



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Nadim Matta

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WIDNER: Our guest today is Mr. Nadim Matta. Mr. Matta is President and founding board member of the Rapid Results Institute. He was born and raised in Lebanon. He holds a degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Master's Degree in Public Health from the American University of Beirut and an MBA from the Yale School of Management. He worked at the US Agency of International Development in Beirut where he oversaw the implementation of USAID's (United States Agency for International Development) Relief and Rehabilitation Program during the Lebanese civil war.

He also worked for Save the Children Federation where he led the design and implementation of a food assistance program benefiting 100,000 families who were displaced by the civil war in Lebanon.

In 1990, Mr. Matta joined Schaffer Consulting where he became a managing partner in 2009. He continues to work with leadership teams in major corporations on driving change and accelerating strategy execution, but much of his life is devoted to supporting the efforts of public servants to improve government. Thank you for joining us today.

MATTA: *It is a pleasure. It is a wonderful introduction.*

WIDNER: As you know many of our listeners are unfamiliar with the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) technique and I wonder if you would begin perhaps with a few words about how this management technique works, where the idea came from and then talk more expansively about where you have seen it used quite effectively.

MATTA: *I'm happy to do that and honored to have the conversation. Let me start with what the RRI approach is and talk a bit about its evolution. I think of it as a way of working, not just a management tool. It is a way of thinking and working that emerges out of three beliefs that have been validated by a lot of empirical experience and observation.*

The first belief is that there is tremendous untapped capability for performance and for change in communities and in organizations. I say "untapped" because it doesn't always emerge spontaneously. In fact, there is an argument that sometimes the way organizations evolve don't really lead to the type of performance that they're intended for and there is a lot of capacity that is suppressed unintentionally by organizations. That's a different conversation.

But the belief that the capacity exists, that's first. The second belief is that leaders in communities and organizations can unleash this capability and channel it to the most important things for the people involved. I say "can," but even more it is one of the key roles of leaders, in our view, to unleash this capability and to channel it in the right directions that are critical for the organizations and the communities.

The third belief is that short-term, somewhat unreasonable commitments, framed in the right way, can actually be used as a lever for unleashing this capability. So that is sort of the starting point for this work. Again, you can call them beliefs, but certainly over the last 20 years in my corporate work experience as well as in development, I've always been validated and confirmed with this belief. I'm always surprised a little bit by the degree of capability that emerges when the right context and the right conditions are set up.

Initially, we as sort of catalysts for change may be the ones framing the challenges and creating the context, but ultimately whether in a corporation or in a community in sub-Saharan Africa, we are really outsiders to the system. So we see the role we play as enabling the actors in the system to play into this situation and become more effective at unleashing and responding, creating the challenge and responding to it in ways that increase the impact that people are looking for.

So that is sort of the way I think of this work. Now there are a lot of mechanics, tools and concepts that go into creating that context, some of it having to do with working with leaders and teams, and some of it has to do with what I like to refer to as the “choreography of creating the situation,” that enables people in spite of previous history and the odds to actually commit themselves to things they did not think were possible. There are ways to support their commitments and help them experience success, and these things evolve. These are not static things and we don’t say that, “we have an idea and we’re implanting it.” These evolve over time based on the local context, so that the elements that we bring into this work are always being enriched by the actual learning and experience that we have with the people involved.

So over time for example, let us take Jerry Sternin’s work on positive deviance. It is an idea that actually is gaining a lot of currency, particularly in development. It is the notion that people respond to experiences that others in the same situation have been able to cope with, and deliver results in spite of the constraints that are around them.

A little bit of social proof of this idea emerged out of observations from even the worst of situations, in his particular case it was actually in Vietnam: some mothers were able to maintain the nutritional status of their children in spite of the fact that the majority didn’t when they were pretty much in the same situation. So Sternin began to observe what they did differently. He found out that there were some resources that were available locally that enabled the mothers to do this. I think one of observations was that the mothers picked up the shrimps in the rice paddies and therefore had the protein to feed their kids, which prevented protein deficiencies.

So people began to use what they called “positive deviants” as a way to give others hope of a solution and what it might look like. I had the privilege to know Sternin before he passed away, and I bring this idea up because I loved it so much that we integrate this concept very much into the work since we know it is effective.

