

How Can We Keep This Going? Cultivating a Culture of Experimentation

Ascending the Mountain of Innovation Conference

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CLARITY ■ DIRECTION ■ CHANGE

Why Bother?

“In an environment with unknown solutions and rapidly changing requirements, encouraging a culture of experimentation is critical to congregational success.” -Amy Asin

Caution: In our rapidly changing times, there should be no expectation that one model will be created... Or that one model will ...last another fifty years. Change in our economy, technology, families and culture are coming too quickly. Stamina, focused commitment, continual learning, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty characterize the work style of...congregations who have challenged the existing model... They brace themselves for the unknown. They strive to release themselves from contentment. Continual experimentation is the constant.

-Cyd Weissman

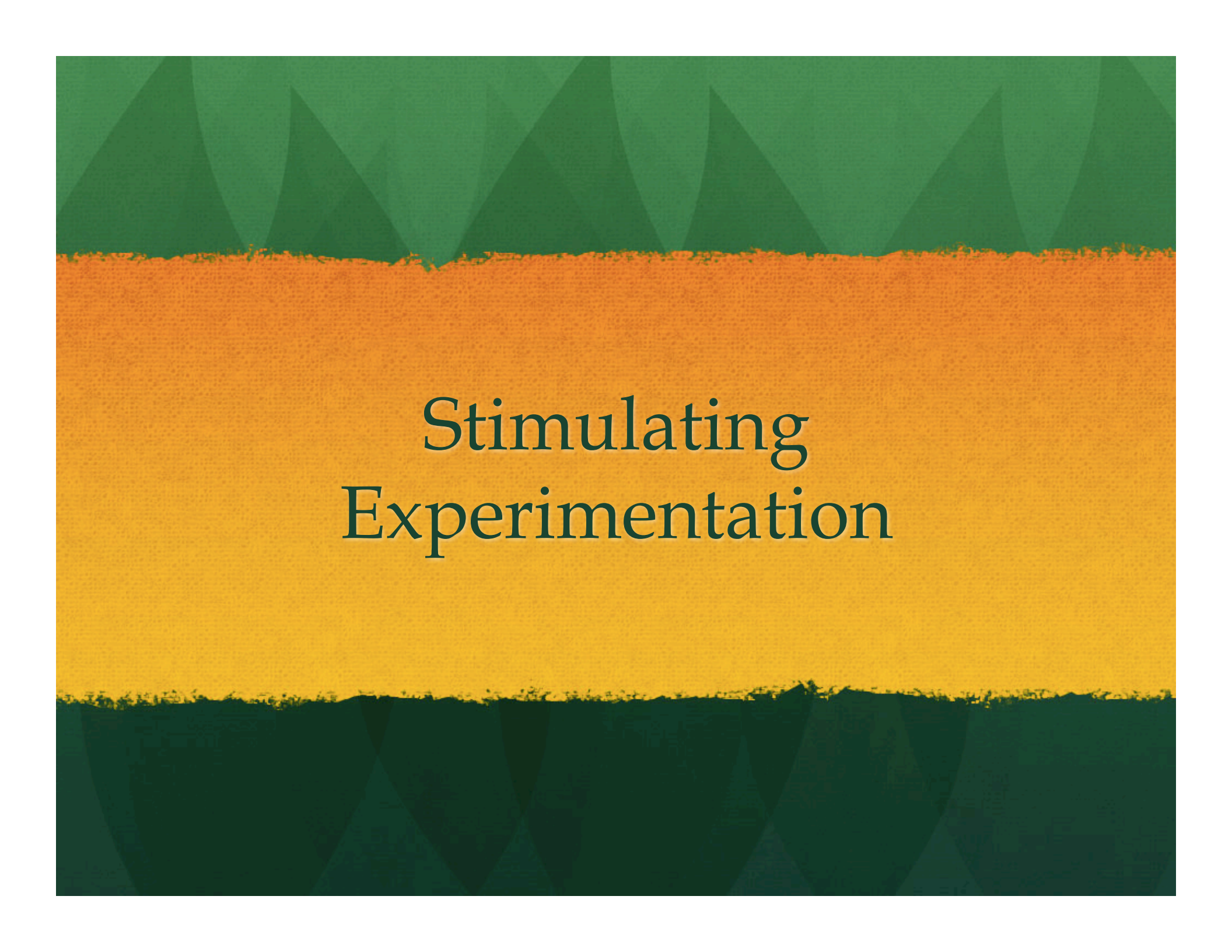
Your Starting Thoughts

- What does “a culture of experimentation” mean to you?
- Where have you seen it?
- What do you imagine it looks like?
- What gets in the way of creating or enacting such a culture in your congregation?

