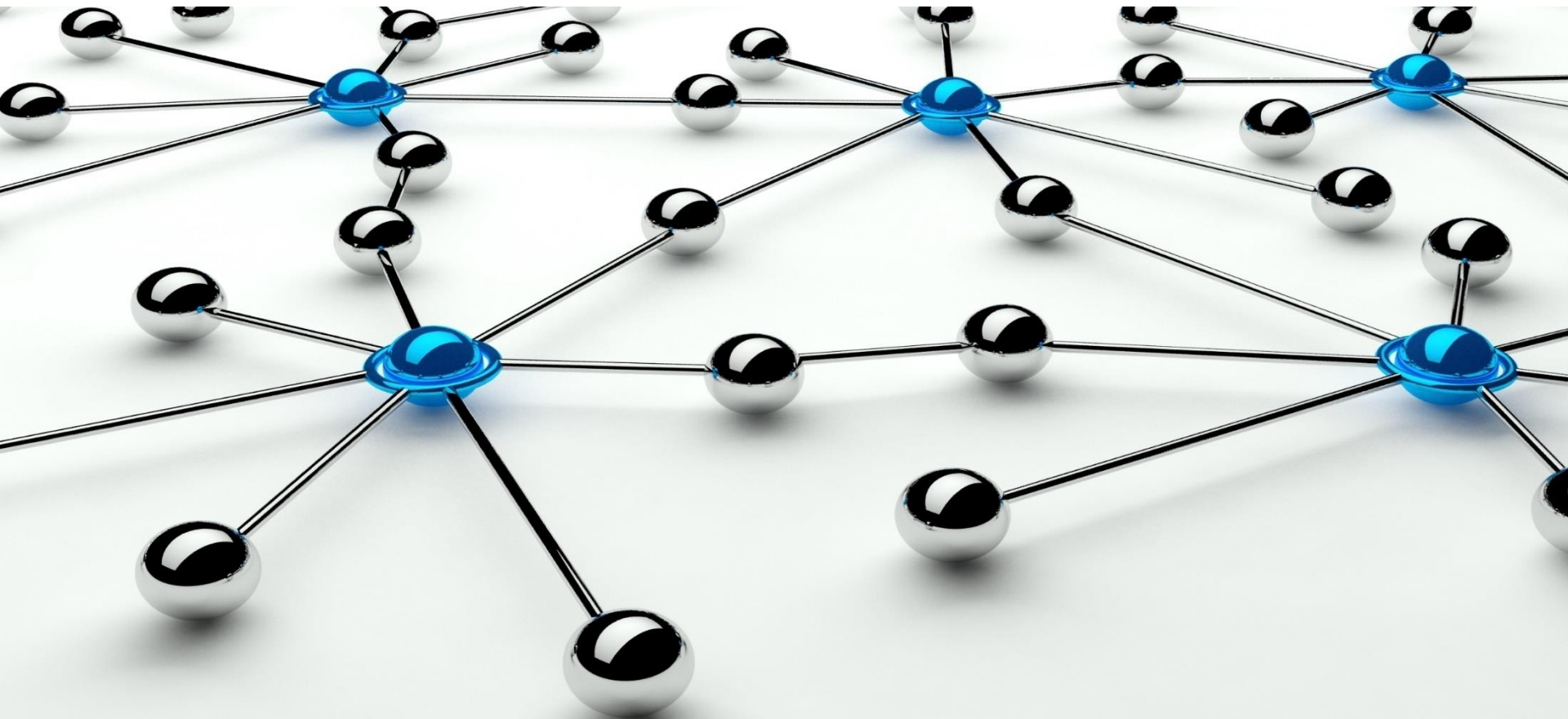# Achieving Impact With Networks

Presented by Marty Kooistra
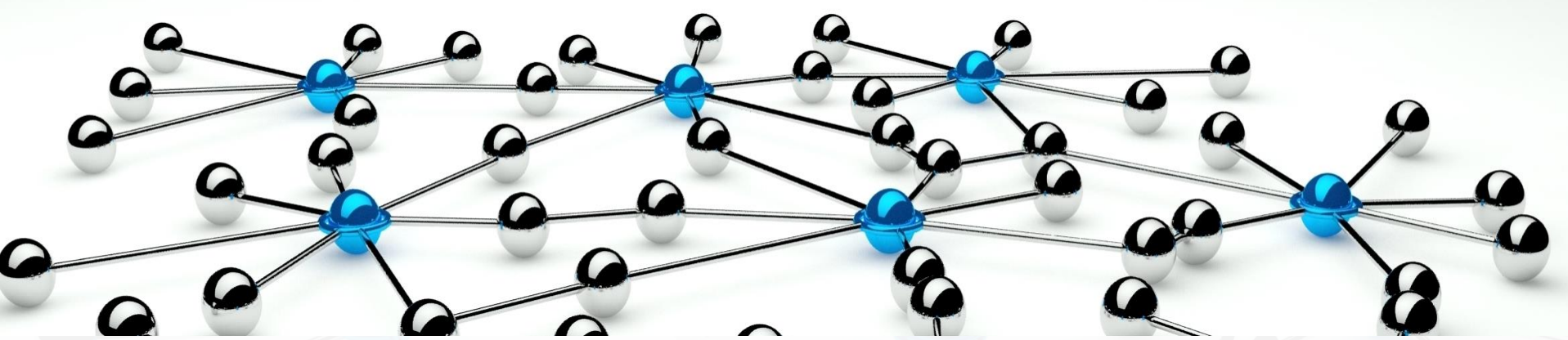
Executive Director

Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County

9th Annual NACEDA Summit

30 August 2016

HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT
consortium

My Backstory:

How did I get so deeply engaged in this work,

and

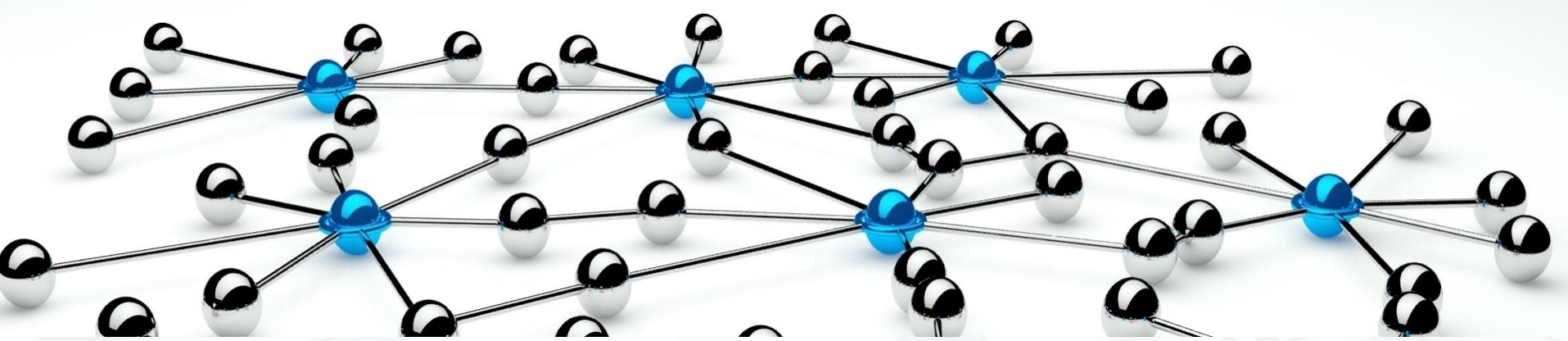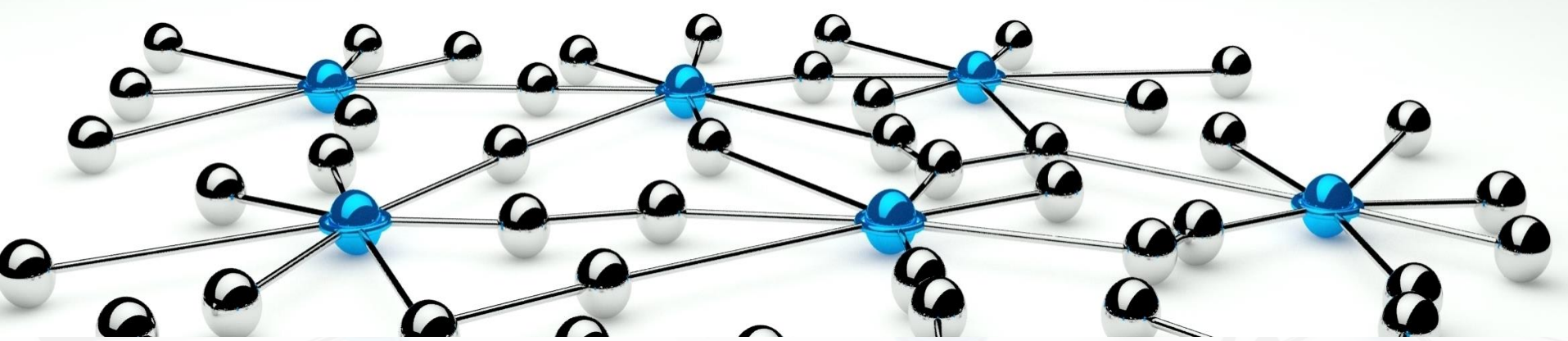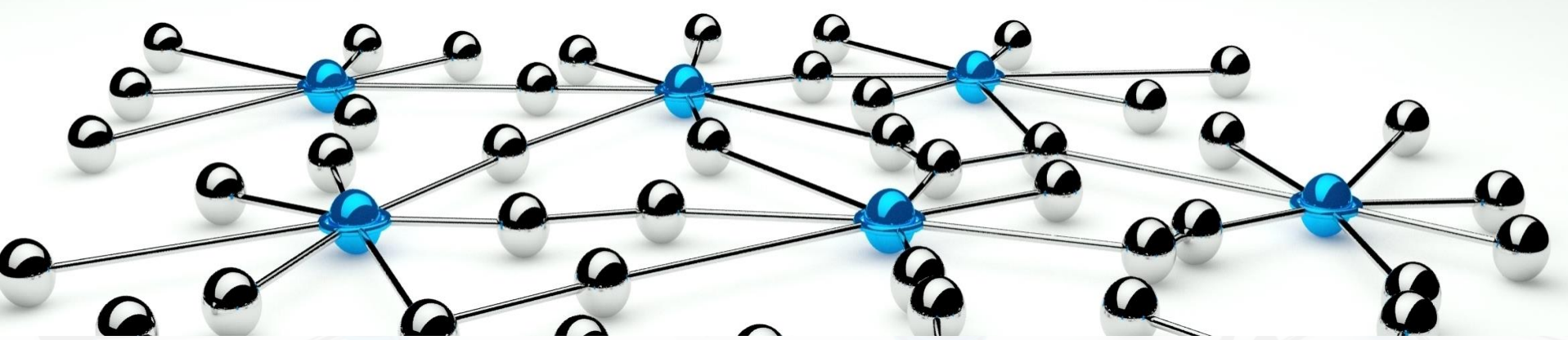How has Professor Jane Wei-Skillern's research

impacted me?

Table Discussion:

Share **3 of the most difficult challenges** you've faced in developing and maintaining collaborations or networks.

Is Today About Networking?

Yes; the kind that's done **in pursuit of mission impact** through **engaging, mobilizing, and supporting** trusted, values-aligned **peers**.
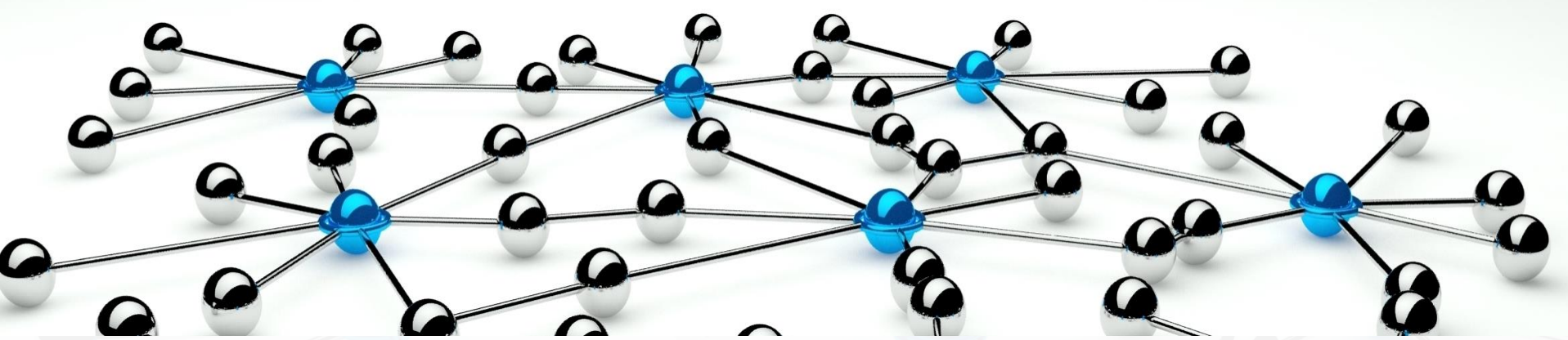
Is This the Same as Collective Impact?