There are others who have written, for example, about the power of peers and how peer pressure can be a key factor in enabling people to persist when they may be more inclined to give up. Of course that is important for a team committing itself to achieve something in a hundred days, and the obstacles aren’t going away, right? They’re going to face these obstacles. So now we create more of a peer network among teams and team leaders to help them share experiences during the hundred days and rely less on the day-to-day handholding that the coaches and the outsiders used to do.

For example, in the work we’re doing with homeless veterans here in the US, we use that mode of support, purely peer coaching. Every two weeks there is a phone call among team leaders that we, the coaches, are on, but we try not to even respond to the issues ourselves as much as create the habit of people responding to each other and supporting each other. This is a way to try and

remove us out of the system as early as possible so the system takes off on its own.

The point I want to make here is that we are not saying, "we have a tool, it is project management, we set a goal in a hundred days and magic happens." It is a way of thinking. The tools and the techniques really evolve and we continuously experiment. We think about how to define the science of implementation, commitment and delivery, and we keep discovering the fundamental principals that can be operationalized in different contexts and that we can bring into this work.

Now where did it all start? I will go back to the question of the genesis of the evolution. There actually is an incident that started it all. This happened in maybe the late '50s or early '60s. Robert Schaffer, the founder of Schaffer Consulting, at that time was a young, recent PhD graduate in industrial engineering. He was asked to come in to do a study not very far from Princeton, New Jersey, at a refinery called the Bay Way Refinery, which has since been bought by Exxon. The study was to document the efficiencies that the management team was interested in hearing about.

Schaffer interviewed many people, both those in the factory and in senior management. A month later he was ready to come in and present his report, which essentially stated that everybody was stretched to the limit. It reported that things were going to fall apart unless they were somehow able to add resources to help them manage effectively and efficiently.

Then, by coincidence, a wildcat strike occurred, which was common in those days, particularly in oil refineries, and everybody walked out essentially to shut down the refinery. So Schaffer had come in to present to senior management and then this happened. From a distance, he started observing how this evolved. For a period of four months after the strike, the managers continued to run the refinery while around 60% of the workforce was picketing.

They didn't implement major overhauls and the refinery kept running. So Schaffer recognized that there was something wrong with this picture. Here he was, convinced that the refinery was breaking at the seams because of inadequate resources, and yet there existed resources that enabled the refinery to continue functioning, even though it was at a 60% deficit in human resources.

He decided that the refinery must have had some capacity that it wasn't utilizing. I am not advocating in any way that workers are irrelevant and the managers should run places. Yet, this example demonstrates the genesis of the notion of existing capability not being leveraged. This launched the inquiry of how to achieve such leverage. This idea further deals with how people perform in different ways in response to a crisis, like in this example. In such situations, the people begin to ignore some of the stuff that gets in the way, such as agendas and ego boosting, and focus on what needs to be done in a crisis. That is one instance in which this suppressed capacity somehow is unleashed.

Schaffer put these ideas together and wondered, "is it necessary to have a crisis for this capability to emerge?" The answer was, "probably not." That's how the initial idea emerged: figuring out how to help leaders structure situations that mimic conditions that allow such capacity to emerge from crisis-like situations.

So the notion of "the hundred days" emerged out of that idea. This notion gives people a sense that things need to be done. When they only have a hundred

days to do it, it feels like a crisis. In another way, I like to describe it as creating a sense of urgency around the things that are really important rather than having the time-sensitive affairs push back the important affairs. In this notion, we must exhort people to go against their own nature, having them recognize that something may be long-term but requires their focus. For most people, there may be a report due next week that may not be that important but since it has such a pressing deadline, which makes it take precedence, even though it is less important. Let us not fight human nature. People are going to respond to urgencies and emergencies. So let's create a sense of urgency around the things that are really important.

The hundred days isn't there for us to say, "Let's pick the low-hanging fruit," it is there to say, "how do we focus people on the things—or how do leaders focus people on things that are important." That's sort of the starting point.

The thinking evolved tremendously since then but that's the germinating idea that started the Schaffer practice, trying to understand and leverage that pretty fundamental principle. Maybe at the time Schaffer didn't realize that this is a universally fundamental principle. I think the work that we've done in developing countries really shows that there is a basic human element to this that transcends cultures and geographies.

How it is applied and operationalized will differ in each context and each of these contexts will differ. Schaffer's practice became part of the essential differentiator that we bring to the way we work with our clients. This migrated into development when two or three years after I joined Schaffer, I got involved in a consulting project for the World Bank, where the President at the time, Lewis Preston, was reorganizing. He put together a consortium of consultants to help with that. We were members of that consortium.

We were given the human resources department to work on. I think we did terrific work helping the World Bank re-think the way the human resource department was delivering services. There, our hundred-day project focused on creating a support services center, which was phenomenally successful and still exists today. It is still the center of delivering the transactional services of the World Bank to its operational units. But a year or so into this relationship with the World Bank, I became intrigued by the idea, maybe because I'm from Lebanon and I've lived on the receiving end of development as well, that the concepts at the core of the Schaffer practice are really even more relevant to the actual operations, projects and programs at work than the departmental work within the World Bank.

I recognized that this was not just about reorganizing the human resource department. There was something missing from projects shaped with a grand vision to go somewhere in maybe five, ten years or sometimes even more. In fact, I didn't pay enough attention to what it takes to get people really motivated and excited, and to unleash the capability locally. It was assumed that this would happen, that implementation would follow if we designed it the right way. We thought that if we put the right incentives in place, people would begin to perform and behave differently.

Our experience on the corporate side showed us that this was not to be taken for granted. I was convinced that this might be an important part of what the people at the World Bank needed to pay attention to. Obviously they need to pay attention to many things. I want to be clear: this is not the answer. There is no answer and whoever is looking for one is chasing their tail. I do know that if you

don't pay attention to that, even if all the other things are in place, you're not going to have implementation, ownership, commitment, results, or an impact. But those are all the things that we're looking for, right?

So even if you have the right policies, if they're not implemented, who cares? So I got obsessed, for lack of a better word, with this idea. Maybe twelve years ago at the World Bank I began sort of a campaign to preach the idea, initially by conducting workshops and talking about this idea. It didn't have the name "Rapid Results" at the time by the way; they were just "hundred-day projects." I started getting involved in some of the training programs that were given to the team leaders and planting these seeds. I found that people really caught onto this. They loved the idea but everybody told me, "Nadim, you don't understand. This might work at GE (General Electric), but we're dealing with Kenya where the hierarchy is so rigid and with Eritrea where there is zero capability. So that's a wonderful idea, but you don't quite understand the realities that we're dealing with." That was the party line.

During that phase I latched onto the idea of needing to give the idea a different name. At the time we called them "breakthrough projects" at Schaffer. The reason I thought we needed to give them another name was that in the context of the World Bank, the word "project" has a very unique meaning. Just attaching it to this gives it a lot of extra baggage that made it very hard for people to bear. We brainstormed together with somebody at the training department at the World Bank—she left now—her name is Mary Brady, about what should we call the idea in the training programs.

I said that we shouldn't call it a "project," but an "initiative," because it is about taking initiative. So what is this work really about? It is about results and it is about getting results quickly. That's one way to think about it. Hence it was named the "Rapid Results Initiative" or RRI. That's where the name emerged from: this need in the World Bank that Brady and I saw for creating a different label that wasn't hampered by the baggage of the word "project." It stuck. In fact, at Schaffer we use the RRI as our operative piece of the practice as opposed to whatever we used to call it earlier.

After several years of conducting these workshops, first at the headquarters and then in the field, one of the enterprising team leaders in the Latin American region, named Norman Pitchioni, said, "You know, why don't you come and show us how this can be done?" So he invited me to Nicaragua to work on a 16-year project to influence the productivity of 30,000 farmers. Yet, even after two to four years into this 16-year project, no farmer had ever been affected.

Pitchioni was really frustrated by this. The new Minister of Agriculture at that time also grew frustrated, saying, "I don't get it. We're seeing the flow of disbursement." This was all clean; it was doing manuals, hiring people, doing the studies but after four years no farmers knew this existed. So I went to Nicaragua with Pitchioni. We brought all those involved together and talked about the RRI. Initially the project coordinator on their side and the governor, very strong characters, basically again said to me, "You don't understand. A hundred days? We don't even have e-mail. We can't get a memo to each other in a hundred days and you're saying results in a hundred days?" I was with a consortium of donors, not just the World Bank; the World Bank was managing it. So a fellow from the Swiss Development Agency pulled me aside during a break and he said, "I know you mean well, but this is not just development. This is Nicaragua. They can't agree on anything in a hundred days let alone do anything in a hundred days!"

