



TALKING TO DECISION MAKERS

FIVE (OKAY THEY'RE NOT THAT EASY, BUT THEY'RE IMPORTANT) STEPS

MICHIGAN SYSTEMS OF CARE CONFERENCE

MARCH 10, 2026

MY BACKGROUND

- Public Relations Professional by Training
- 17 Years and Counting in Healthcare, Nonprofit Ambulatory + Government
- Day-to-Day Leadership in Persuading Legislative, Regulatory, and Funding Decision Makers (Advocacy, For Short)
- Still Optimistic Enough to Hope
- (Abandoned My Formalities A Long Time Ago #notimetobestuffy)

OUR TIME TOGETHER

- Thing of This Session As:

- One (Important) Part Self Help
- One (Big) Part Community Organizing
- One (Smaller) Part Dale Carnegie
- One (Growing) Part Flexing Your Influencer Muscles
- Not One Where You'll Sit Quietly ;)

- Accepting Responsibility and Believing
- Awareness
 - Problem / Goal
 - Narrative and Storytelling
 - Your Team
- Build Power
 - Theory of Change
 - Strategy
 - Building Commitment
- Deploy Power
 - Take Actions
 - Relationships and Finding Shared Values
- Achieve Some Wins
 - Shout Your Victories
 - Learn from the Process
 - Ensure Accountability

Awareness



01



Build Power

02



Deploy Power

03



**Win!
Celebrate!
Learn!**

04



ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY AND BELIEVING

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THE FIRST PERSON YOU NEED TO CONVINCED IS YOURSELF

- Do you accept responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty?
- Do you have people and a problem or goal to tackle?
- Do you believe with time, commitment, and maybe a little luck you can succeed?

- *Be Honest With Yourself*
Dwell On It
You're Going To Need Confidence In Your Belief To Persevere...
...You're Probably Going to Need a Cheerleader Too



AWARENESS

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YOUR PROBLEM AND GOAL

- What problem are you facing?
- What addresses that problem? (That's your goal)

- *Keep It Simple (At This Stage)*
Keep it Human
No Need to Get Fancy Here, You're Going to Flesh It Out
Simple Test- Can you explain it to a family member (who doesn't do what you do) in five minutes?

BUILDING NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING

- “Public narrative is the practice of creating the emotional conditions for enabling others to respond to challenges (your problem) purposefully”
- Think of your narrative like a story...
 - You (and your people) are the protagonist
 - You have a challenge (your problem)
 - You’re going to make choices (your strategy and actions)
 - You’re going to achieve an outcome (your goal)
 - And, there’s a moral to your story (guiding principles that keep your story focused on the humans at the center of the story)
- Your narrative needs to embrace your personal connection – your why – in addition to conveying “why now” and connecting to the person you are telling it to
- Resist the temptation to make data your story



YOUR TEAM

- Who understands your problem?
- Who is affected by solving it?
- Who cares about the people solving it will impact?
- Those people- the people who also have personal connection to your problem- are your team
- Your team will need more than one leader, leading in this context is usually not about someone's job, and sometimes leaders step up in less obvious ways

Recognize Leaders



LET'S WORKSHOP THIS PART ONE

- First, Reflect for 60 Seconds
- With 2 – 4 people...
 - Identify Your Problem
 - State Your Goal
 - Share Your Personal Connection to Your Problem (The Rest Of Your Story Will Be Easier)
 - Name At Least Three People On Your Team





BUILD POWER

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THEORY OF CHANGE

- “Developing a theory of change is essentially the process of making explicit collective assumptions about how change will happen - in other words, making thinking visible”
- This is where you flesh out your goal
- You can get fancy now (but you don’t have to)
- In its simplest form, your theory of change should address:
 - Your problem
 - What your people want (your goal)
 - Who has the resources to help your people get what they want
 - What those people want (but, don’t assume)
 - What resources you have that those people need



STRATEGY

What is strategy?