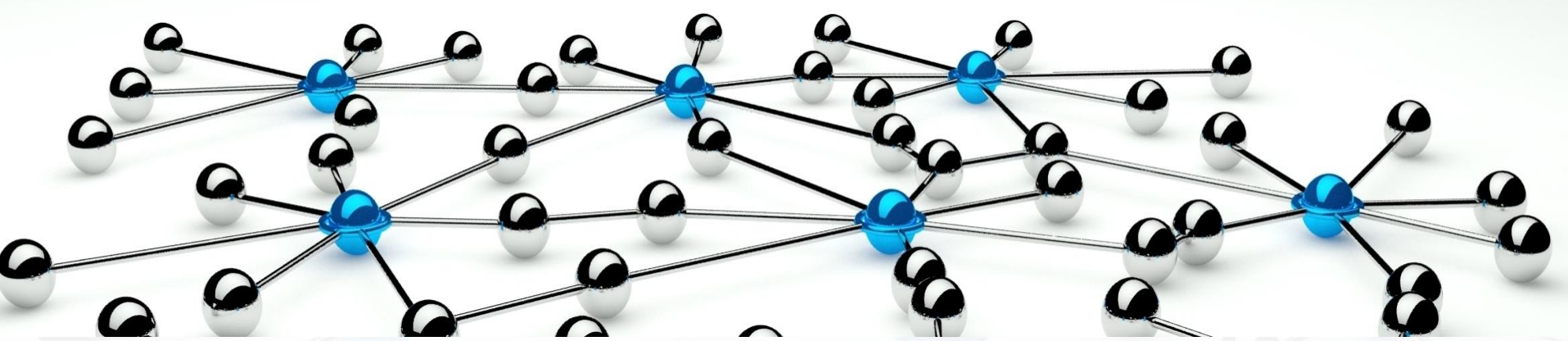No. Complementary principles, **key differences in focus**.

CI: structures and systems. **Networks:** values and culture.

CI: funder-driven impacts. **Networks:** organic, bottom-up approaches and mutually beneficial solutions.
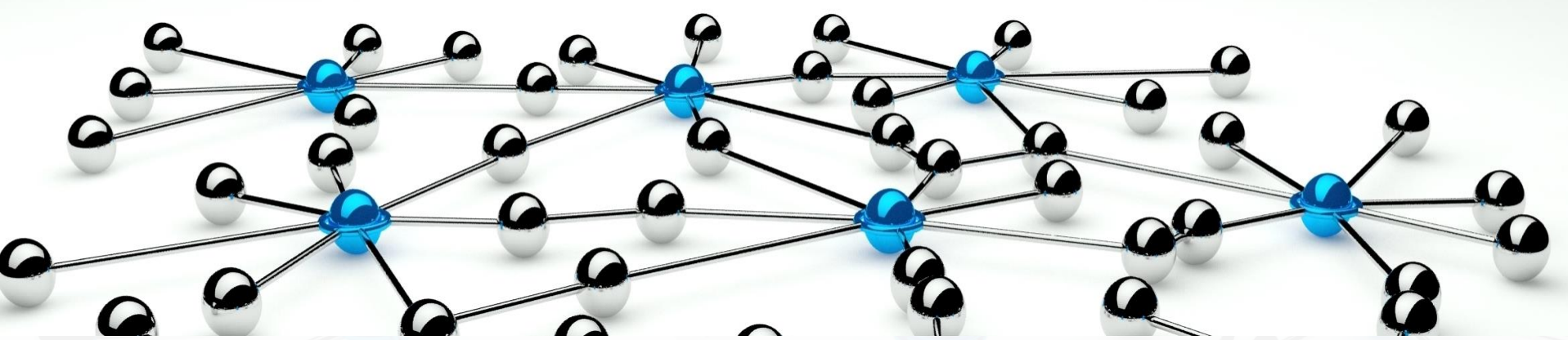
Why Networks?

Because three observations **from the field**
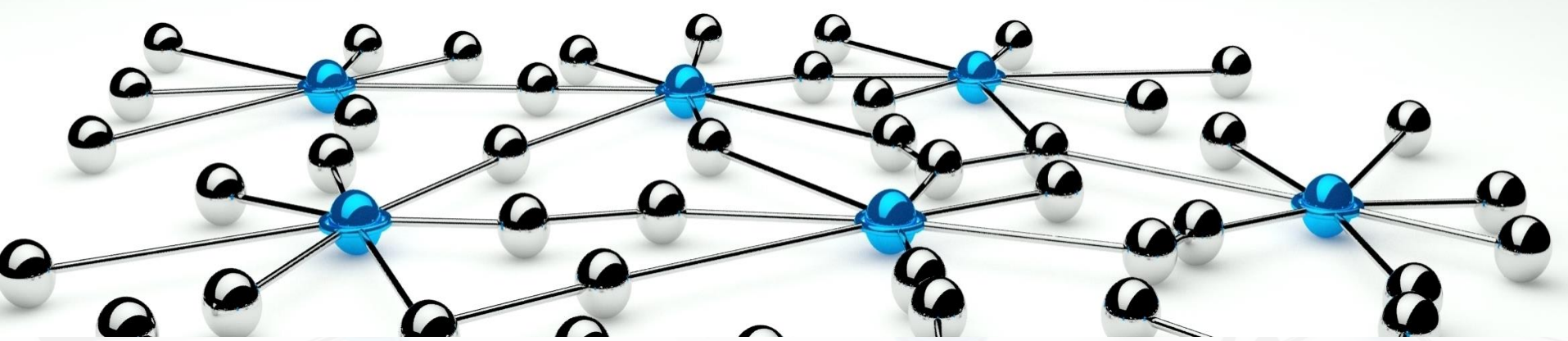
point directly to their unique effectiveness.

Field Observation #1: Growth is Hard.

For nonprofits and NGOs, **achieving the scale and sustainability** needed to meet their mission is extraordinarily challenging.
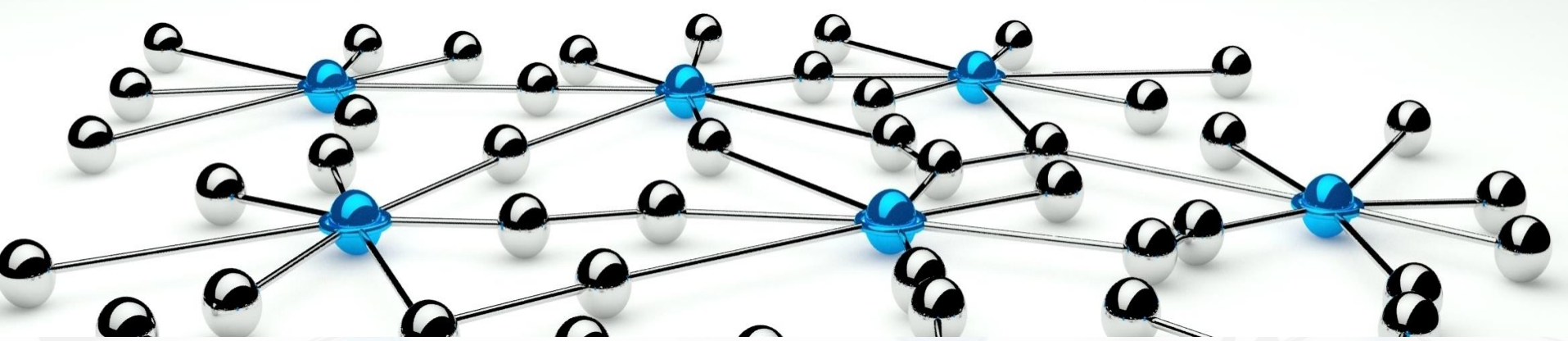
Field Observation #2:
Size Doesn't Guarantee Impact.

Even large global NGOs are **dwarfed by the scale of the problems they seek to address** and struggle to ensure their impact is greater than the sum of their individual parts.

Field Observation #3:
How We Define Success Matters.

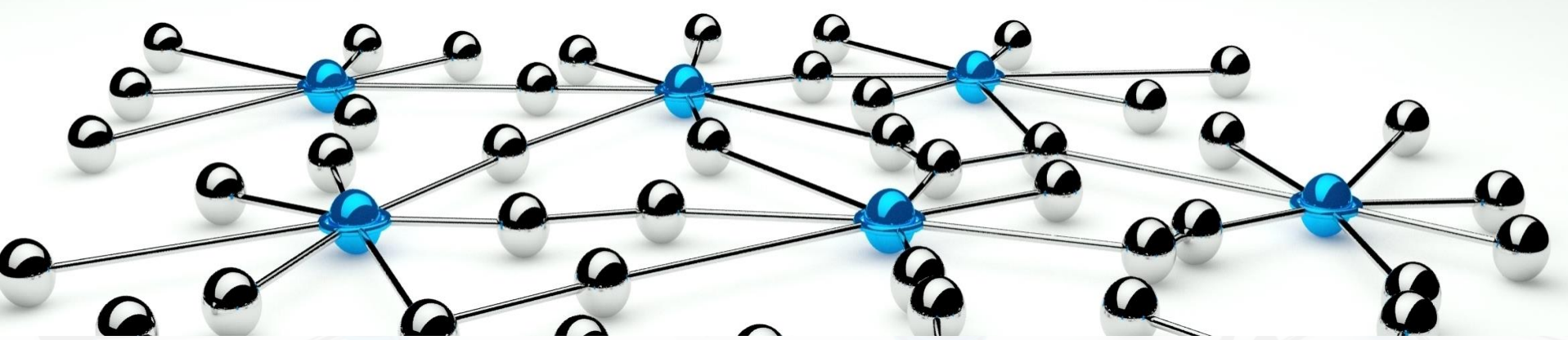Our tendency to assess **organizational performance** denies the more important assessment of **mission impact**.

Networks Work When…

the goal is to **mobilize** various organizations and

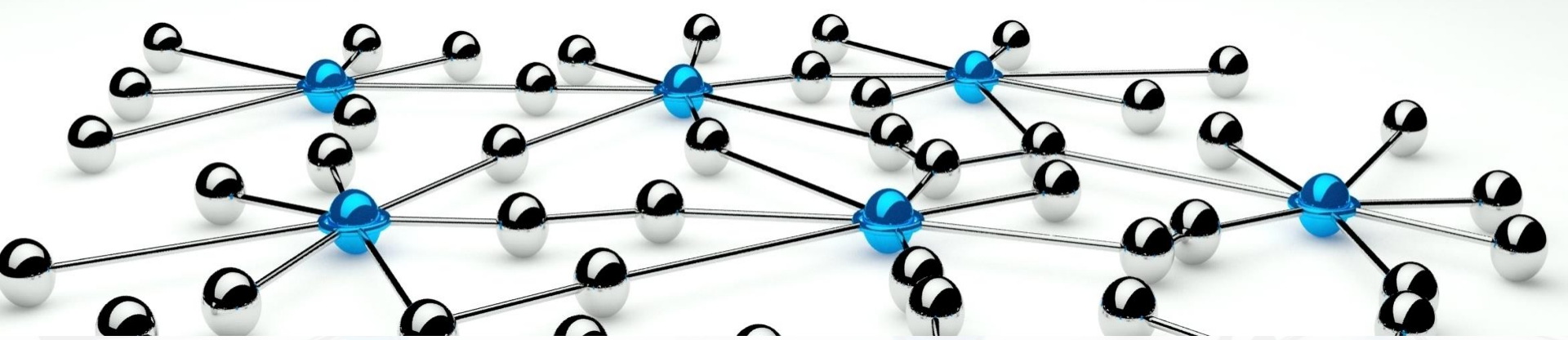resources that **together** can deliver more impact

not when

the goal is to become **a leading organization first**,

engaging in **collaboration at the margins**.

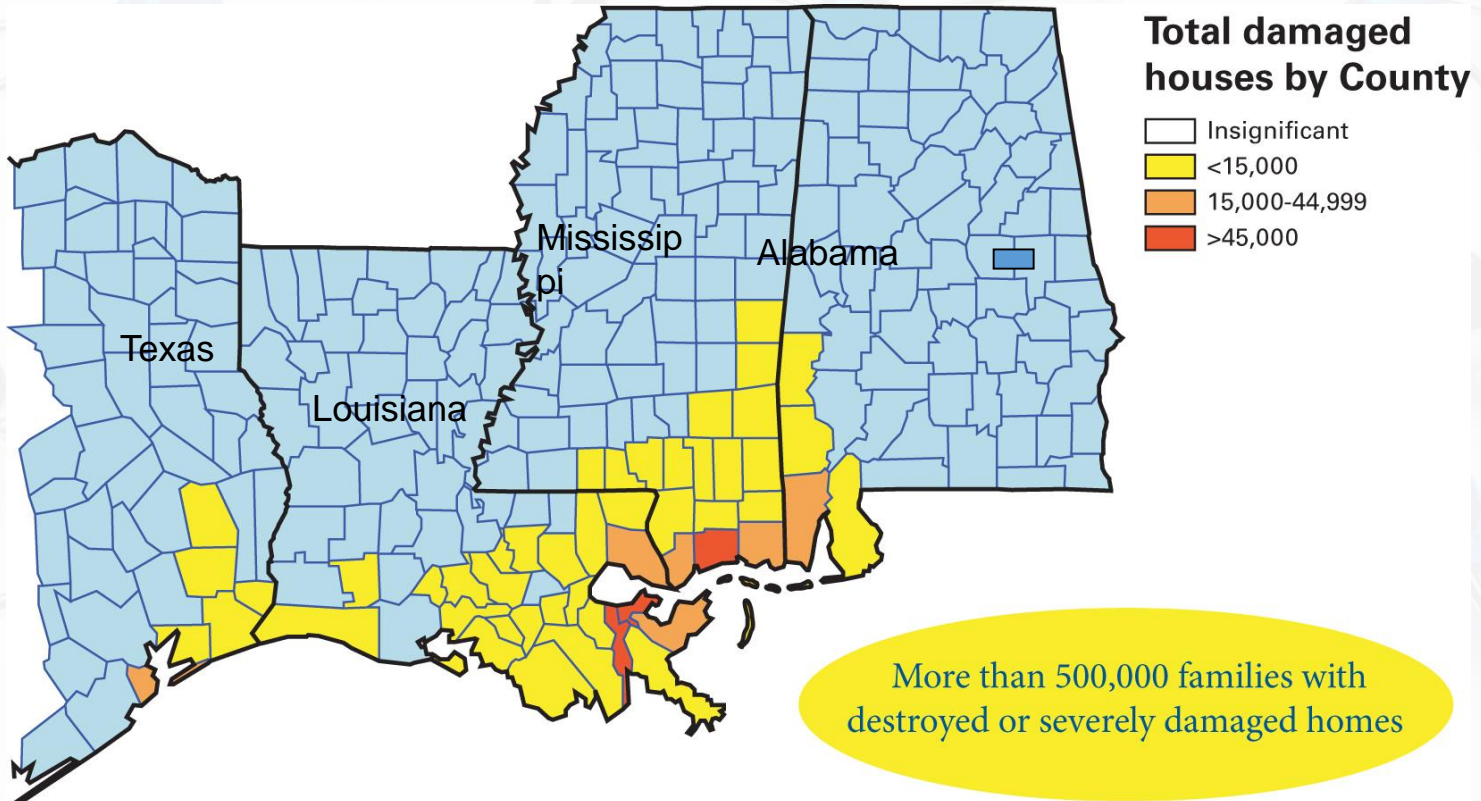# What Can Any Collaboration Learn from High-Impact Networks?

A different leadership **mindset** and different **metrics**.

The **network** is seen as the primary vehicle for change, not the **organization**.

What I Learned About Networks from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Unprecedented Damage

Total damaged houses by County
- Insignificant
- <15,000
- 15,000–44,999
- >45,000

Texas
Louisiana
Mississippi
Alabama

More than 500,000 families with destroyed or severely damaged homes

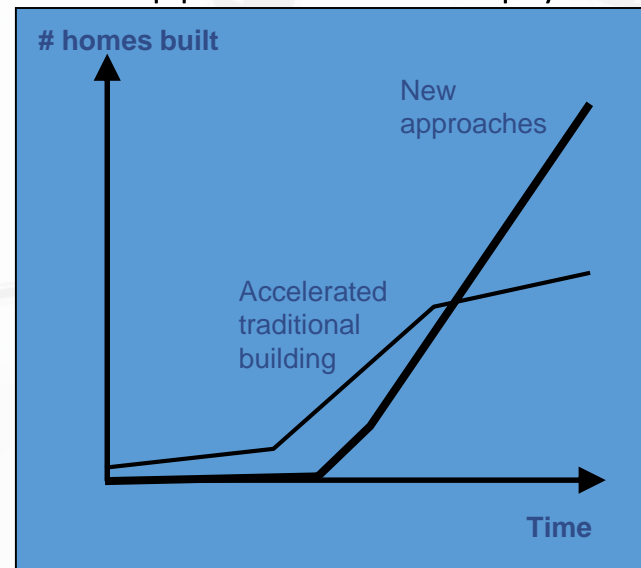# Extremely Concentrated Habitat for Humanity Building Effort

- Great urgency
- Specific geographic region
- Limited existing infrastructure
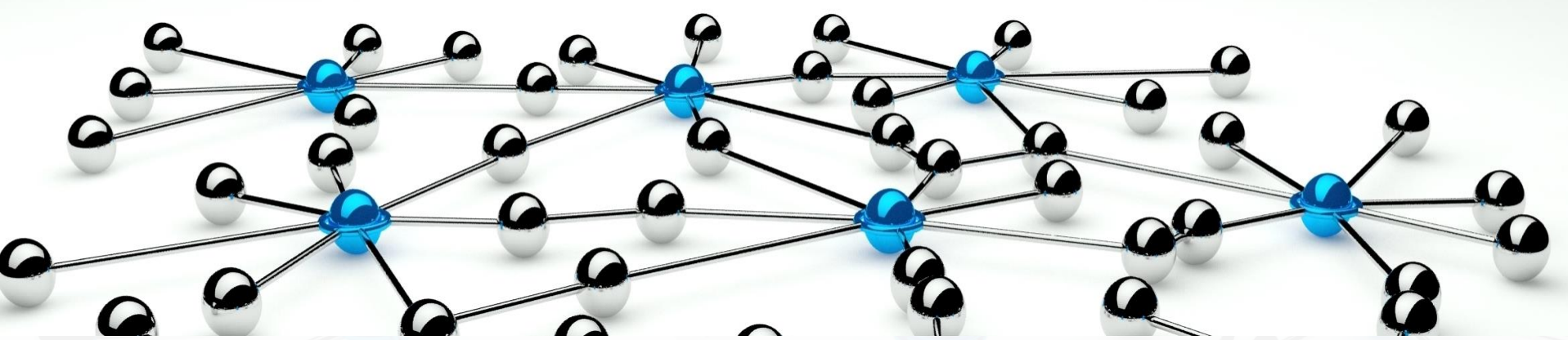- Non-scalable traditional service delivery model

The Need for Rapid & Sustainable Scalability Demanded a New Approach

Constraints on Sustained Scale

homes built

Exhaustion in our existing organization

Heroic relief effort

Pre-disaster

Hurricanes

Time
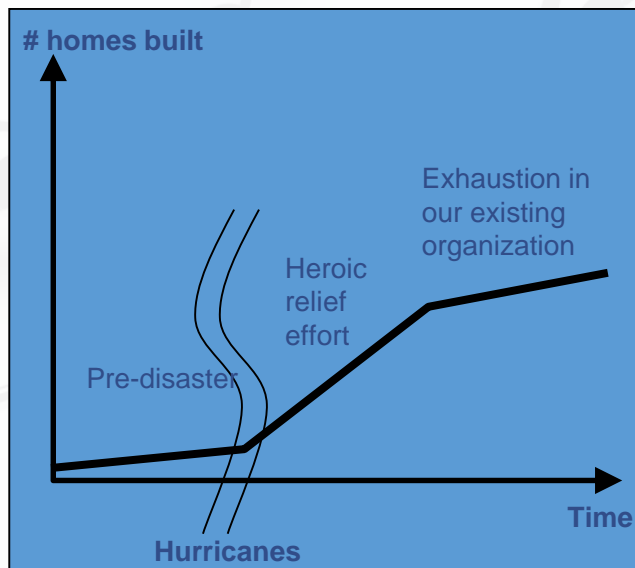
New Approaches Multiply Scale

homes built

New approaches

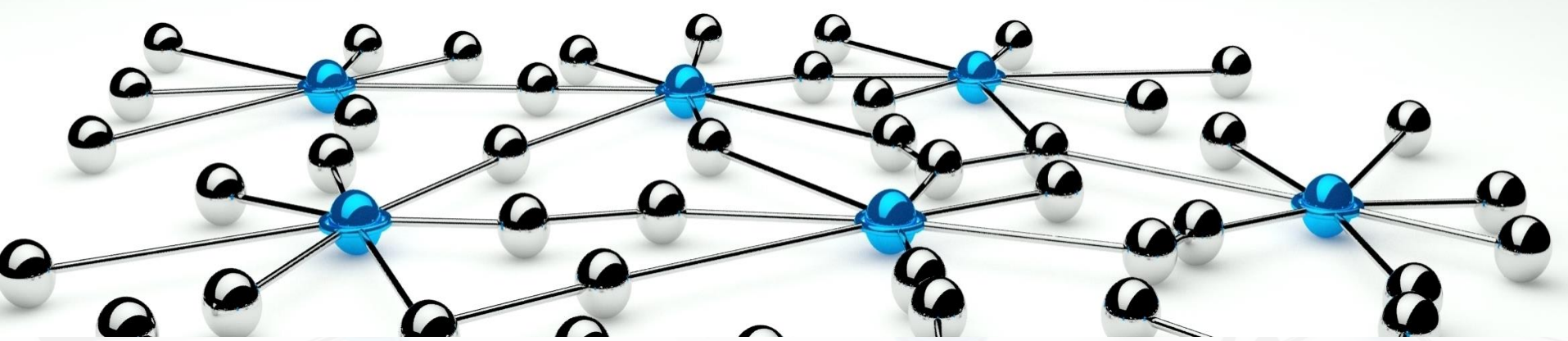Accelerated traditional building

Time

Large Group Discussion:

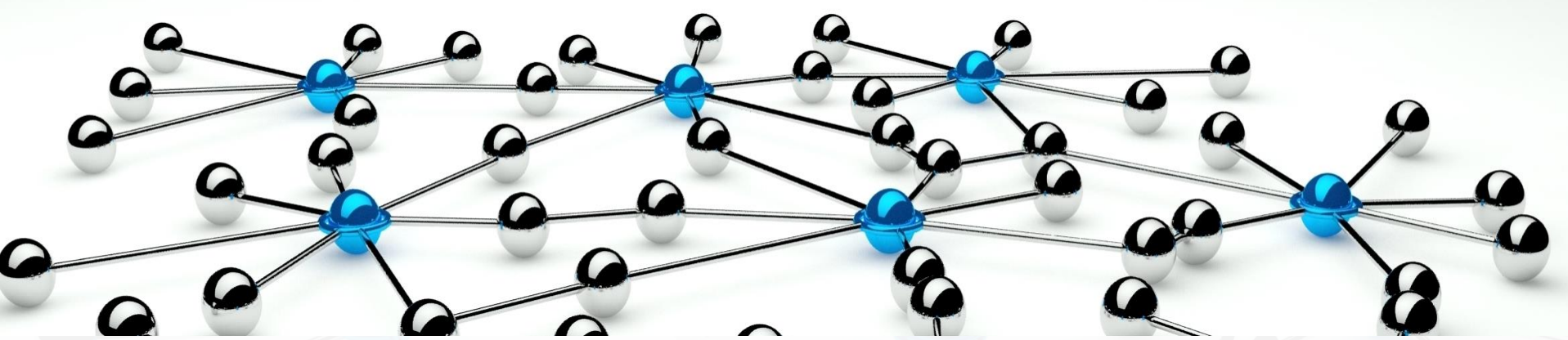**Other examples** of successful networks?
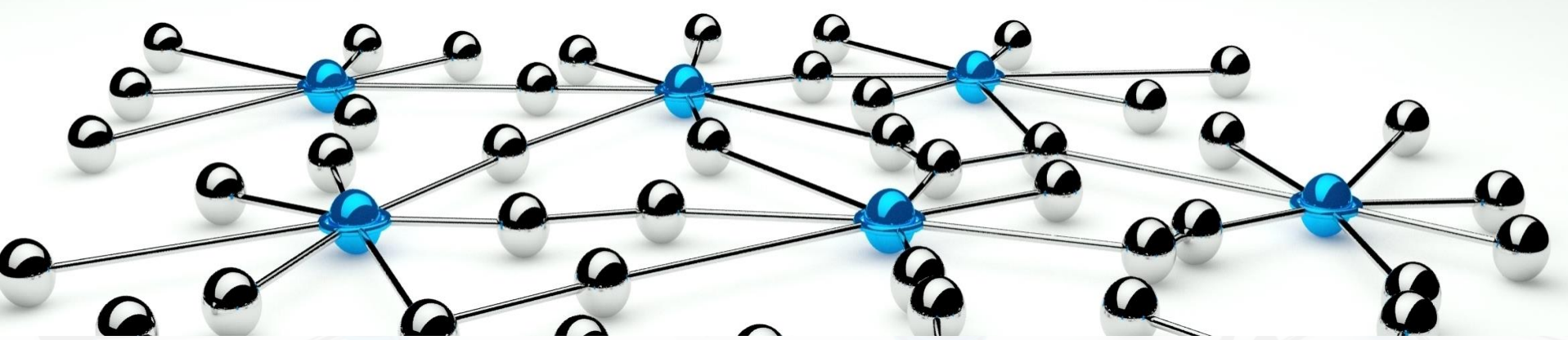
Network Entrepreneurship = A Mindset Shift

Rooted in four counterintuitive principles:

1. **Mission**, Not Organization.
2. **Node**, Not Hub.
3. **Humility**, Not Brand.
4. **Trust**, Not Control.

Principle #1:
Mission, Not Organization.

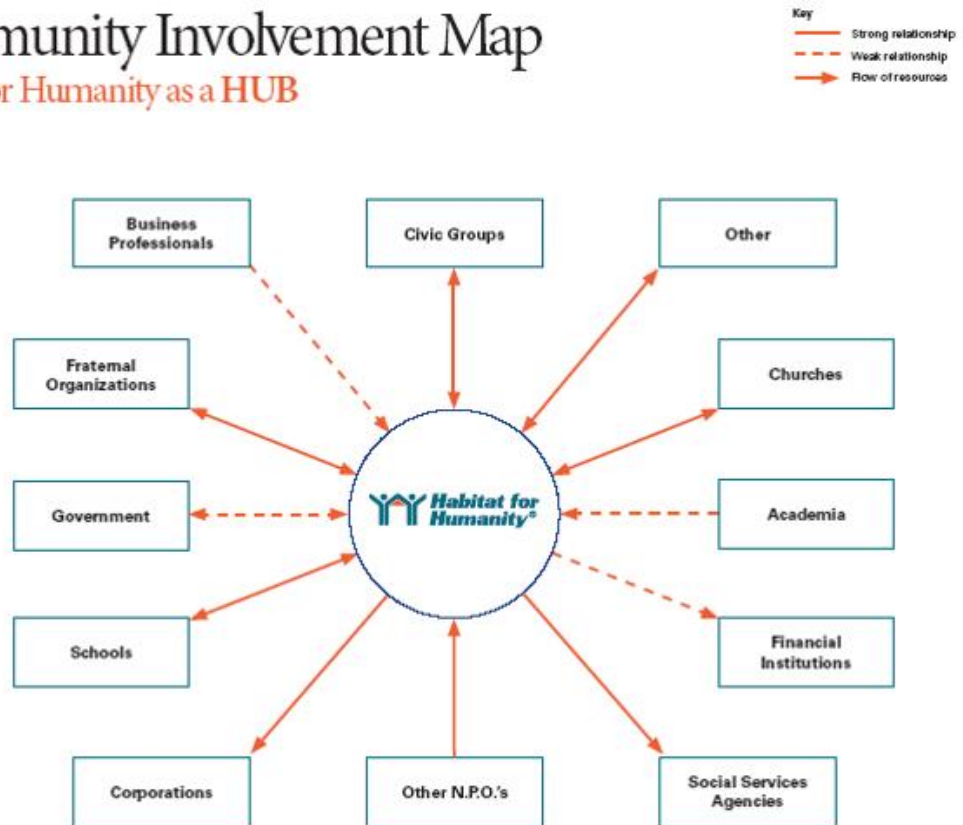Leaders adopt strategies and tactics to **achieve a mission**, not necessarily to stimulate **organizational growth**.

Principle #2:
Node, Not Hub.

Network partners see their organizations as **part of a larger web of activity** targeting a cause, **not as a hub** of action.
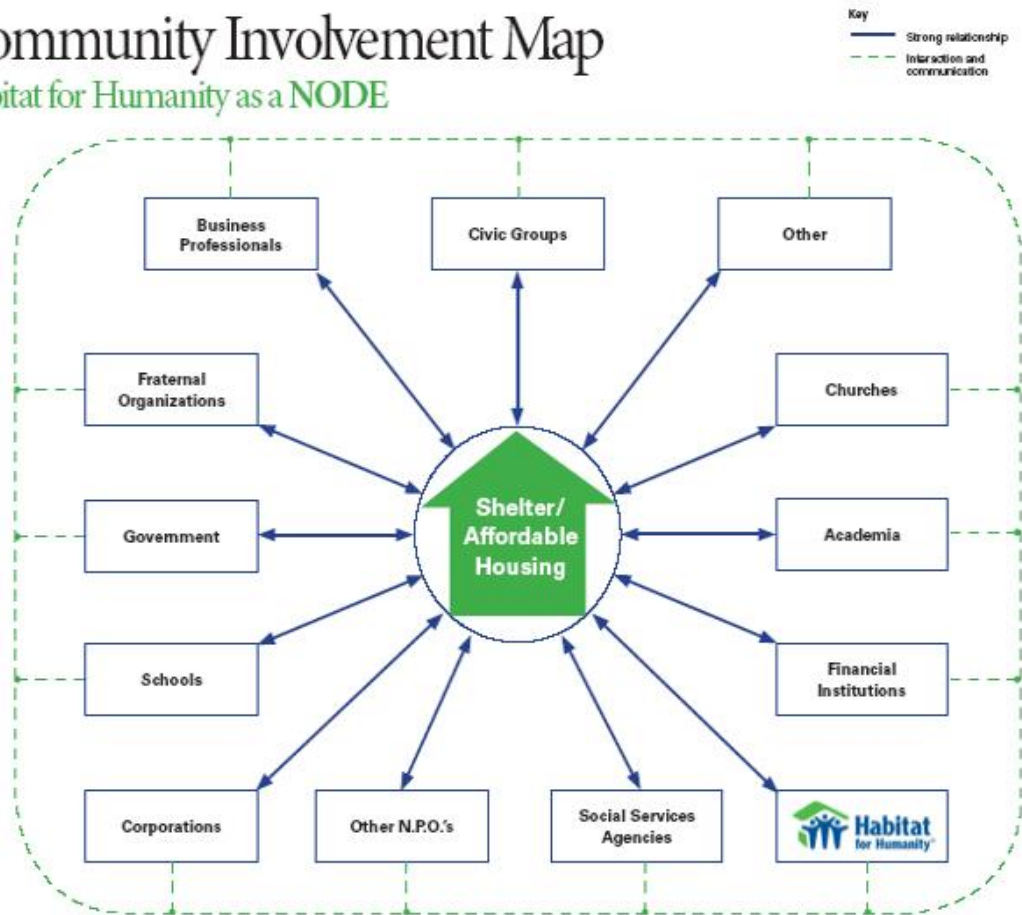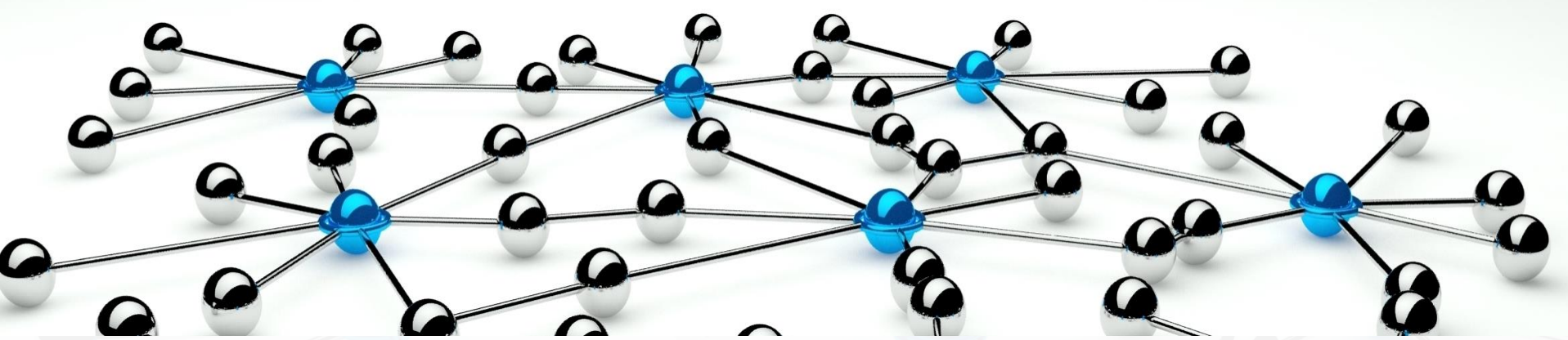
Static Role as Hub

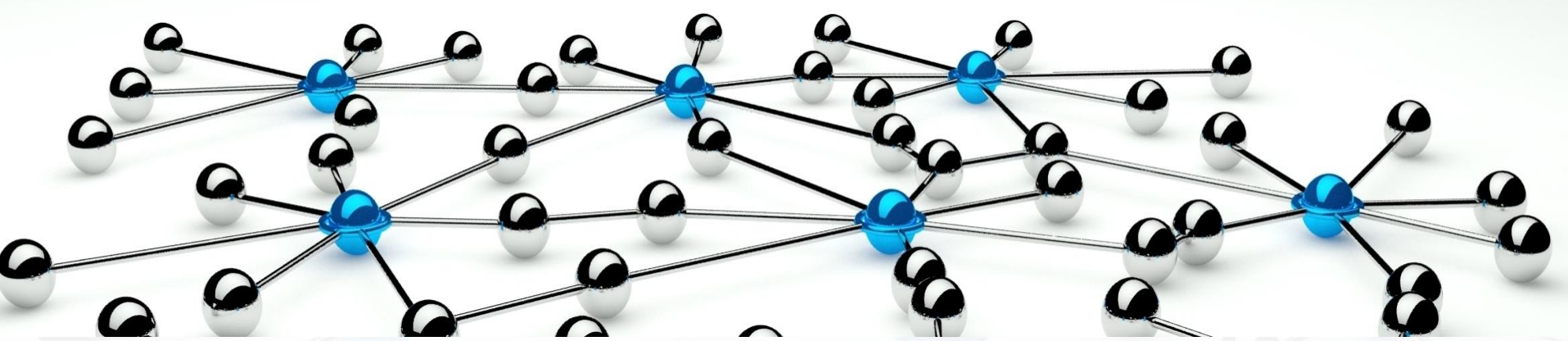Community Involvement Map
Habitat for Humanity as a **HUB**

Key
— Strong relationship
- - - Weak relationship
→ Flow of resources

Business Professionals · Civic Groups · Other · Fraternal Organizations · Churches · Government · Habitat for Humanity · Academia · Schools · Financial Institutions · Corporations · Other N.P.O.'s · Social Services Agencies

Dynamic
Role
as Node

Community Involvement Map
Habitat for Humanity as a NODE

Key
— Strong relationship
--- Interaction and communication

Business Professionals

Civic Groups

Other

Fraternal Organizations

Churches

Government

Shelter/ Affordable Housing

Academia

Schools

Financial Institutions

Corporations

Other N.P.O.'s

Social Services Agencies

Habitat for Humanity

Principle #3:
Humility, Not Brand.