So he was shocked that 100 days later the farmers that were brought in as part of this process set their own goals two weeks after this first meeting with our help. Then they delivered phenomenal results—I mean phenomenal comparatively speaking. So they tripled the output of the sale of milk. It didn't change the country but they saw something that they got excited about. There were six of them; I call them the breakfast RRIs because one focused on milk, one on eggs, one on bacon and another on pigs.

People at the World Bank really took notice at the time. When they began to hear about this, in fact, the World Bank President then, Jim Wolfensohn, asked me to talk about this. He looked at me after my colleague and I described this effort. He said to us, "How can we make everybody here do this?"

I replied, "Mr. Wolfensohn, I think since you've been here there have been several initiatives that you've pumped up from the top and people push back on this. So let's let this emerge organically. What we want from you is simply to support this. But let's not begin to claim this as the answer. Let's work with the pioneering team leaders and create examples of success here."

He turned to his head of operations, who is also retired now from the bank, and he says, "Well, just make sure that you meet with them every so often to see what support they need." It wasn't financial support, it was literally I would draft e-mails for the Vice President for Operations and say, "Please send this e-mail to this team leader to let him know that you're noticing what exciting things are taking place."

The word began to travel through that. Then we published in our business review an article, "Why Good Projects Fail Anyway," which featured the Nicaragua story along with other corporate stories. So the street credibility began to emerge. So we moved from Nicaragua to help the Ministry of Health in Eritrea, Minister Meky. I keep saying either "he resigned" or "he passed away." This Minister Meky was a phenomenal leader and just passed away last year actually. His interest was in HIV/AIDS prevention. By the way, Eritrea is a story where we're writing about as well. He basically was very concerned that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is going to be hitting his country soon. They were at the cusp of the inflection point in the J-curve, which a lot of other countries had experienced at that time, in 2003. So they had 2.3% prevalence. Typically that sort of moves up to the J-curve, shoots up and then begins to taper off when people begin to die on the other side.

He was in a bit of a panic mode. They developed a strategy for this. He asked, "what are we going to need to implement this?" So the idea of getting something done in 100 days was like an answer from heaven to him. We brought all those involved together. We launched the first wave of RRIs and it really started a movement in Eritrea around this. There were several waves; we moved from the center to the periphery and then they themselves moved one of initiatives into the education sector. The Minister of Education implemented an initiative in two schools in the central district and it turned into a nation-wide program all on their own.

So they had a RRI in every school in the county focused on setting hundred-day goals. They committed to prevention goals, such as teaching safe sex behavior, essentially using condoms, to older classes. We were there on and off for a year supporting the startups and supporting the scale-up into the different regions. Then it took off on its own.

There is no attribution in this work. I'd be the last to say, "Eretria accomplished all these things because of the RRI." But we do know this probably influenced the trajectory of how the country has fared in terms of its HIV/AIDS prevalence. In fact, after that, two years ago UNAIDS [The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS] wrote about Eritrea as a model case for how they were dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They stabilized the prevalence, which at the time was unusual, now it is not a big story anymore.

We then introduced this work in Kenya. It took a while in Kenya; I wouldn't say this was a straight-arrow journey since it took all kinds of turns. Then we were asked to introduce it in Madagascar and this is where I worked. I worked with, Benamina Randrianarivelo, a local consultant who the World Bank had suggested. We worked together for about two years; he worked on the ground and I came in every two months for two or three weeks and built up the local network as well as created the political context needed for this work to thrive. So a lot of this also deals with being deliberate in involving individuals and how, from the leadership level, to keep them engaged and feeling like this is something that can accrue to them credit and a leadership perspective.

That is a lot of the non-mechanical work. As you set up teams and initiatives are launched, you always have to pay attention to how to provide leverage and to expand the space, engagement and the coalitions at the leadership level that enable the continued progress. That is sort of another part of the work.

At some point, I think after Madagascar, I realized that this was something that we shouldn't continue to do just as sidebar and hobby under the Schaffer label. There was something here. Again it isn't the answer, but it is part of the puzzle that wasn't being paid attention to, and that's when my partners and I decided that we wanted to set up a separate entity that focuses on this. This was the genesis of the Rapid Results Institute. I think that was now six or seven years ago.

