



It's not your job.  
It's not your career.  
It's not your startup.  
It's not your company.

**It's your life.**

FUTUROSITY

## SACRED PANDA

Simple tools for creating a more future-friendly culture

PANDA stands for five characteristics of high-performing individuals, teams, and organizations. SACRED is a simple tool to help you create PANDA.

### PANDA

#### Problem-facing

All big problems are the result of avoiding small problems. Being future-friendly means acting now to prevent the future from inheriting the problems of the present and the past. To do that, you need to vigorously encourage and defend the people who surface problems in your organization. Truth, trust, and transparency must be the norm. There are no failures, only lessons. Be learning agile—face problems head-on and learn rapidly.



#### Alignment

Effective teams are aligned—on the vision and aims of your organization, roles and responsibilities, priorities, deadlines—on everything that contributes to your organization's success.

#### Networking

Your organization will perform at a high level when there are strong connections both within and outside the organization. An organization that's strongly networked internally will be more collaborative, less siloed, and will encourage *organizational*

*citizenship behavior*<sup>1</sup>, i.e., people going above and beyond their job descriptions to help other people and the organization be successful.

Networking outside of your organization is also critical—for you, your team, and your organization. By some accounts, as much as 50% of your professional success depends on the quality of your network.<sup>2</sup> Having an extensive and open network is a great way to optimize for serendipity. In a volatile and uncertain world, having a significant positive impact may require collaboration with industry allies, government agencies, NGOs, and other partners.

## Decision-sharing

It may have made sense in the past for decisions to be made top-down, and most leaders skewed toward a leadership style where they simply told their team what to do. There's a continuum of decision-making styles, from *telling* to more creative approaches.<sup>3</sup> There is no one right way, but in a VUCA world, autonomy reigns.

## Accountability

I want to make a distinction between responsibility and accountability. Responsibility means, Who *responds* for a particular role or task? Everyone on a team should know their responsibilities. Accountability means, Who will be held to *account*? Who pays? There's an idea that accountability is about having consequences for people who don't deliver. If someone doesn't deliver because of a lack of time, resources, skills, cooperation, or some other reason, the proper response is not to hold them to account, but **to help them**. If they said they were going to do something and didn't do it—and there's no valid reason why they didn't do it—it's not an issue of accountability, but one of integrity. You will have to address the integrity issue.

If we are working together on the same team, who's accountable for our success? **We all are**. If we fail, we all pay. On a team with high accountability, we have each other's back. If I see you struggling, even if it isn't my job, I'm going to help you any way I can. And you'll do the same for me. That's accountability.

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<sup>1</sup> Amabile, Teresa, et al. "IDEO's Culture of Helping." *Harvard Business Review*, no. January-February 2014, Jan. 2014. *hbr.org*, <https://hbr.org/2014/01/ideos-culture-of-helping>.

<sup>2</sup> Simmons, Michael. "The No. 1 Predictor Of Career Success According To Network Science." *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelsimmons/2015/01/15/this-is-the-1-predictor-of-career-success-according-to-network-science/>.

<sup>3</sup> Tannenbaum, Robert, and Warren H. Schmidt. "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern." *Harvard Business Review*, no. May 1973, May 1973. *hbr.org*, <https://hbr.org/1973/05/how-to-choose-a-leadership-pattern>.

# SACRED

My clients use SACRED, or some variation of this outline, for All Hands meetings, 1:1s, and retrospectives. Don't force everyone to take a turn on every question (they'll just make something up, which defeats the purpose). Ask the questions and open it up for anyone who wants to respond.

## Successes

What have you—or someone else on the team—accomplished since our last meeting? Celebrate your successes.

## Appreciations

Who helped you? Or who has done something that you appreciate? Be specific. Be personal. Talk about impact. How did their actions help you?

## Challenges

What challenges are you experiencing personally? What problems do you see on the team, in the organization, or in the environment that might impact what you're trying to accomplish? Surface challenges when they're small.

## Requests

Make direct requests for the help you need. Make specific requests of specific teammates. Don't assume there's no one on the team who can help you. Ask for what you need. If they can't help you, they may know someone else who can.

## Expectations

What do you expect to accomplish by the next meeting? Or what do you expect to happen that you and the team may need to be mindful of?

## Decisions

Are there decisions that need to be made? Changes in how you or the team—or the organization—work? What is the best approach to making the decision? Top-down? Co-creative? Something in between?