

## **SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS**

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



### **Recap of 8/11/22 session with John Kolm and Amanda Biller**

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

What an interesting session this was, from the round of introductions forward. We learned about the use of simulation to help work teams accelerate their experience without risking the financial, reputational and time costs of bad decisions. How does that work?

- A simulation doesn't have real world consequences – all failure delivers is losing the game.
- A simulation is efficient, involving practice and repetition-friendly “training wheels.”
- The trick to making it effective is knowing what to leave out.
- Mid-course corrections may need to be made, if what was initially presented as the problem turns out not to be the real problem.

One participant discussed past Nuclear Regulatory Commission simulations of a dire scenario. Mock interviews conducted during one of them led to the discovery that media training would also be desirable.

John told us about nuclear sub crews, which by their nature can involve rapid changes in state – leader to follower and back – in a crisis. That need for agility can be simulated and practiced.

There was some discussion about the Pareto principle, a heuristic (or rule of thumb) that doesn't always hold true. Gestalt models of team dynamics don't work. John used the 2010 GSA conference scandal as an example: one person's behavior eventually brought down top GSA leaders.

Before John co-founded the company, he transitioned from a career in Australian Intelligence to helping teenage runaways "expand their planning horizons" at Silver Wattle, an old sheep grazing property that is now a Quaker community & retreat center.

We also were given an impressive preview of the Team Results USA approach when a participant put a difficult problem on the table to see if John and Amanda could help. She's been tasked with getting a project team at her agency to finish what they're doing and deliver the intended result, and she's getting stonewalled by an insecure project manager. Project team members don't seem to care. We learned that the most common situation Team Results USA works with involves just this:

- You have no direct authority over people and you need to get something done. Part of the solution is, the people who don't care need to experience the pain.
- A sign of success, when things have really shifted in the right direction, shows up when you start being asked, "Why wasn't I included?". -At which point you include them.

John and Amanda conducted a fact-finding dialogue with our colleague, who took away a next step to try. The fact that she felt comfortable enough to volunteer her problem at all is a testament not only to her leadership maturity but also to the habitual trustworthiness of everyone else who attended.

We now know that John and Amanda have delightful senses of humor. One also can detect this in the signup form for the quarterly newsletter offered on their website, which begins, "Your details are kept in a locked vault at the bottom of a mineshaft guarded by a leopard. (Okay, not really, but we don't share your details with anyone at all.)" You are invited to spend a few minutes at <https://www.teamresultsusa.com/> to learn about what they have on offer and to make contact if you wish. Following the company on LinkedIn is an alternate way to find out about the free Wednesday webinars.

We ended with some thoughts from Amanda and John stemming from their psychology backgrounds and their experience with teams since the pandemic began. One thing I heard was that "we're coasting on the benefits of the cohesion we had before Covid," and that we may be experiencing PTSD writ large because so many of us have had to confront our mortality, and that there's a confluence of 3 things: concern about health, remote working, and a breakdown of the industrial bargain. Based on the plethora of articles and blog posts with repetitive themes

that have been published globally on social media over the past couple of years, it makes sense to me. Clearly, people all over the world are trying to understand what's changed and how to cope with it. The last word I wrote down, and I think it came from Amanda, is "Joy."

By the way, John presented in June at the Serious Play Conference in Orlando. Founded by Sue Bohle, another member of the SFF network, the annual conference draws speakers from all parts of the world who share their knowledge and experience creating or using games or simulations in the corporation, classroom, healthcare institution, government, military and other sectors. If you want more from John on simulation, his session video, "Does Game-Based Learning Work for the Human Being?" (#11) is available for rent at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/seriousplayconf2022>.

### **Participant affiliations**

ASPA National Capital Area Chapter  
Brown & Brown Northwest  
Center for Public Administrators  
Department of Education/Federal Student Aid  
Department of the Air Force  
Government Accountability Office  
KM/HR Systems Auditors  
Old Dominion University  
Securities and Exchange Commission  
Team Results USA

Participants joined from the Washington, DC Metro Area ~ Fredericksburg, VA ~ Frederick, MD ~ Western PA ~ Portland, OR ~ Colorado Springs, CO.

Each time, we discover commonalities and warm up the space by beginning with a round of introductions. Please consider joining us in the future.

Sincerely,  
Kitty Wooley



## HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Cooperating freely, learning on the fly, empowering ourselves, and navigating unknown waters beyond the edge of the comfort zone are the name of the game. We began our public leadership journey in calm harbors, and now we're surrounded by the white water of constant change. Business as usual isn't working well enough. We choose to gather our strengths and lead from wherever we are, applying our best efforts to the challenges of our time. Are you coming?

Header photo: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers\\_in\\_Redwood\\_City,\\_California.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg)