

# A Discourse on Working in Academic Health Centers With Some Practical Observations

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Wake Forest University  
School of Medicine



The academic core of



Atrium Health

# Conflict of Interest Disclosure

**None**

# Objectives

- Convey my experiences of working in AHCs
- Review Simone's Maxims



# Simone's Maxims

Updated and Expanded:

*Understanding Today's  
Academic Medical Centers*

Joseph V. Simone, MD

**Understanding Academic  
Medical Centers: Simone's  
Maxims**  
**Clin Canc Res 1999; 5:2281-  
2285**

**Book Review.**  
**Hum Pathol 2013:1964-1965.**

## Also based on

Working at 6 AHCs--

Albany Medical Center, UCSF, Columbia-Presbyterian, U of Iowa, U of Utah, and  
Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist

“Experience is the name everyone  
gives to their mistakes”

-Oscar Wilde



# Topics

- Institutions
- Leadership
- People
- Jobs and Changing Jobs
- Other (Miscellaneous)

# Institutions



# **Institutions have a culture and that culture drives decision making**

# Institutions are not loyal to you

**Institutions have long time horizons and their reputations take a long time to change; your timeline is much shorter and your reputation can change much faster**

**An AHC in bad shape will probably descend further even after corrective change before it gets better**

- Good to Great (Collins)

**An institution will outlast a dissenting individual, regardless of merit**

**There are strong temptations to  
compromise academic missions for  
power or money**

# Leadership

# Leadership does matter

- Who Moved My Cheese (Johnson)
- The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner)
- Leading Change (Kotter)



**Academic success depends greatly on  
the local/regional culture and finances**

# Leaders are usually chosen for characteristics that have little correlation with a successful tenure

- The last 10% of job accomplishment may take as much effort as the first 90%, and may not be worth it

