



<http://ccl.org>

Visual Explorer - <http://cclve.blogspot.com/>

Leadership Metaphor Explorer - <http://lmecccl.blogspot.com/>

Using Visual Explorer

VE can be used in a wide variety of ways depending on the context. **Here are the five basic steps** for using VE to facilitate a group conversation around a shared question. These steps can be altered or elaborated for particular situations as described in the VE Guidebook.

1. Frame
2. Browse
3. Reflect
4. Share
5. Extend

1. Choose one or two “framing questions” to frame the conversation. For example a group with a shared challenge might ask: “What is the key to this challenge we are facing?” and “What strengths do we have for solving this challenge?”

2. Make the VE images available for browsing. If you are using the full-sized images, spread them around a room on the floor and on tables. Card decks can be browsed in more compact ways, such as on a table top, or simply by thumbing through the deck. Everyone silently browses the images and each person chooses an image for each framing question. *“Pick an image that represents or connects to your own response to the question.”* The connection of the image to the question can be literal, or it may be emotional, metaphorical, aesthetic, or intuitive (*“Let the image pick you”*).

3. Each person examines the images he or she has selected, and reflects on how the image connects in any ways to the framing question. *“Pay attention to each image you selected. What is it? What is happening in it? What is the context? Anything surprising? How does it connect to the framing question?”*

4. The group (or sub-groups) sit in a circle. One person at a time shares his or her image(s) as follows:

First: *“Share the image and describe the image itself (forget about any connection to the question for a moment). What is it? What is happening? What do you notice?”*

Second: *“What connections do you make from the image to the question? How is the image a response to the question?”*

Third: Each person in the group responds to the image(s) offered by this first person. Each response may also have two parts: *“What do you see in the image? Do you see the same things that other’s see? What stands out to you? AND THEN: “What connections do you make from the image to the question?”* After the first person has shared their images around the group in this way, he or she thanks the group, and the conversation moves on to the next person and their image(s). Continue until everyone has shared their images.

5. When this initial dialogue with the images is finished, a certain kind of momentum is often present, and it works well to extend the conversation in whatever direction is important to the group. Subsequently, the most significant images and metaphors can be reused in ongoing creative problem solving, invention, and communication. The images lend themselves to “cascading” to other groups in the same organization, especially in digital form.

A Design for Using Leadership Metaphor Explorer

The following design was used successful at the Library Leadership and Management Association LLAMA (a Division of the American Library Association - ALA at the LLAMA President's meeting June 2008 in Anaheim, CA. I was expecting about 10 people but more like 300 people came so I had to think quickly on my feet.

Overview

- Introduction
- Leadership Metaphor Exercise
- Presentation on leadership culture stage development
- Presentation of the [Sense Making Loop for complex challenges](#)
- Visual Explorer Exercise
- Concluding remarks

Description

1. My session was called "Visual and verbal literacy: Skills for contemporary leadership"
2. I put on one LME Card and one VE Card face down on each chair, randomly distributed.
- 3a. I opened the session with the question: How does the metaphor you have been assigned describe leadership in your organization in any one of these ways:
 - in the past?
 - your organization at its worst?
 - how leadership is practiced currently?
 - how leadership is when your organization is at its best?
 - how you would like leadership to be in the future?
 - how leadership needs to be in order to resolve your most pressing leadership challenges?
- 3b. Discuss with your neighbors

4. People were then invited to come to the microphone with the card they had been assigned. The microphone had been set up in the center aisle to share what they had found. This was very rich. About 7 people came forward before I moved on to the next part of the session. They shared both the metaphor and insights they had gained.

5. I then did a presentation about [how we think leadership will look like in the future](#) using:

Honorable Captains to illustrate dependent leadership
Adventurous Explorers to illustrate independent leadership
Leaderless Orchestra to illustrate [interdependent leadership](#)

6. I then presented the [Sense Making Loop](#) used as a response to complex challenges.

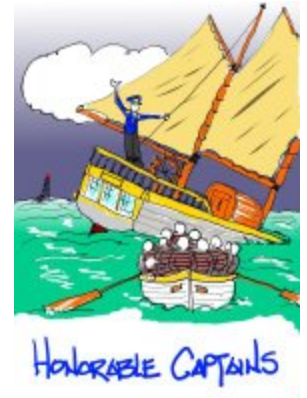
7. There was a VE image at each seat. I asked them to think of a complex challenge in their organization. How does the visual image you have been assigned describe your complex challenge?

8. Again I had people come up to the microphone to share insights on the process and what they learned. One woman chose the snails eye view of trees as a metaphor for appreciating diversity.

"Lying on my back looking up at the trees and seeing how beautiful they are and how different they are in height. If I appreciate the beauty in them, they will in turn appreciate the beauty in me."

I rounded things off by reciting a verse from T.S. Eliot, *East Coker*, to close.

In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.



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Visual Planning Processes
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