Organizations work alongside their peers **as equals** and **willingly take a back seat** when their partners are in a better position to lead.
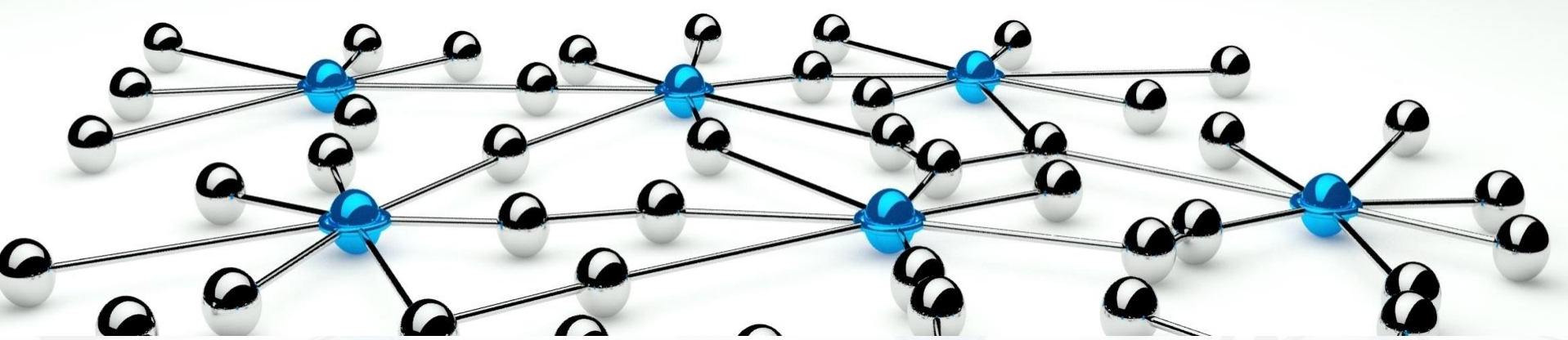
Principle #4:
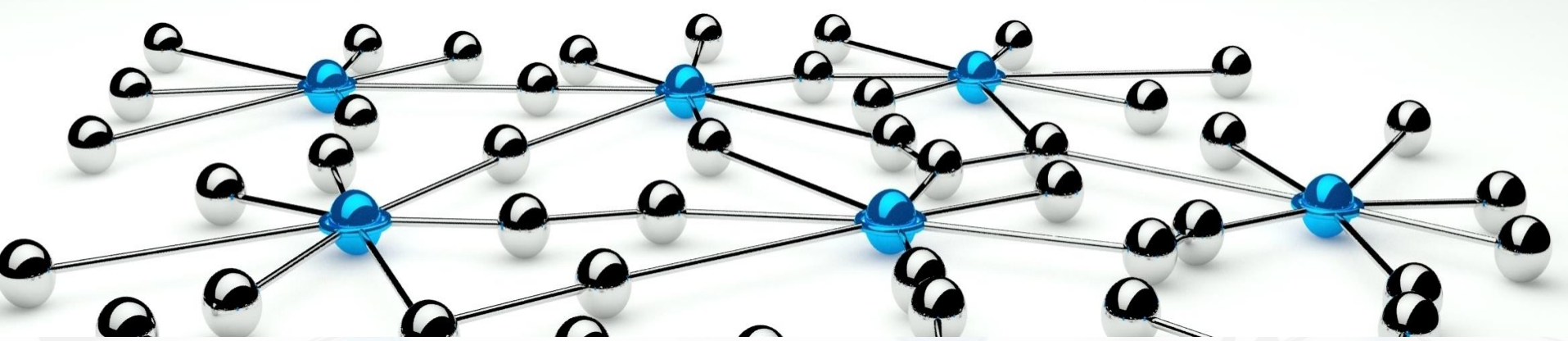# Trust, Not Control.

Trust and shared values are far more important (and robust) than **formal control mechanisms** such as contracts or accountability systems.

My Road to Embracing a Network Leadership Style

Arc of **career experiences**;

Accepting **hard realities**;

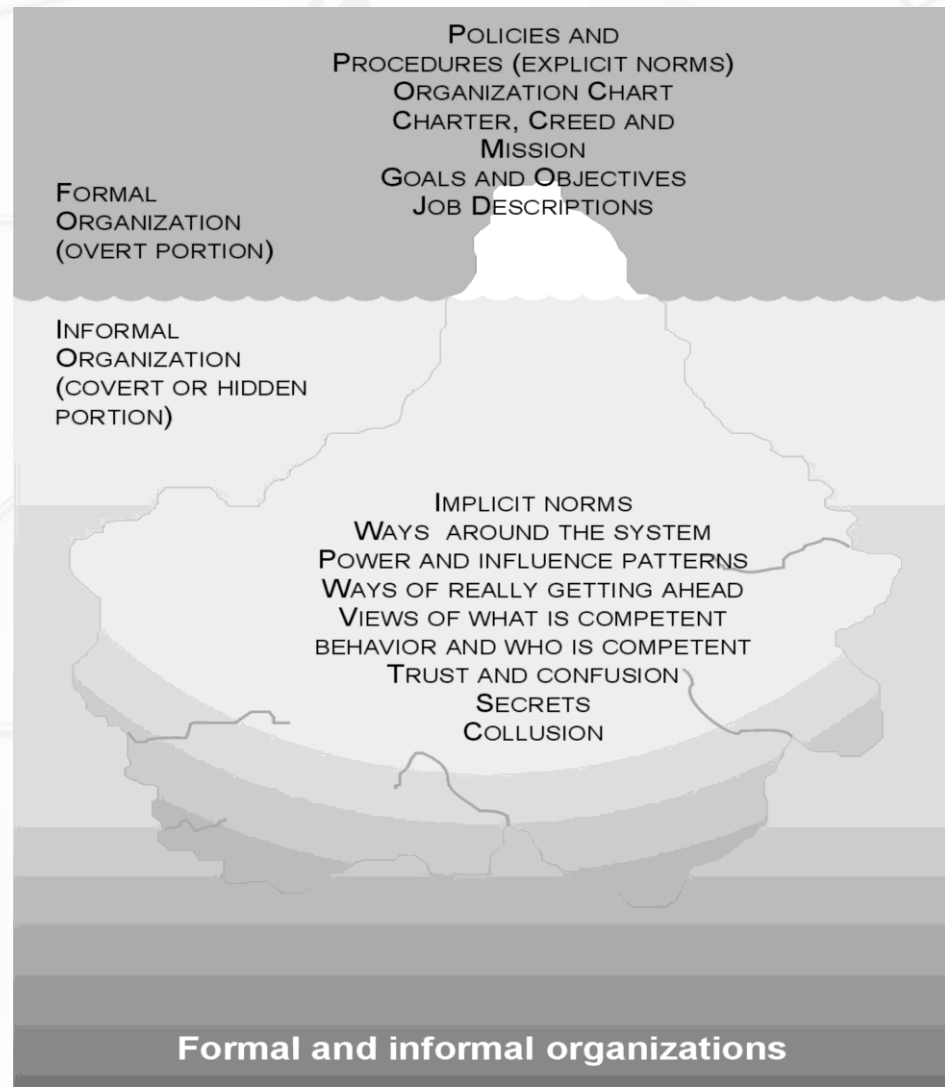Recognizing my **limited influence**.

Networks: Forces Seen and Unseen

The **unique power** of a network comes from
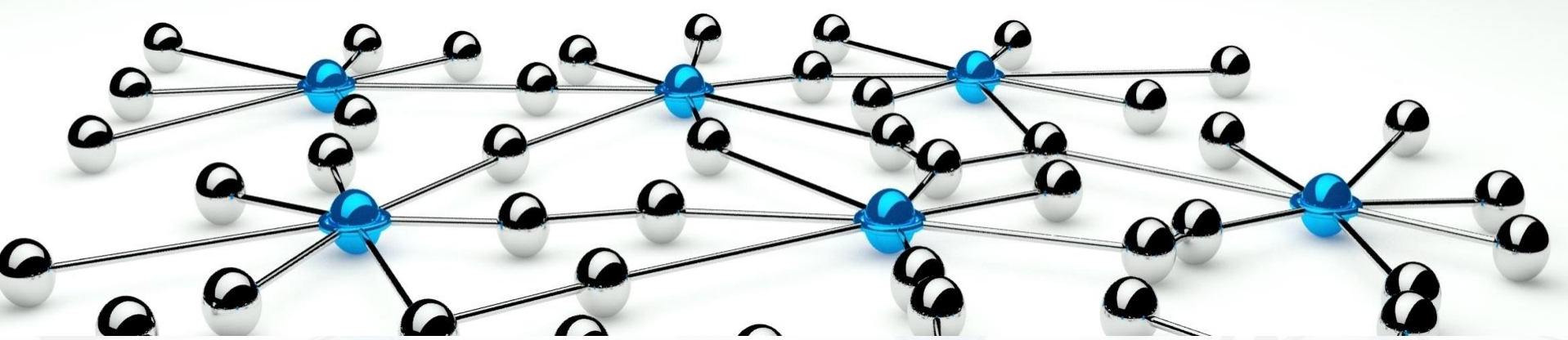
massive but largely invisible forces...

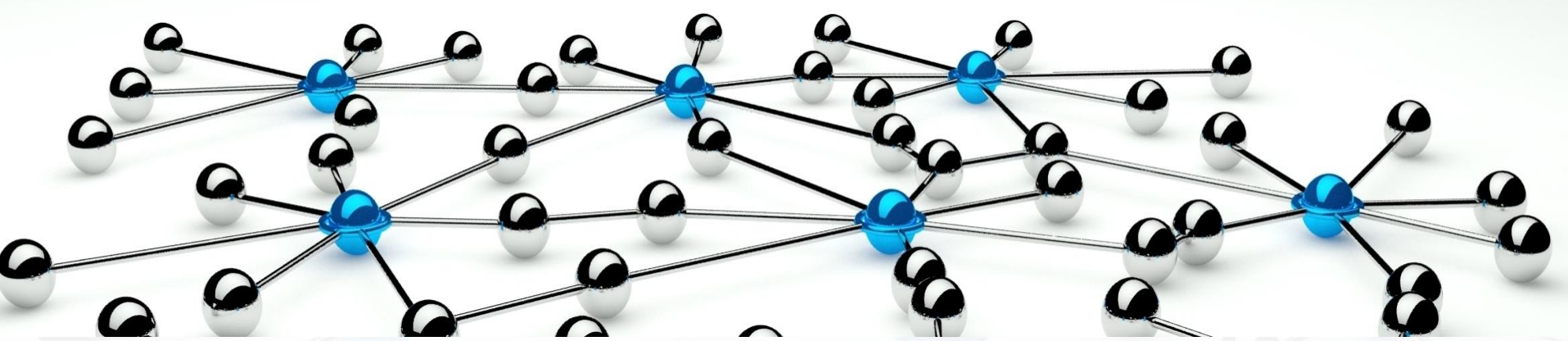like

these.

What's **Below** the Surface?

FORMAL ORGANIZATION (OVERT PORTION)

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (EXPLICIT NORMS)
ORGANIZATION CHART
CHARTER, CREED AND MISSION
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
JOB DESCRIPTIONS

INFORMAL ORGANIZATION (COVERT OR HIDDEN PORTION)

IMPLICIT NORMS
WAYS AROUND THE SYSTEM
POWER AND INFLUENCE PATTERNS
WAYS OF REALLY GETTING AHEAD
VIEWS OF WHAT IS COMPETENT
BEHAVIOR AND WHO IS COMPETENT
TRUST AND CONFUSION
SECRETS
COLLUSION

Formal and informal organizations

A Strong Network Arises from a "Risky Mindset"