We had to operate for a whole year before the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) responded to our request, and understandably so. Those at the IRS wanted to make sure that this was not a gimmick for a consulting firm to have another way revenue scheme. So we had to set up very strict processes to ensure that the private sector consulting firm wouldn't benefit from the nonprofit that we were creating. We truly were creating this as a separately governed entity that pursued a mission, as opposed to funneling money into a consulting firm. I'm a firm believer in this work and I put together a small board consisting of people not affiliated with Schaffer consulting. We began to hire people to create a different economic model for the delivery of this work. So colleagues for example, worked for me for maybe three years before they moved on. That's how they learned about this work. I didn't hire Benamina, but basically for two years he was subcontracting for us before the institute was created. Then I brought in others whose interests primarily focused on development. Some started as interns and then moved on to become more regular staff members. We began to be more articulate about the valuable contribution we could provide, which is less about delivery because at that point we had created a network that was able to support the delivery. But we began thinking about the essence of this work: why does it work? What are the pieces of it that are critical? How can it be adapted to different contexts?

Think of it more as the R and D (research and development) of this work. We also focused on being more deliberate and innovative in how we bring coaches up to speed to support this work.

WIDNER: You've talked a little bit about the coaches, you've mentioned their role but they're obviously critical here and in that R and D capacity. I wondered whether you could talk a little bit about what makes a good coach? Then perhaps after that we could talk a little bit more about how you get the leaders onboard to enlarge that space because we've seen that happen in a number of the cases we've covered. That links to the third question of what are the requisites for making this work. Are there some settings where it is more likely to take off than others?

MATTA: *These are all important questions and I can share with you the current state of thinking about these, but this is an evolving process. What really is fascinating to me, and the reason I continue to do this work, is the continuous discovery process. If it was simply the matter of having an idea and spreading the idea in a cookie-cutter fashion, I think I'd get bored given who I am and the way my mind works. But for whatever reason I keep finding deeper layers of discovery around this work.*

First, there are several elements concerning the coaches. I'm not going to list them in any particular order but will mention them as they come to mind. Firstly, particularly in development, a lot of people working on development projects have been socialized to think of themselves as experts, as the people with the answer, whether it is technical or managerial. Obviously in this work we retain a managerial point of view about what motivates people. We'd like our coaches to share that point of view, but being able to step out of the role of the expert is a critical prerequisite for a successful coach. That is achieved partly by unconditioning people from what they've been conditioned to believe as the value of what they're contributing. If you're not providing the space for people to answer their questions, you're not going to achieve ownership. If you answer their questions and develop the solutions, they might be the right solutions and even if they implement them, they're not going to be owned.

So the first element is a shift, and not everybody is able to make that shift. Secondly, there needs to exist some degree of humility at several levels about the possibility of what people can accomplish. One should be humbled by someone's capabilities rather than pre-judging that there is no capability. And humility about learning and not being dogmatic, even about the process, is important. You can also get too emotionally wedded. This is the way we do it, going back to the principles and adapting the way to the local context. So someone with that type of humility won't say, "I am the RRI expert!" Obviously you know more than they do about what you're talking about, but if you come across as the RRI expert, you're going to miss something as well. It becomes a power trip. We've seen that in some places. This becomes sort of a badge one carries on. I'm the RRI expert; I come from the president's office. You may get results but you're not going to get the transformation that comes along with it that enables these results to be sustained.

These are two things that are absolutely critical. The third element is subtler and sometimes harder to pin down. This element is that some people we work with, whether they are clients or colleagues, have the ability to distinguish between the slightest difference between a result and an activity, which is almost taken for granted. Some people have a very hard time with that because we're conditioned to see ourselves as problem solvers.

In school what do we do? We're given problems and we solve them, right? We're not asked to think, "which problems we should work on today?" So we jump into

the solution mode. Conversely, if you're interested in results you would want to start by asking yourself and helping people articulate what the problem is, what the challenge is before you start layering the activities to get there, right? So being results focused is important. There are moments in which you see either people moving in, getting the "a-ha moment," or people getting stuck in a different mind space.

I'm not being concrete since it is hard to be very articulate about this. This is the kind of thing you know it when you see it but it is hard to put rough boundaries around it. At the same time we find that some people—and this is particularly with clients and with leaders, bring different temperaments to a situation. Some leaders are the types who, in psychological terms, have a need for control. So their instinct is to define things for people. Some others are more influencers and have less of a need to make a decision.

Of course the coach needs to have the temperament of an influencer rather than the decider. We see it both in coaches and in leaders. You want to be an influencer but you want to be results oriented at the same time. Sometimes people view that as a contradiction in terms like, "How can we be delivering results if we're not making decisions?" So it is an interesting balance that not all people are able to work. We get around that. Obviously, we're not going to do a psychological analysis of every coach. We're given people and we need to work with whom we're given.