# Crap flows uphill in AHCs

**The appropriate maximum term for  
an academic leader should be  
10 (+/-3) years**

# People

# First class people recruit first class people; second class people recruit third class people

- Expertise
- Integrity
- Energy
- Intelligence
- Other

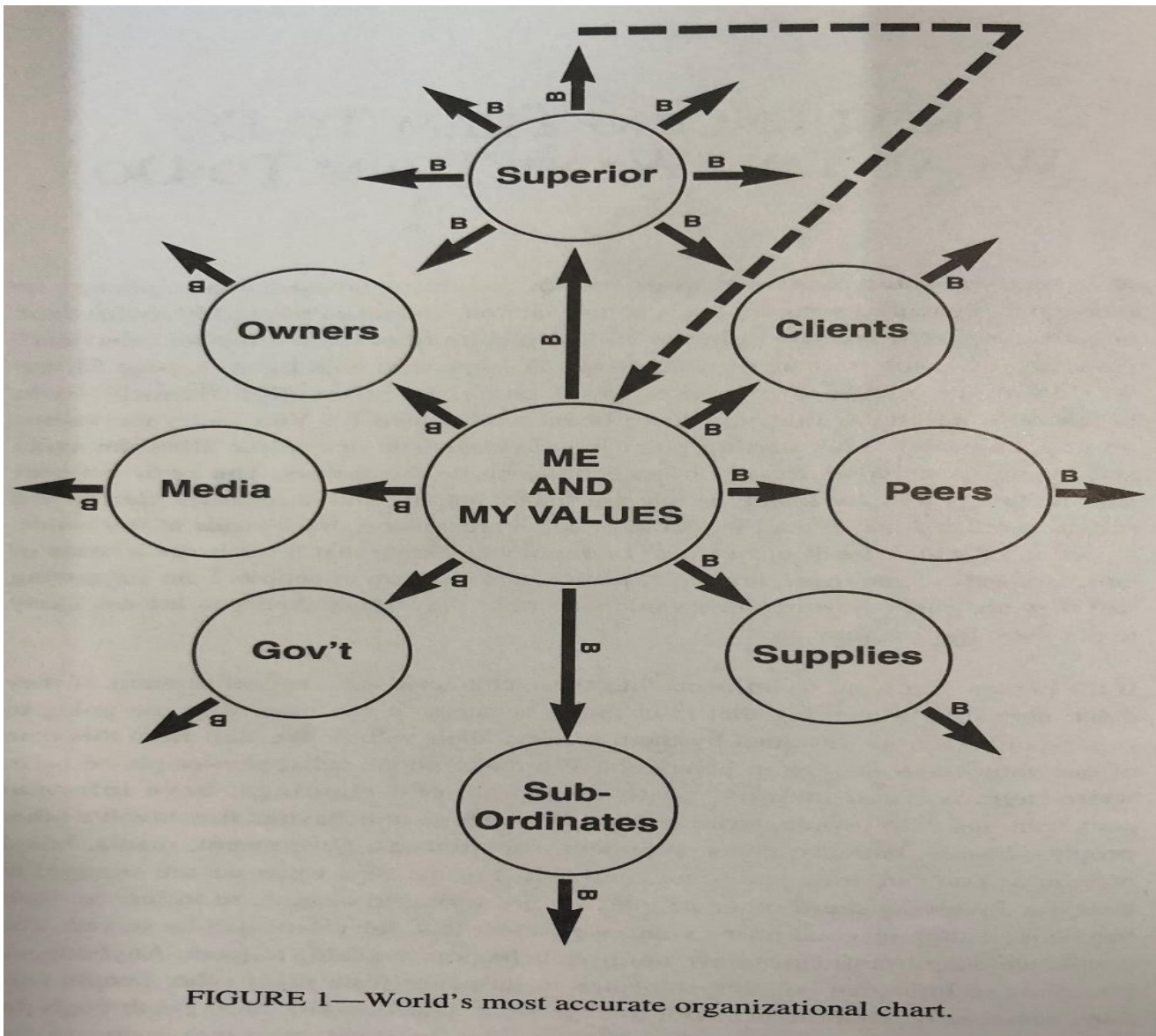
i.e. EIEIO

# Personal attitude and team compatibility are greatly underrated in recruiting

- Overcoming the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni)
- Emotional Intelligence (Goleman)
- Encouraging the Heart (Kouzes & Posner)
- Children the Challenge (Dreikurs)

# Recruits bring expertise and culture





The Shifting Sources of Power and Influence; CE Dwyer (1991)

# Ineffective people and trouble-makers are often transferred where they continue to be ineffective and trouble-makers

- Members of most institutional committees consist of ~30% who will work at it and ~20% who are idiots/status seekers/troublemakers
- Difficult Conversations (Stone, Patton, Ury)

# Faculty Fired for Incompetence Will Almost Always Land a Better Job

# The Job and Changing Jobs

- Working Identity (Ibarra)
- The First 90 Days (Watkins)
- What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20 (Seelig)

# The Job is what it is

- The One Minute Manager (Blanchard & Johnson)
- Getting Things Done (Allen)
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey)

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant I</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Crisis</li> <li>● Pressing problems</li> <li>● Deadline driven projects</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant II</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relationship building</li> <li>● Finding new opportunities</li> <li>● Long-term planning</li> <li>● Preventive activities</li> <li>● Personal growth</li> <li>● Recreation</li> </ul>
Not Important	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant III</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interruptions</li> <li>● Emails, calls, meetings</li> <li>● Popular activities</li> <li>● Proximate, pressing matters</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Quadrant IV</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trivia, busy work</li> <li>● Time wasters</li> <li>● Some calls and emails</li> <li>● Pleasant activities</li> </ul>

# The More Detailed the Offer Letter the Greater the Likelihood of Failure

# Jobs may be like oysters

- If you get past the rough shell, the difficulty opening, and the yucky blob inside you may find something tasty and maybe a pearl



**Don't put too much weight on things that  
don't directly bear on your chances of  
success**

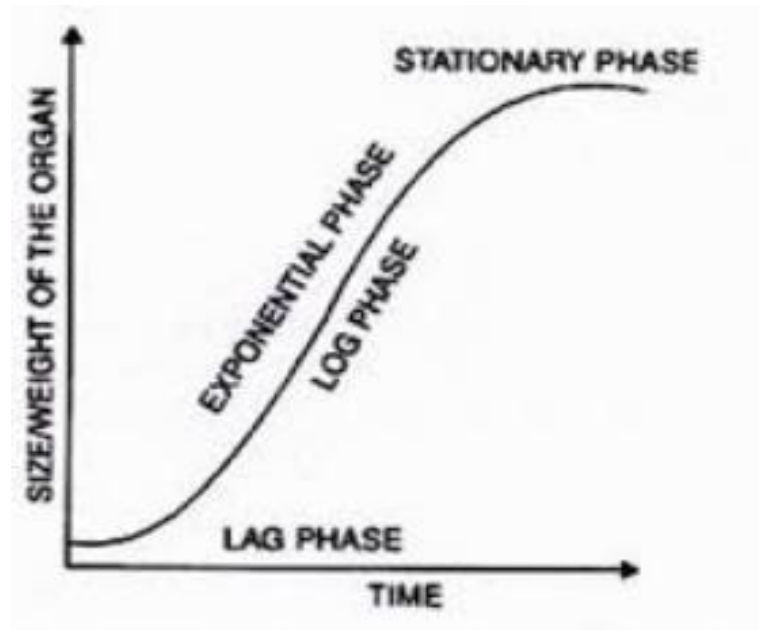
**If you're hired for an acute problem, your leverage will dissipate once it is solved**

**Job fit may take 18 months or more  
to become apparent**

# Every Job Change Involves a Push-Pull Dynamic; the more the push dominates, the more likely it will be unsatisfactory

- Consider a Move Only if the Anticipated Opportunity is at least 50% Better
- 3 signs of a miserable job (Lencioni):  
anonymity, irrelevance, immeasurement

# The time course of academic jobs follows a classic sigmoid growth curve



# Other

# Longevity is not a good measure of success, accomplishment, or happiness

- Four Thousand Weeks (Burkeman)
- How Will You Measure Your Life? (Christensen)

**Academic battles are recurring and continuous; no one wins them all**

- Getting to Yes (Fisher & Ury)



# Sayre's Law

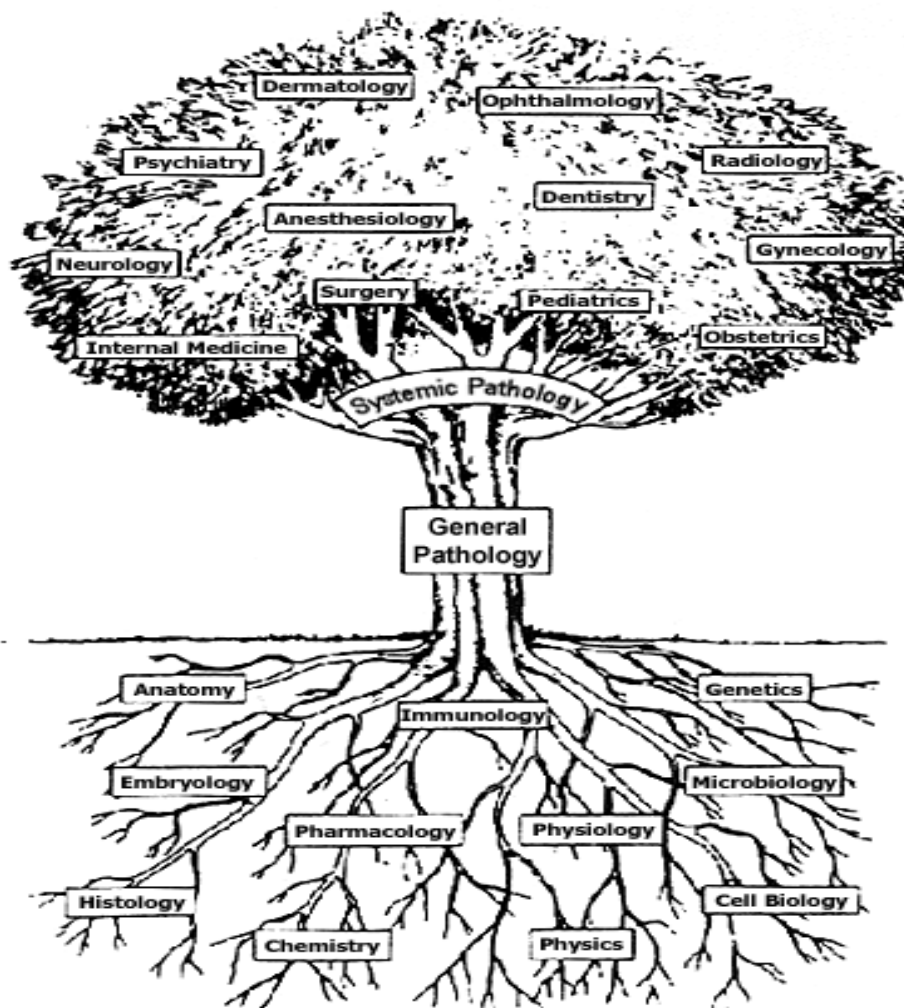
- “Academic politics is the most vicious and bitter form of politics, because the stakes are so low.”