Don't underestimate the power…
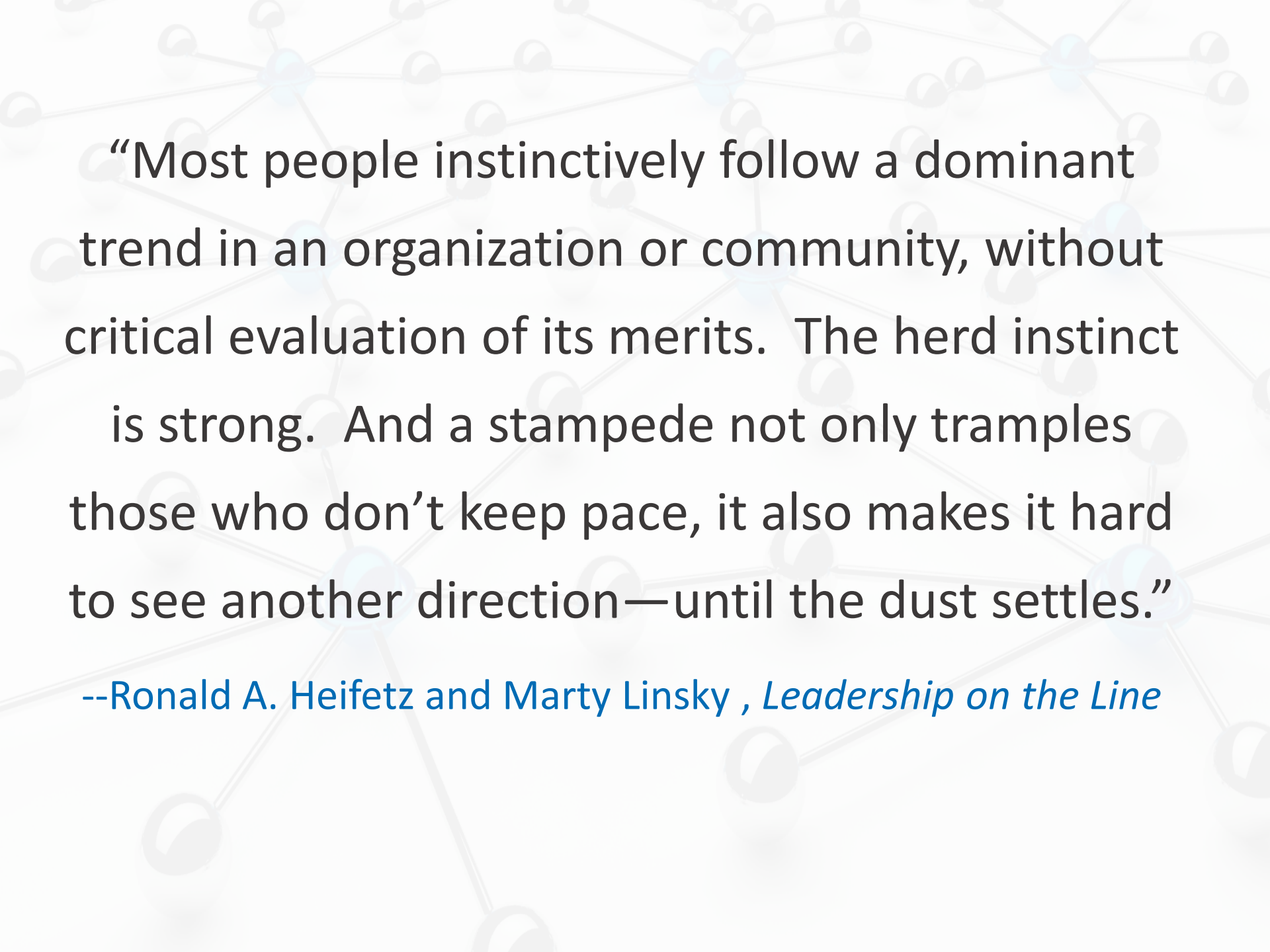
...of **risk**.

Network Leaders "Get on the Balcony"

What does that mean?

"Most people instinctively follow a dominant trend in an organization or community, without critical evaluation of its merits. The herd instinct is strong. And a stampede not only tramples those who don't keep pace, it also makes it hard to see another direction—until the dust settles."
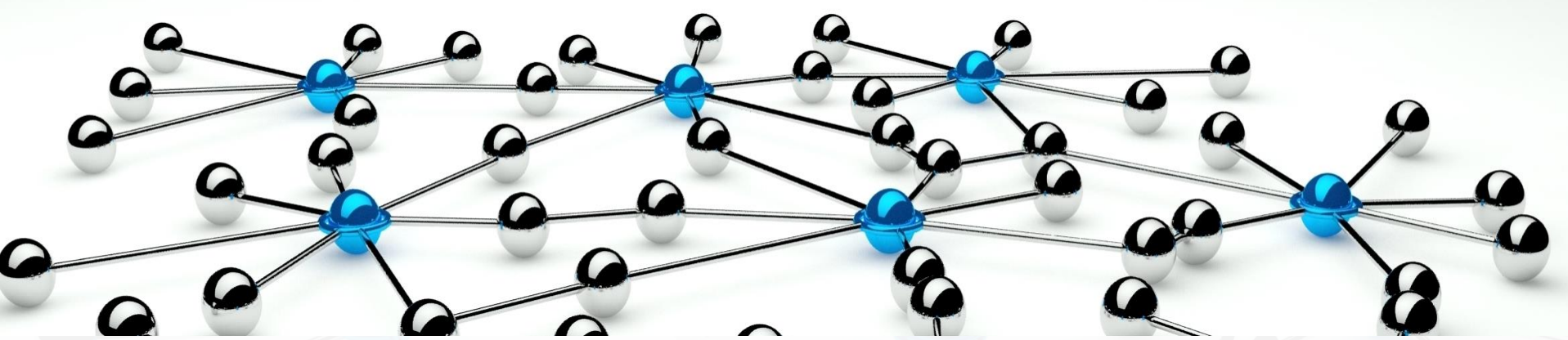
--Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky , *Leadership on the Line*
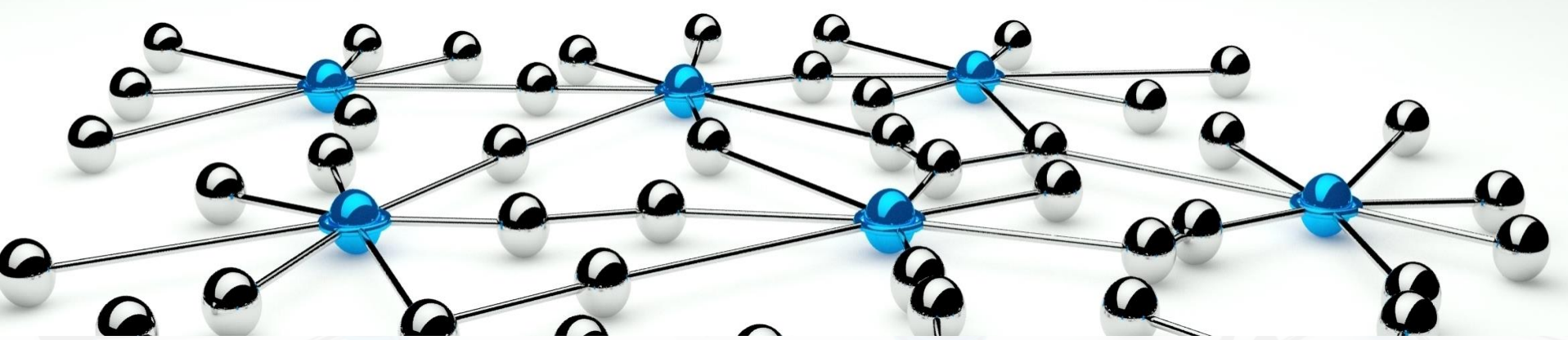
What Does a "Network Mindset" Look Like?
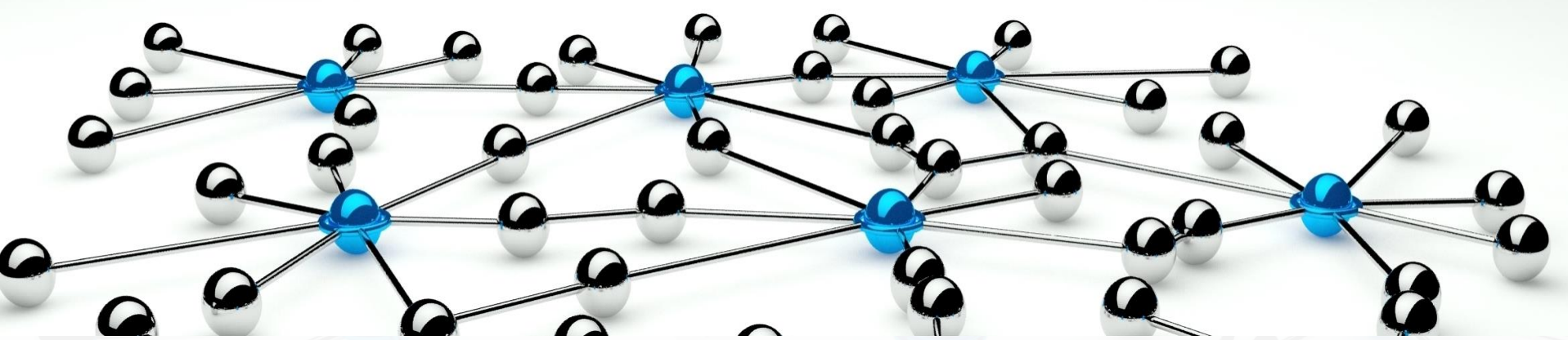
Some observable traits:
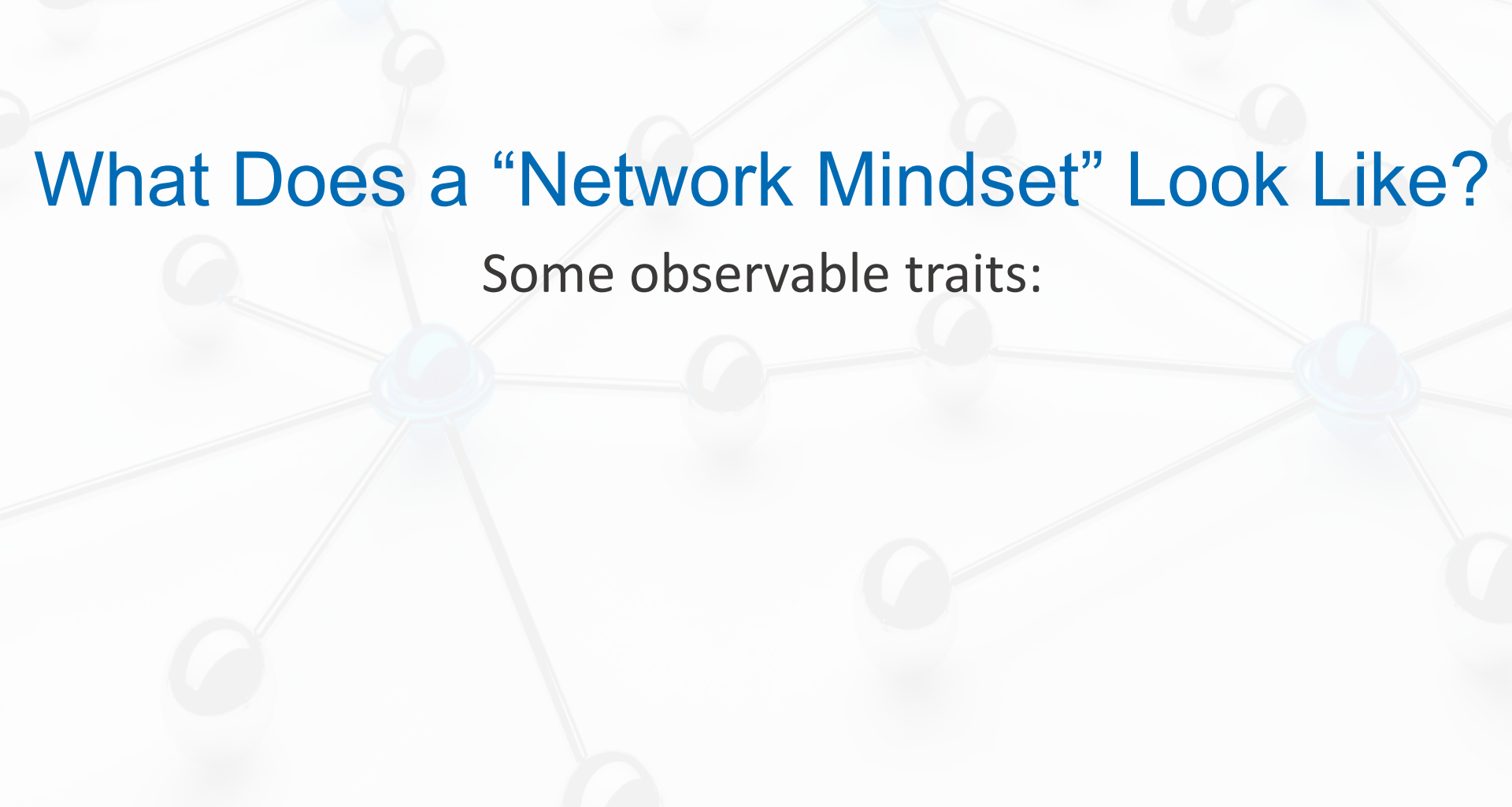
Trait #1: Eyes on the Prize

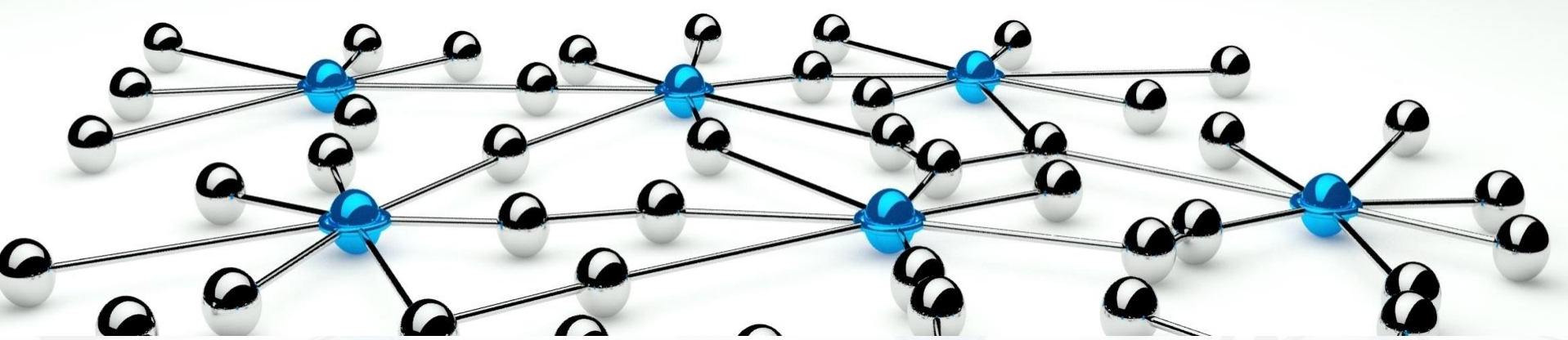Visionary, but resists being sidetracked.