We try to work around that through, to some degree, through the process. So here is what you do at this stage. Let us take normal people for an example. Even if your instinct tells you—or even if you're inclined to act differently, we say that your success here is if no more than 30% of the time you're either talking or you're answering questions and the rest of the time you're either silent or asking questions. So you give them kind of an artificial metric to gauge themselves by rather than trying to necessarily change one's temperament. Obviously, if you can get the right temperament, that is even better.

In terms of skills, in a way you can learn skills but I think changing your temperament is the harder one. So yes, you need to learn facilitation skills. You need to learn communication skills. But these are more learnable and the others are sometimes harder to do. Let me stop here on the coaches, is that helpful?

WIDNER: That's very helpful, thank you.

MATTA: *You asked about project management and its differences. Obviously, good project management is a good thing, right? I wouldn't get rid of it at all. In fact, everybody, whether they're doing this work or any other work, should practice good project management. But if this is just about good project management, I don't think I'd be as excited about it as I am and I don't think it would have delivered the type of results that we have seen happen.*

Obviously, you need to use good project management disciplines. You need to help people learn good project management disciplines along with other good leadership disciplines. The difference is before you get to project management, you need to establish ownership of the results that people want to achieve. This isn't our ownership of it, but the ownership of the people involved. You need to get to a mindset where people, not just own the issue but commit themselves to doing something about it.

You need some modicum of collective action associated with that because the most interesting results aren't results that individuals or even individual organizations achieve. But they require some degree of collective action. So this is a way to create these things that, with people learning about good project management disciplines, increases the odds of success. But without the previous things, you can have good project management, even good results but no personal transformation, no sustainability, no changes for sustainability because you lack ownership. Without such ownership there is no potential for sustainability. It is a precondition, but it is not sufficient.

The other difference is the frequent role of leaders in this. Leaders aren't the project managers; they need to play a very different role. They need to create a space in which people have the opportunity to innovate, learn and discover on their own. That runs against the grain of a lot of what people instinctively do in leadership positions. I think the reason we get away with having leaders open that space is because we tell them to try it out for a hundred days. I think if we came to leaders, said that there was a better way to manage and told them that we would teach them, I don't think many people would pay attention to us.

If we say, "there are some exciting results that have happened in these places. Oh, by the way, you don't have to take this as gospel, but let's see if in the next hundred days, with our support and coaching, you can create similar conditions." We then see what happens. We give people that hundred-day space to step back and see what could emerge if they interact with others in different ways and behaviors.

WIDNER: In some countries, the civil service rules are fairly rigid. Do you find that you have to get leaders to commit to lift those rules for that hundred-day period or does it fit pretty well within the context of most civil service rules?

MATTA: *So far we have found that there are perceptions in every system about what you can and cannot do. In some cases these perceptions prevail on people. So in some cases leaders, when we talk with them, may say, "We don't want to proceed with this." Maybe it is because they feel compelled by what they view as the constraints of the system. But there were cases when people said, "Let's try this," in the hyper-hierarchical setups of Kenya, Eritrea and Madagascar, places where the civil service rules are not exactly flexible. Leaders in these places were able to carve out space to enable this work to happen. So I think there are rules, but part of the issue is that people don't take the time to question what is possible and what's not.*

Obviously, you can start this anywhere but you do need leadership space, increasingly higher and higher in the food chain. In Madagascar, we got to the point where the President was talking up this work. Obviously people then begin to question the rules even more proactively than they would otherwise.

In Kenya, we kept this alive long enough so that when the right government players came on board, they were able to escalate it up to that level. So to answer your question, I think the hundred days does give people a bit of a license to experiment with the rules a little bit more. I haven't seen a situation yet when someone has said, "We're not going to do it because even bringing people together and giving them some space to innovate is against the civil service code here." They might have thought that and said something different not to proceed. And everybody who said, "Let's try it," was able to create a bit of space.

This doesn't work all the time. I'm not suggesting that this is going to work every time we put it into play. But where there was some political or leadership interest that we were able to create and when the space is opened, usually interesting things happen which shift the conversation. So the conversation a hundred days later with a minister about this work is very different than the conversation at the start because they're open to hearing about some of the behavioral issues.

