have the wherewithal to then take yourself back out to the people and ask the questions you're asking about how you're doing the job and then be able to hold it and listen and take that in and then use that. To me that's what choosing to lead really looks like. It's one thing to lead and nail it and be successful and everybody's in a claim. But it's another thing to have to retrace the road you traveled to learn from it so you can get another shot to do the right thing for the right reasons.

[00:29:04] JFM: Yeah. And then there's a piece in the KLC framework and in what Heifetz and Linsky teaches. It's about holding to purpose. That what I remember hearing from Marty way back when, like, "One and done doesn't do it." One and done is not leadership. It's like try my best and go home. That's not leadership. It's have a purpose. Allow that purpose. Hold the purpose while being open enough to listen for and inspire collective purpose and keep going.

[00:29:38] RT: So, staying in the Marty Linsky camp here, I just loved his definition about leading is disappointing. Sometimes leading is disappointing people in doses they can absorb.

[00:29:46] JFM: Isn't that great? Yeah.

[00:29:48] RT: It's just so spot on. Talk a little bit about – I mean, you're working with people all around the world now with KLC. And you must be seeing people who have decided to travel this road. They're doing all that they can. And they're coming up against these kinds of moments. What have you learned in yourself and in teaching and supporting others about loss, resiliency, not being one and done, getting back in the game? What does it take to recover from loss so that you can stay in the game and stick to purpose?

[00:30:20] JFM: Hmm, what's coming up for me is that to stay in the game and stay connected to purpose, we need two things. One is to really take the time to see our opponents or people who think differently than us as humans. One of the things I think Kansas Leadership Center is really good at is creating containers. And this is mostly in our civic engagement work now,

where people who think differently about an issue can come together and listen to one another and hear the humanity behind the issue.

I think I can stay in the game longer if I take the time early and often to understand a little bit more about who my opponents are. And then on the flip side, I also need to have coaches and confidants. I need people – My personal thought is if we're creating cultures where everyone leads, we also need to equip people with skills so that everyone coaches. So that all – And that is one of the beauties of KLC. That all around me here, and part of the adaptive leadership network, as well. And that's a global network of people.

I had a conversation a week and a half ago with somebody, with Laura Berlind, from the Adaptive Leadership Network, where I just said, “Laura, I need somebody far outside my system to give me a little coaching for a meeting I'm having an hour.”

It's just so fabulous when you can have somebody ask you a couple of questions that get at maybe what's technical and what's adaptive about this challenge. And also, just what are the values are at play? My own and maybe the person I'm about to go talk to? And what's triggering me right now? Well, it's going to make it hard to manage myself during the conversation. And it's just so fabulous to have people who can do that for you.

[00:32:41] RT: Be really explicit. I think part of what I hear you say is, if you're making the choice to lead, or even if you're using your authority, having allies, and colleagues, and peers, rather than going it alone. It's very unsurprising to see people in those positions going it alone. And it's hard work as it is. It's just double down on the difficulties if you're going to go alone.

[00:33:01] JFM: Yeah. And I think part of KLCs most important contribution to the field of leadership is the idea of scale and the idea of when we do programs online and in person for 180 people at a time. And we're not trying – There's not much case-in-point that happens in those situations. We have some smaller, more targeted programs that go deeper. But we know that we need some people who are deeply, deeply immersed in the KLC ideas and this definition of leadership as an activity to make progress on tough adaptive challenges.

But we also need miles and miles wide of people who know just enough to be able to ask the questions, think experimentally, tolerate some tough interpretations. And we're seeing them here in Kansas, when you get companies and organizations that have that, you get a different kind of progress. And we're also seeing it with some global companies, a tech company in particular, that we've worked with and researched, where if a critical number of people know this language of leadership and have a certain amount of comfort with deploying it, then they start to make more progress on the things that really matter.

[00:34:29] RT: Right. Okay. All right. You have a book coming out.

[00:34:32] JFM: We do.

[00:34:33] RT: And so, let's talk about the book. Because you sent me an eversion, or at least a portion of the book, which I've read twice.

[00:34:41] JFM: Oh, thank you.

[00:34:41] RT: So, well done on the book. Independent of content, having written a book, I just think writing a book is its own process. And congratulations on getting it done, you and Ed. Why do we need this book? What caused you and Ed to say, "The world needs this to hear from us on this?" Why?

[00:35:01] JFM: Yeah. We have a book by Ed O'Malley and Amanda Cebula called *Your Leadership Edge*. And that book lays out the KLC framework; the definition of leadership, five principles, four competencies and 24 behaviors that are basically ways of experimenting to make progress on adaptive challenges. That's a little bit of an insider book, we're finding, that like you have to have some introduction to be able to really make use of that book.

And so, this book is the prequel. Its' the book that goes into – I talked to at the beginning of our conversation here about the gap between concerns and aspirations and what makes leadership hard. This book lays out that gap and gets people thinking about their own gap. It lays out the definition of adaptive and technical very clearly and accessibly with cartoons. And it talks about

the barriers of leadership, internal and external. What it looks like to start where you have influence? And four things you can do right away.

It's really a way of lowering the heat in some of our own programs and for people who may have picked up your leadership edge and felt, like, "I don't know where to start." This book – And I think it'll be accessible to anybody, whether you come to KLC, or, certainly, whether you've been to Harvard. You don't need to come to a program, or have talked to a KLC person, or to Marty and Ron, to get something out of this book and start doing something right away.