Trait #2: Sees the Big Picture

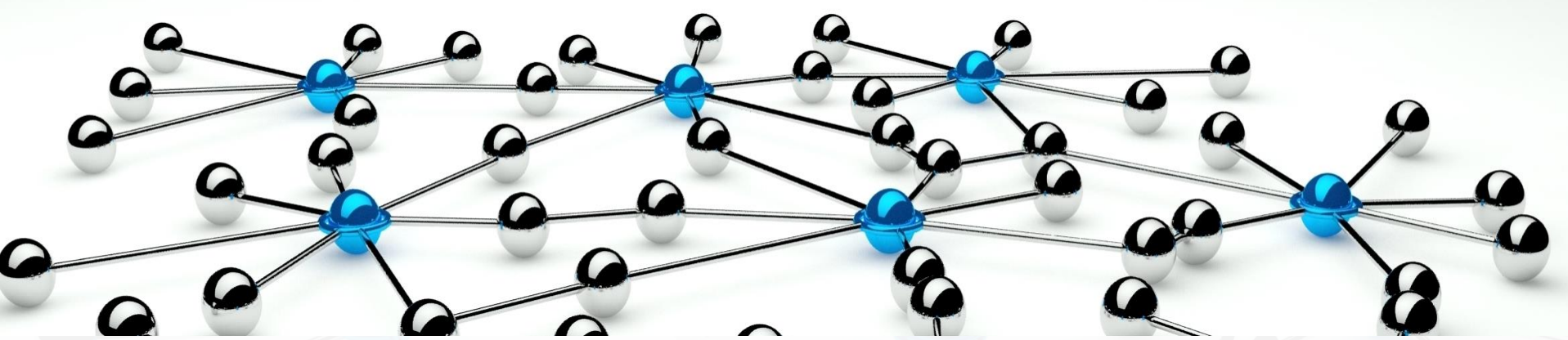Integrative thinker, listener, and communicator.

Trait #3: Inclusive

Uses the art of honestly reflecting the various perspectives to draw people into deeper exploration.
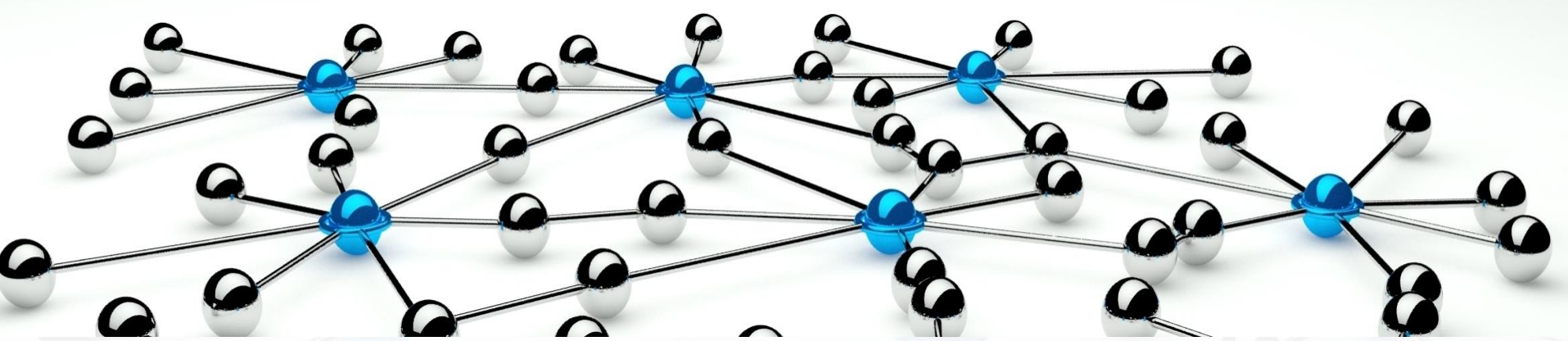
Trait #4: Entrepreneurial

Finds space to use network leadership,
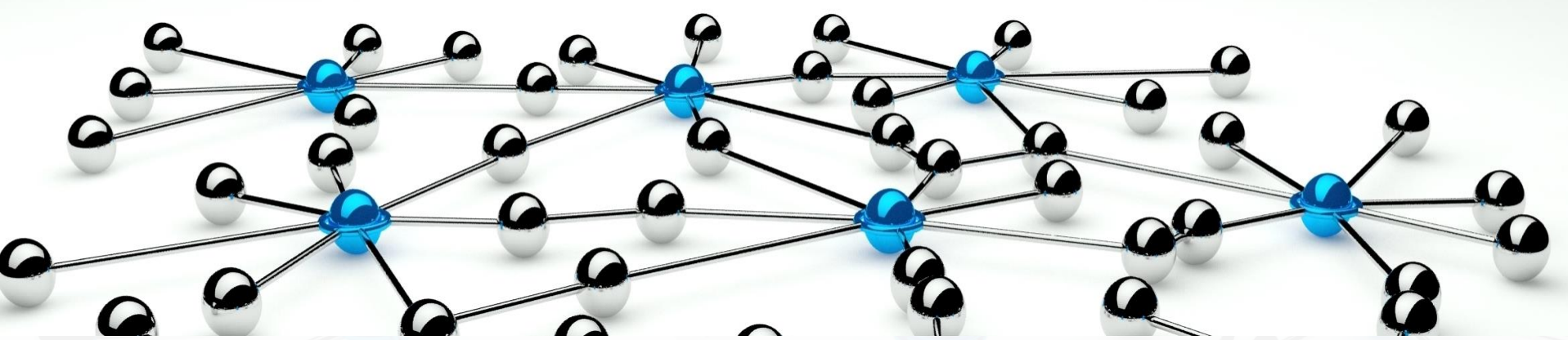
sometimes under the radar.

Trait #5: Submission to Mission

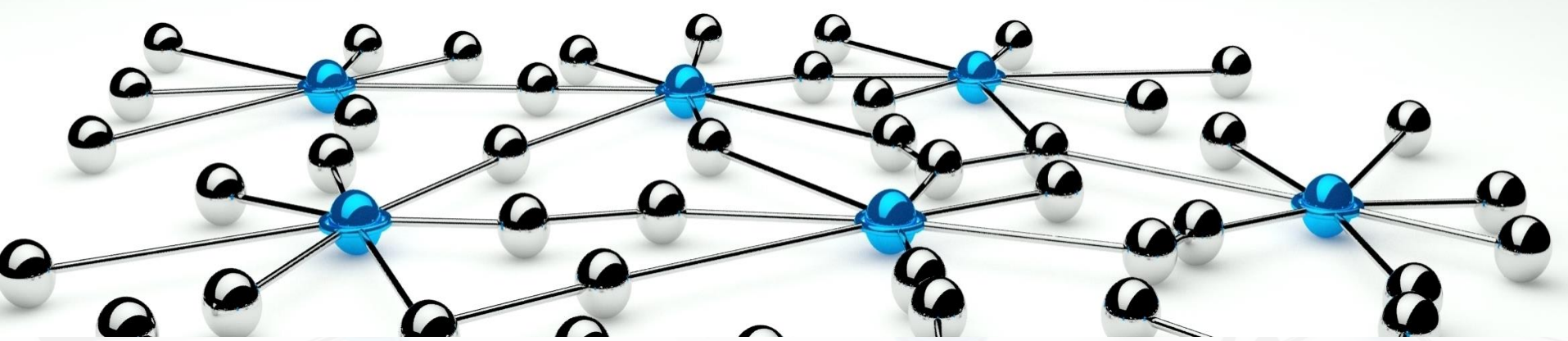The work is never about making their own role more important.

Trait #6: Willing to Be Vulnerable

Makes it safe for partners to go below the surface to discover mutual values, beliefs, and assumptions.

Trait #7: Believes in " Little L" Leadership

You don't have to be in charge to lead.
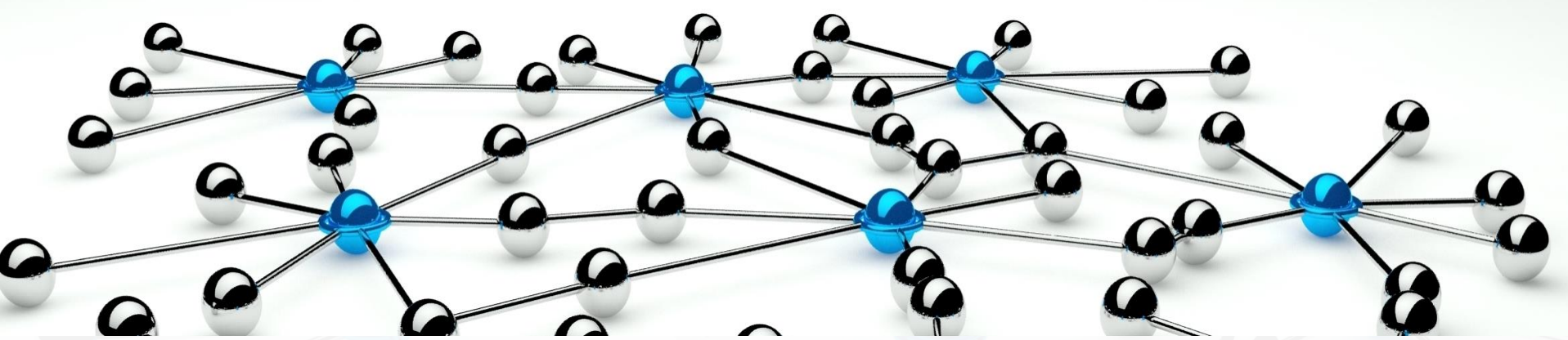
Neither does anyone else.

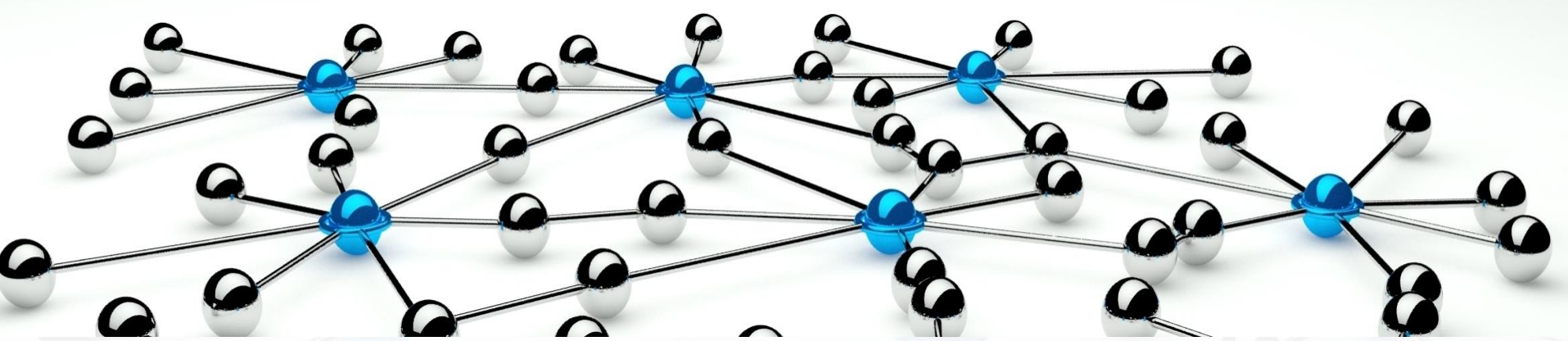# Trait #8: Continuously Invests in Relationships

Listens vs. talks.

Inquires vs. asserts.

Believes relationships have inherent value beyond the immediate endgame.