WIDNER: We're very interested in why some leaders do create that space and then allow that to expand and allow the use of the RRI approach to diffuse throughout government a bit more or it has been adopted by non-governmental organizations in places like Madagascar as well.

MATTA: Yes.

WIDNER: I wondered what you thought made some more willing to run with it than others. Is it related to the degree to which they think, "I'm going to get some credit for these results when the next election comes," or does it have to do with individual personalities? Do you think that there have to be certain incentives in place for them or not?

MATTA: *I think it varies. Certainly there is more appetite for this when there is a new government in place. When somebody is coming in fresh with the aspirations, hopes and desire to create an impact. I frankly feel that, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, people come into government with that desire. It may get sucked out of them after a while because they're not able to move the needle on things, but when they get started I think that desire is there. Obviously, there are people who come to government for very different reasons. But for the most part I think that desire is there.*

So in a change of government there is likely to be more traction for this. I think part of it is personality. It goes back to that character trait I mentioned about the coaches, which depends on whether a leader is by nature more of an influencer or more of a type-A decider. More leaders probably fall under the type-A decider category. But depending on how they sit on that spectrum, it is hard for them to cede control, which is partly what we're asking them to do for a hundred days. They're ceding control to a team to decide on the goal, that's a big job, right? Many leaders don't feel comfortable with that.

So if you are really uncomfortable ceding control as a person, you're probably not going to be too enthusiastic about heading in that direction. If, for whatever reason, the incentives to try something different cause you to open this space, you may be in a different place in a hundred days. Things may change even in terms of your sense of your role as a leader; you may become more aware of how one's own inclinations and behaviors get in the way of what they want to try and accomplish. I wouldn't rule these leaders out as sponsors, but it will be harder to get the initial traction with them.

Let's take Eretria for example, which had a crisis or at least a perceived crisis. Meki was panicking about the potential impact of HIV/AIDS on his country. I have him on video saying, "This is about the survival of my people." That's how he thought about it. So he was someone who is going to try things, who is going to say, "Even if I am a control freak, if somebody tells me that this can work, I'm going to try it out, especially if I only have to close my eyes for a hundred days."

This is an example of a crisis situation, even if it is not a change of government. Frankly, I think people are hungry for results, leaders are hungry for results and

leaders know that results are political currency. So being able to plant their flag on the hill of results is very appealing, and that is to their credit. They opened the space even if they didn't go there and dig the well. They opened the space so they should take credit.

We talk with the teams and with the people involved and say, "This is a chance for you to plant your flag but if you really want this to be a way of doing business in this community or in the government, you have to create the space for others, particularly leaders, to share the credit." So some implicitly changed management ideas are planted at the level of the teams. This is where the coaches become helpful as well, because the ones who spend the time to really learn about all the aspects of this versus the mechanics of it would be attuned to these things. They would begin to think to themselves, "What do I need to do as a coach to make sure the leader remains engaged and how do I advise a team leader to do the same?" which is very different from simply saying, "I'm managing the meeting today for the team leader."

I want to add one thing about the coaches, which deals with peoples' abilities to not have their egos in front of the room when they're dealing with the teams and with the leaders. So if there is a big ego involved and they need to feed that ego through this work, it is going to be self-defeating at the coaches' level.

WIDNER: One of the things that we had spoken about earlier was that the whole idea here is to get people to take ownership.

MATTA: Yes.

WIDNER: That often means that it is very hard to say, "Here is the reform team that moved forward with this idea," because everybody claims to be that team of reformers. When trying to identify the people who had spearheaded some changes, I think you had observed the competition that we were seeing for ownership of this. We found that many people were claiming ownership and that this was actually an intentional product of the results. Did I get that right?

MATTA: *I think it is a consequence of the process. It could lead to many people wanting to have only their flag planted on the hill. I don't think it is intentional on our part to create that. Actually, I think we have become more deliberate about trying to avoid the situation where this becomes kind of monopolized as a way of working or as a tool or even as a display of, "I brought you this." That actually turns off some people who feel like, "I don't want to be the agent of somebody else in my government. I want to own it as well, as opposed to just doing what I'm being told to do. I don't want to be beholden to the flag bearer that is saying, 'follow me, I have this flag.'"*

We want to create a collective movement towards this. We don't always have the luxury to deal with all these change management aspects of an engagement. In an ideal world, we would be able to be much more deliberate about ensuring that this happens, but I think sometimes we just have to go with the flow and with the constraints within which we're operating. It is not as if we can deploy a few people to a country for three years and say, "Just make it happen." They need to be funded somehow. I wish that were the case.