Strategizing is turning
what you have (resources)
into what you need (power)
to get what you want (change)

STRATEGY

"So that"



OUTCOME

BUILDING COMMITMENT

- Your problem, your goal, and your story should sincerely connect your people together (this is the stuff movements are made of)
- Having your people deeply involved in articulating your theory of change and developing the strategies you will deploy is key to building commitment
- Your people need to see and feel the power they have to be successful
- And, sometimes your team needs to get bigger to wield enough power to achieve your goal



LET'S WORKSHOP THIS

PART TWO

- With the Same 2 – 4 people...
 - Name Who Has the Resources to Help Achieve Your Goal
 - Discuss What Those People Want (Or How You Can Find Out)
 - Name Something You Have Those People Want
 - Write Down One Strategy That Capitalizes on the Three Things Above





DEPLOY POWER

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TAKING ACTIONS

- At this point you have a problem and a goal, know how to tell the story of that problem, and you have a team to work together
- You have a theory of how fix that problem / achieve your goal, identified who has the resources to enact your theory, and the power both you and they have
- If your theory of change is on the informal side, this is where you start to get formal:
 - Write it down
 - Map out the strategies that help you get to “yes”
 - Note who’s responsible
 - Set a timeframe
 - Decide how you’ll keep communicating and coordinating as a team
- Then, get to work (recognizing work in this context may look like a lot of talking)

RELATIONSHIPS AND FINDING SHARED VALUES

- In my experience, “Right thing to do” arguments are rarely successful alone, it takes long-term relationship development, based in shared value and interest, with the people who have what you need to achieve your goal
- Start small- I cannot overstate the power of a meaningful one on one conversation
 - My biggest cliché of the day- at least in the beginning listen more, don't sell
- From there, relationships that serve your goal can grow and vary
 - However annoying, the influencers are on to something, and social mediums are a form of relationship that can be very useful

THE ONE-ON-ONE MEETING





ACHIEVE SOME WINS

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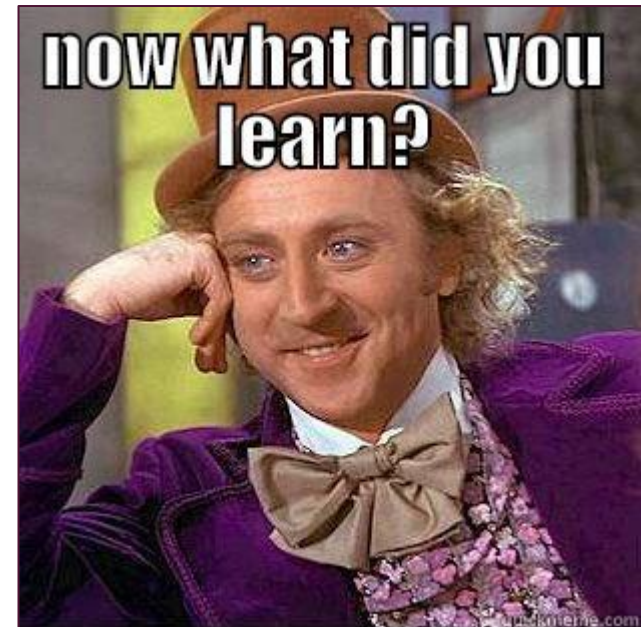
SHOUT YOUR VICTORIES

- However small, point to the small successes that lead up to your goal
- And, when you reach your goal, make sure your people know it, stop and celebrate the win... that's going to deepen commitment for the future



LEARN FROM THE PROCESS

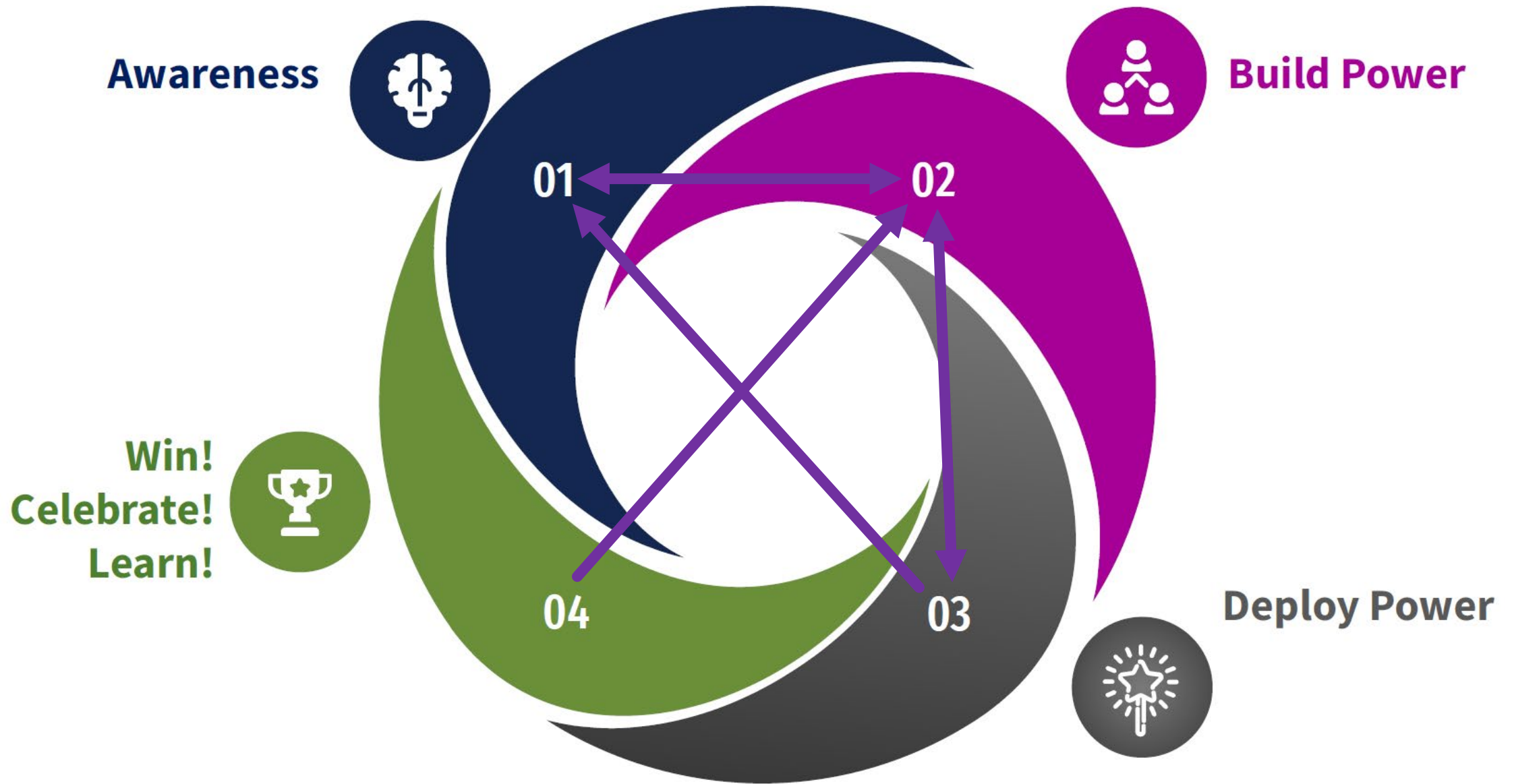
- Before you get too busy doing the goal, make time to (quickly) talk about and write down what went well and what didn't
- You can use those lessons next time (and there's going to be a next time)



ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

- A lot of times, after you get to yes, you're going to also play a critical role in making the goal you set a reality
- Take this as seriously and act with the commitment it took to achieve the victory in the first place
- Make sure the folks who had the resources you needed know how doing the goal went, it will enhance your credibility for the future







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THAT' ALL THE STEPS, YOU'VE GOT THIS

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