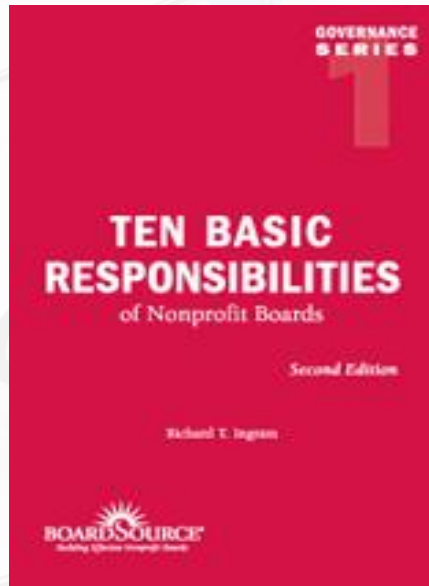# Trait #9: Rewards Getting it Right, Not Being Right

Acknowledges that vulnerability, humility, release of control, and trust = sacrifice and risk.

What About Boards?

The 10 basic responsibilities of nonprofit boards are not inconsistent with a network mindset.

#9: Determine, monitor, and strengthen the organization's programs and services.

The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and to monitor their effectiveness.
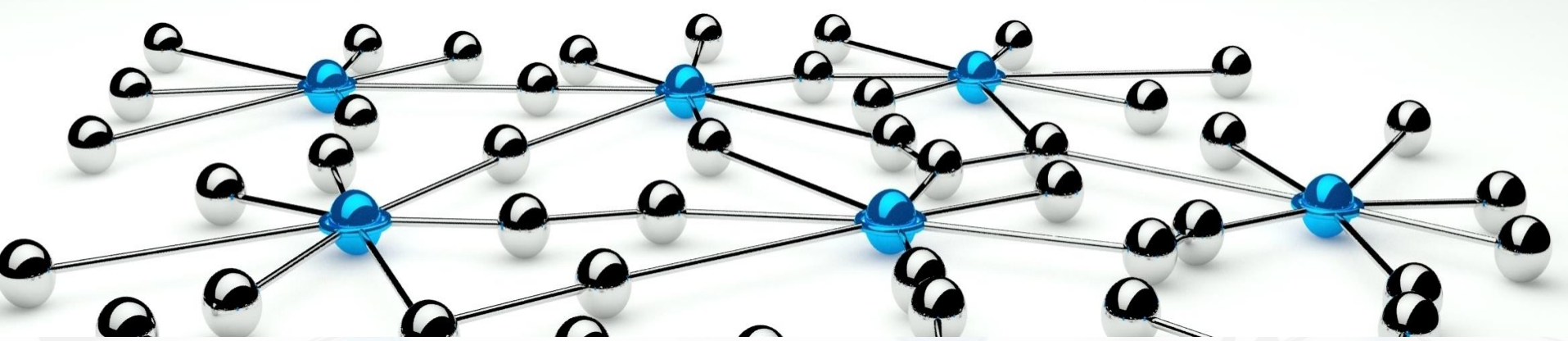
How is this affected by a shift to a network mindset?

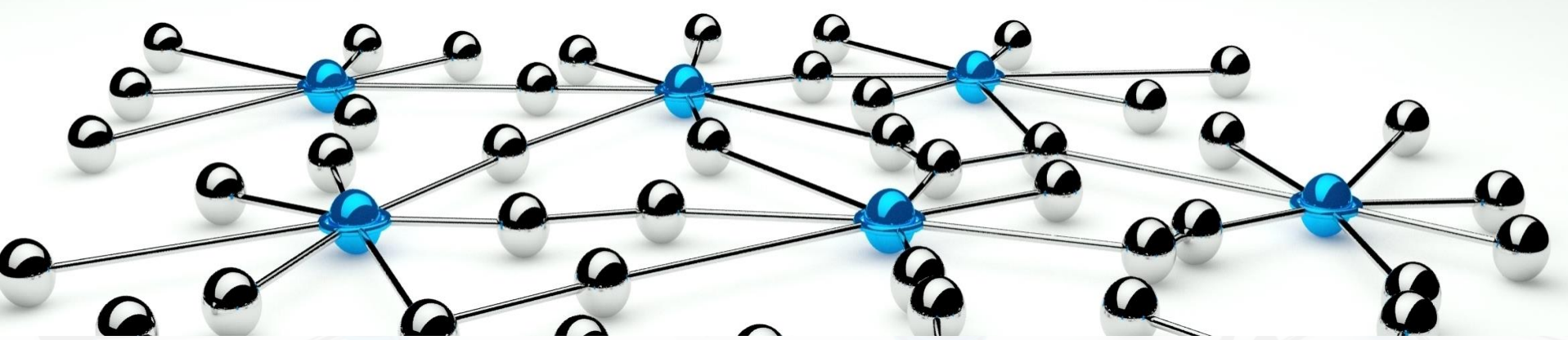**#10: Support the chief executive and assess his or her performance**.

The board should ensure that the chief executive has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the organization.

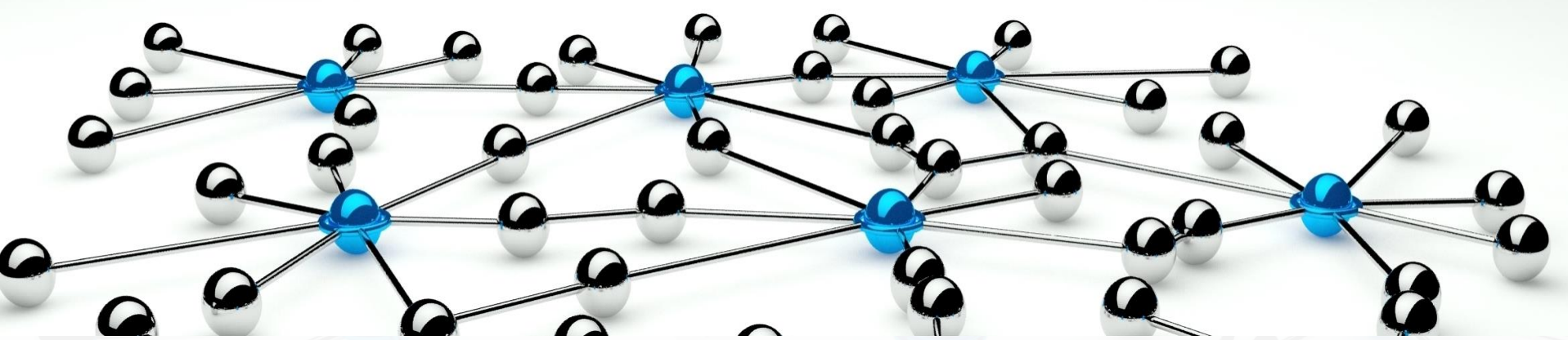How is this affected by a shift to a network mindset?

A Case Study
In Network Leadership:

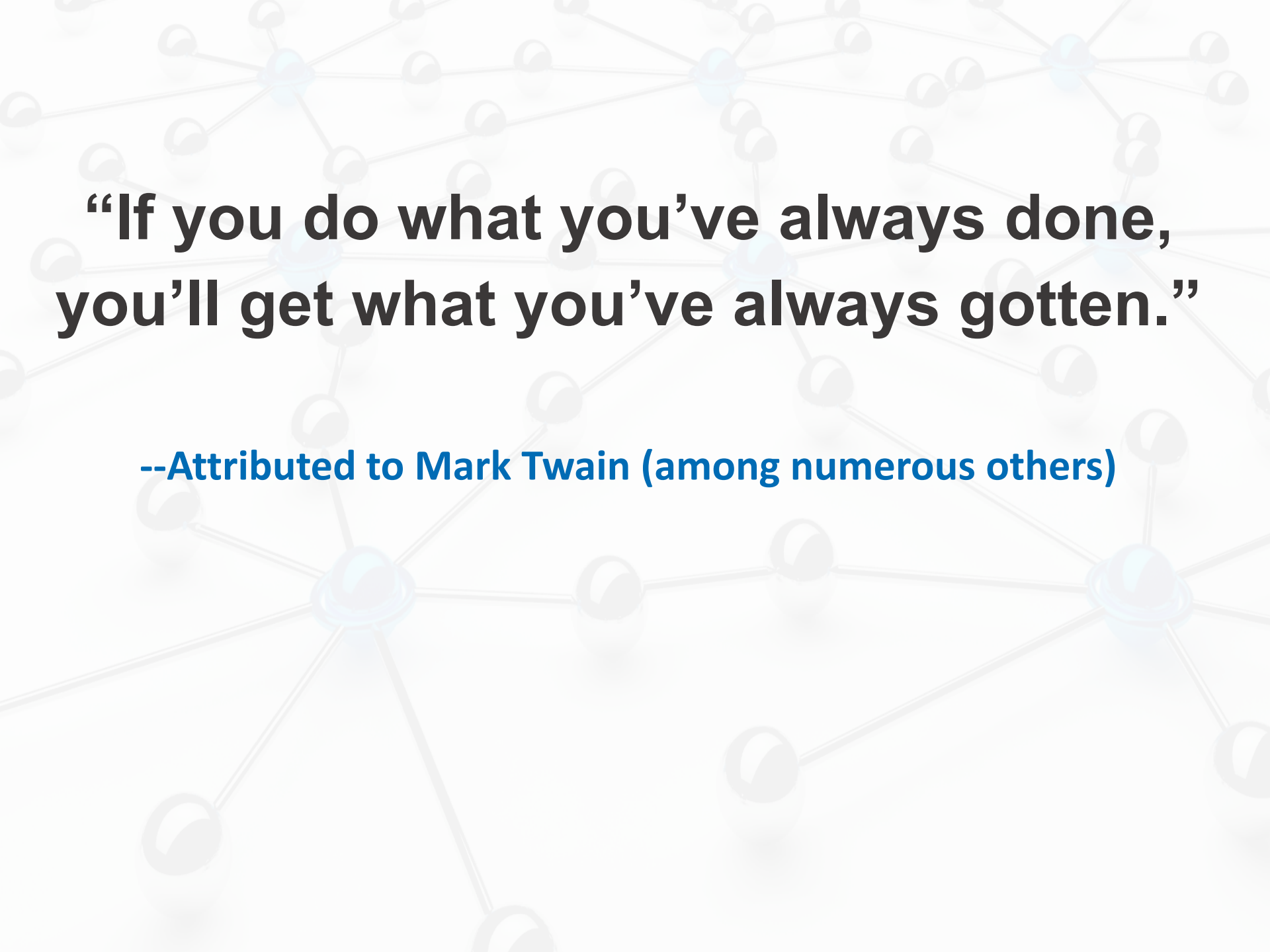How it broke through decades of deadlock and acrimony.

HALA
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
AND LIVABILITY AGENDA

1. The Challenge
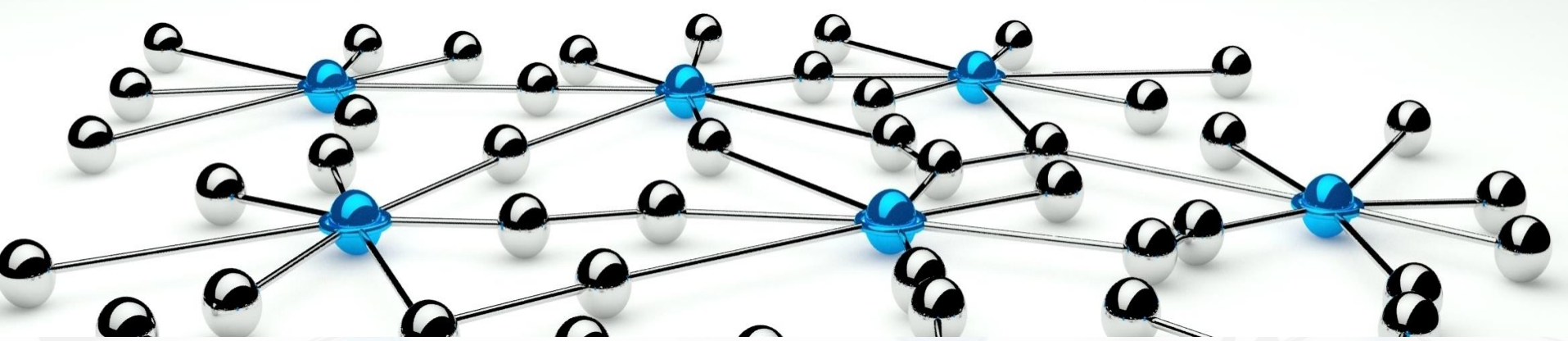2. The Approach
3. The Principles in Action

Four Counterintuitive Principles of Network Leadership:

1. **Mission**, Not Organization.

2. **Node**, Not Hub.

3. **Humility**, Not Brand.

4. **Trust**, Not Control.

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten."

--Attributed to Mark Twain (among numerous others)

Stay Connected!

Visit the brand new, one-stop resource

for network leadership: www.newnetworkleader.org

✉ marty@housingconsortium.org