[00:36:51] RT: It's also a book that, in some ways, is in support of the greater mission of scale of KLC. Because people could pick this book up somewhere way off and get, A, an understanding. Because I think both of you do a wonderful job of making these concepts accessible, understandable, and therefore more usable, just because I can get better grip on them in terms of my understanding. I was tempted to send your e-verse until this trust over here. I don't know if you've noticed, there's been – It's only a leadership issue. There's a lot of authority problems. If they not use their own authority very well in this process in addition to. But we digress at the risk of me getting kicked out.

[00:37:28] JFM: Yeah. And I think one of the other things that this book does, which we haven't done in writing before, certainly, is it talks more about what is the role of authority in adaptive work? And to a large extent, its naming the adaptive challenge and making leadership less risky for others.

[00:37:47] RT: Yeah. And I think, when I read it, I was appreciative of that, because I don't think there's Ron and Marty's intention in any of their writing at all to have authority come off as a pejorative. But it's easy to conclude that in some ways, because there's so much amplification of what it takes to lead and the techniques and skills of that. So, it can look like that's the senior talent. But clearly, people who have those levels of position have certain useful things they can do with their authority and need to do them well. And you can find that dance between somebody with that skill and the recognition skill or when to lead, you've got something going on, if there's good stuff happening. Alright. Tell people when the books coming out. Let's do that first, because that's important.

[00:38:28] JFM: It's coming out January 31st of 2023. And it's available to order now on Amazon and on our own website. Go right there. If anybody wants to do bulk orders, Ed and I are available for speaking engagements.

[00:38:46] RT: Okay. I will put those links to the Amazon sites in the show notes of the episode here. So, anybody listening, I've read it. I'm going to admit, I've read almost all the books that KLC has put together. This is going to be a great companion to a really useful library. I'm sitting here thinking, "What have I not asked you that I should be asking you?"

[00:39:09] JFM: Well, I think I want to just tell people that because of the way we had to pivot during the pandemic, KLC is more accessible than ever to people who might want to join – Who might read the book and then say, "I want to go to that one day when everyone leads program. Or I want to follow up by coming to our two-day Your Leadership Edge Program." Those are now available online.

And we also – They're online as open enrollment. You can just go and sign up. And they're available worldwide for KLC people to zoom in and do programs for your organization or your company. And we love that work beyond Kansas. Because often, we're contributing to a mission to build a civic culture somewhere else. And we always learn something. We are stretched by our engagement with people beyond the state of Kansas. We learn and we grow. And I think the only other thing I would say is – Well, actually, I've said enough. So, I'll let you have a word.

[00:40:25] RT: Okay. I actually have two more questions for you. So, you got to keep talking here. You are the interim CEO of this organization now, which is in and of itself a different level of authority, and probably put some interesting dynamics on your opportunities to lead. So, what have you learned about yourself in this role that is new for you?

[00:40:46] JFM: I am having to make quicker choices about how I use my time. I am enjoying the convening power and what that means about my ability to engage people in the conversations that need to be had when they need to be had. So, we're navigating, yeah, a transition that will probably last about six months. By the time this podcast airs, we may have our next CEO, either named or very close to being named. We're in a transition.

And I am using a lot of my energy and authority to help people acknowledge that navigating that transition isn't easy. And they shouldn't try to pretend to themselves that it's easy. That we're naming loss where even as we're describing for the search firm what we want to see in the next CEO. We're taking that time. And so, I appreciate the opportunity to have the level of authority that allows me to hit pause, frankly, as often as I think it's necessary to have people have the conversations that need to be had about the transition.

[00:42:16] RT: When I hear you describe it in those ways, I think this is a healthy demonstration of authority of the position. To convene the space. To hit the pause button. To provide time and space for people. Again, to amplify a little bit, really, importance of wise authority in a system, and in a role, in a position. I will say, I'm smiling when you talk about transition. I know you know William Bridges' work. I thought I knew William Bridges' work until I actually moved to the UK and found out I knew about transitions. I didn't really ever put myself in one. And lived with Bill Bridges' book for about 30 days in the process here. And I just appreciate the challenge and that they had somebody in this organization that they trusted enough to be able to shepherd this group through this process to the next CEO. So, congratulations on that.

[00:43:06] JFM: Thank you. And I'll just say, if Ed walked out of an old staff meeting, and I introduced William Bridges, transition model. And we talked about it and addressed with the whole staff. And I think an authority can bring in some expertise. A lot of people in that room had not heard of William Bridges and the muddy middle that is so difficult. And so, that's like that's something authority can do, is bring in some expertise and then provide space for people to digest it and make it their own.

[00:43:41] RT: Okay, last question for you. Since you are the interim, which means temporary in some way. Something to head. When you look ahead, what's in your future, you think? Once this passes, what in your future?

[00:43:54] JFM: Yeah. Well, I'm hoping this book is wildly successful and it creates opportunities for me to connect and have conversations like this, and to reach new audiences, young audiences in Kansas, and elsewhere. That's one thing. I intend to go back to the position as Chief Leadership Development Officer. And I am already planning the next iteration of our capstone program, which is Lead for Change. And how to make that three-day program not a

leadership training program at all, but three days where people come and they make significant progress on their most important challenge. That we're really crafting it to encourage people to come with people from different factions who share the same challenge at the center. I'm very excited about that and I'm working with Tim Steffensmeier, who's our Director of Research, along with Dioane Gates and Donna Wright on that team. And I'm hoping that a book comes out of it that includes research and stories from real adaptive challenges.

[00:45:16] RT: Oh, fantastic. All right. Julia Fabris McBride, thank you for – I hope you didn't get too muddy in our swamp here. Thank you very much for being here.

[00:45:24] JFM: I love the muddy swamps. It's great. Thank you.

[00:45:27] RT: All right. Thanks very much.

[OUTRO]

[00:45:32] ANNOUNCER: Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe to follow more leadership swamp conversations.

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