# Research

- Get ideas from the best
- multiple, original lines of research is very hard
- Metaphors: top → down; picking up stones
- Maturity of the field

# Academic Medicine is a noble calling

THE TREE OF MEDICINE



“As is our pathology so is our practice...what the pathologist thinks today, the physician does tomorrow.”

Sir William Osler, M.D. (1849-1919)



**It's been a severe pleasure**

Questions?

The Witch Doctors (Micklethwait & Wooldridge)

## Annotated Reading List

**Getting Things Done.** D Allen (there is a newer edition from 2016)

All about personal (time) management

**Questions of Character.** J Badaracco (2006)

Challenges for a leader's character through literature

**The One Minute Manager.** K Blanchard and S Johnson (1981)

Short book about managing people well

**The Four Thousand Weeks.** O Burkeman (2021)

Philosophical guide to time and time management

**How Will You Measure Your Life?** C Christensen (2012)

Asks-How can I be sure that I will be successful and happy in my career, that my relationships with my spouse, my children and my extended family and close friends become an enduring source of happiness, and that I live a life of integrity?

**Good to Great.** J Collins (2001)

A classic that describes how companies made and sustained the leap to greatness, including the importance of the hedgehog concept and Level 5 leadership

**The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.** S Covey (first published in 1989)

Principle centered approach about how to lead one's life

**Emotional Intelligence.** D Goleman (there is a newer edition from 2005)

Perhaps dated but still valuable about how to handle one's own emotions

**Getting to Yes.** R Fisher and W Ury (there is a newer edition from 2011)

Best single book about negotiation. BATNA!

**Working Identity.** H Ibarra (2004)

A way to reinvent your career

**Who Moved My Cheese?** S Johnson (1998)

Parable about change

**Leading Change.** J Kotter (there is a newer edition from 2012)

The 8-step process for managing change is excellent

**Encouraging the Heart.** J Kouzes and B Posner (there is a newer edition from 2013)

All about recognizing and rewarding people

**The Leadership Challenge.** J Kouzes and B Posner (there is a newer edition from 2017)

Probably the best single book about leadership

**The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team.** P Lencioni (2002)

How to develop trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and attention to results

**What I Wish I Knew When I was 20.** T Seelig (2009)

A guide to transitioning to adulthood

**Simone's Maxims.** Updates and Expanded: Understanding Today's Medical Centers. J. Simone

See also: Clin Cancer Res 1999; 2281-2285.

**Difficult Conversations.** D Stone, B Patton, S Heen (there is a newer edition from 2010)

An approach to having those tough conversations

**The First 90 Days.** M Watkins (there is a newer edition from 2013)

How to successfully on board