WIDNER: I wondered if you could reflect a little bit more on the circumstances under which the RRI is most likely to take off and if there have been failures, it would be interesting to hear your thoughts about the most common sources of trouble as well.

MATTA: *Well I think we need to distinguish two things. Getting in and trying to help organize a RRI or a series of RRIs, is one dimension. Another dimension is that we've had a few successful RRIs but this thing didn't take off. These are two different things.*

I think it is somewhat easier to find answers to the first dimension. We know some of the things associated with the teams being able to achieve results. For example, we know the groundwork that needs to be done with the senior members to create that space. Even if it is for a hundred days, the people close to the work, whether it is the government or a community, are challenged to do something that is beyond the ordinary. They are left to their own devices as to what exactly it is that they're going to deliver and how they're going to get there.

So it is important to create that space and instill in these teams a sense that, "We have confidence in you and even though we're more senior, we really don't know the answer here. We trust that you will not only set your own goal that will be exciting for us but you're also going to figure out a way to achieve it." We know that work upfront, to create that context, is key.

Sometimes we're asked to come in and there isn't enough space or enough awareness of the need for it. The peoples' expectation is that you show up in a room and there is a group of people, asking, "Where's my RRI?" Without that pre-work, I think it is not as loaded for success. So that is key.

I think another key, at least in the initial phases, is having somebody preferably local, who knows enough about both the choreography of this work and the ongoing support of this work after the initial choreography of what we call "the launch," to help the team stick with it. This choreography helps the team move from thinking, "This is the challenge" and "Oh my God, what do I do about it," to "I'm committed to this hundred-day goal and here's my plan to do it." It is not evident that even if all the leaders are in the room, they they say all the right things and then they leave, which we ask them to do by the way, that if left to their own devices the team would say, "okay, let's set a hundred-day goal that we think would be impossible." They need to be nudged into the frame of mind in which they do that on their own without being told what it is or being demanded and commanded to do it. This is still their choice. That is what I mean by the "choreography" and the "launch."

Then some support by the coach initially is needed along the way to help the teams stick with the plan or adjust the plan, more importantly, so that the teams do not say, "Okay, we decided this is the plan, it didn't work, let's give up." Rather, we need them to say, "We decided this is the plan, it didn't work, how do we evolve the plan?" We must help these teams adopt the principles that are now very much involved on the corporate side, those kind of design-thinking principles of trying and iterating and adjusting, as opposed to saying, "We will stick to a plan within a hundred days, no matter what." So we know that this is an important part for the initial results to be achieved.

In terms of the other problem, I think it is a harder one to tackle. I can safely say that without an intentional strategy to engage with the senior members and the leaders on a somewhat longer-term horizon, it is going to be hard. So the emergence of leaders taking a key role is important. Obviously that can happen spontaneously but I think it will be nicer if we can be more intentional about that.

I also think the presence of local coaches is critical. Certainly we've seen that where we have invested in creating that capability. When the leaders are there, there is a potential for people to respond to what they're asking for if these coaches are there on the spot rather than parachuting in to respond to day-to-day challenge. Actually, I think the local coaches also add another dimension, which is really important. They make it easier for the process as a whole to become locally owned.

In Madagascar the process was called "angaredona" which roughly means, "achieving results together" in Malagasy. So it stopped being called the RRI and they came up with their own name, helping make it became their own. If you asked people in Madagascar they may even tell you that the initiative was invented there and that it was exported to other countries. That's fine; we're not about planting our flag. We'd love it if they think of us as having contributed in some way but that's it. In Kenya, it took on its own life as well with results for Kenyans. But I think the local coaches make that possible in some way. It gives it a local face, which is important for the ownership, not just of the specific results but also for the overall way of thinking.

WIDNER: I'm very glad that you brought up the Madagascar example because to us, in looking at a lot of these RRI cases, that one really stands out as a case where many people in the society appropriated much of the spirit of the approach.

MATTA: Yes.

WIDNER: A wonderful place perhaps to end.

MATTA: *These are just some of the things that come to mind; there are probably many other things related to the other question. Hopefully we will uncover them with our stakeholders as this journey continues.*

WIDNER: Thank you very much. I'm sure we all have lots more questions but this is a wonderful introduction and it is great to hear from you on it. Thanks.

MATTA: *I appreciate it, thank you.*