The Balance of our 50 Minutes Together

Culture of Experimentation: Three Aspects

- What does it take to *stimulate* experimentation?
- What about a culture *keeps* the system from *extinguishing* experimentation?
- What *sustains* a culture of experimentation?



Stimulating Experimentation

Stimulating Experimentation

What's
so?

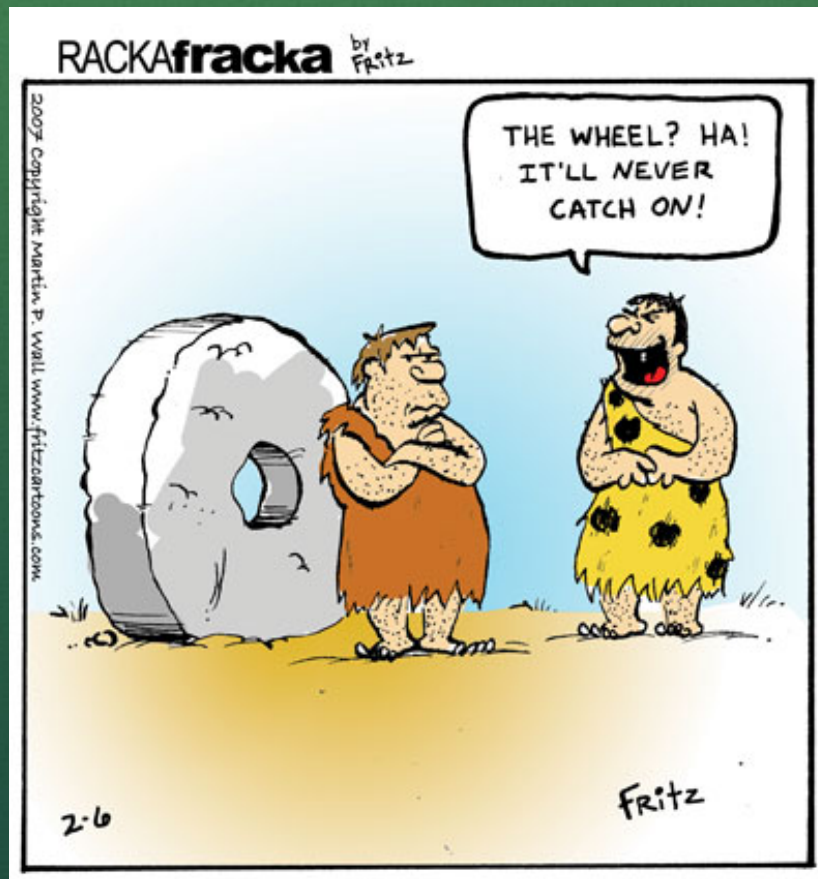
So what?

Now
what?

Open Minds



Optimism



Open Doors



Empathy



Environmental Scanning



Collaboration





Not *Extinguishing*
Experimentation

How Not to Extinguish Experimentation



I have not **failed**. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work. Many of life's **failures** are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.

How Not to Extinguish Experimentation

- Assume congregants are resilient; focus on “Why”
- Focus on *principles* rather than programs (or practices).
- Manage transitions (as well as change)
 - What losses will this experiment create?
 - For whom?

How Not to Extinguish Experimentation

- Affirm values of *kehillah kedosha* (sacred community)
 - Shed transactional, consumerist relationship
 - Get beyond “Did they like it?”
 - Treat congregants as partners, co-creators
- Examine habits and processes
 - Budgeting
 - Decision-making/Governance



Sustaining a Culture of
Experimentation

Sustaining A Culture Of Experimentation



Shift
expectations
about stability
and change

Sustaining A Culture Of Experimentation



Make sure feedback (evidence)
informs future decision-making

http://www2.huc.edu/ece/?ht_kb=background-on-empowerment-evaluation

Sustaining A Culture Of Experimentation

How you manage people:

- Encourage them to scan the external environment
 - Conferences and meetings
 - Reading and relationships
 - Innovation Opportunities
- Allocate time for immersion, planning, experimenting, reflecting
- Foster team work and partnership



Sustaining A Culture Of Experimentation

How you manage people:

- Reward innovative behaviors
- Support ongoing, iterative change
- Extend political support to change-makers
- Cultivate cadres of lay leaders with supportive leadership perspective
- Operate with a core value of *dan l'chaf z'chut* (benefit of the doubt)

Behave Like Liberal Jews

**We love tradition.
And we're willing
to change anything
to keep it alive.**

Your Questions

