

“ We make the mistake of using things to develop people instead of using people to develop things.”

### Susan Millionses

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**JSD:** What do you wish you had known when you first began your journey as a learning leader?

**Milliones:** I wish I would have understood the power of the default culture. It is not enough to train, coach, mentor, or collaborate. We tend to completely overwhelm overwhelming problems with one or two strategies when what is needed are four to six strategies implemented on multiple levels simultaneously.

**JSD:** What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to those just starting out in the professional learning world?

**Milliones:** Remember that people are more important than things. Get some training in change leadership both inside and outside of education. Education is a spiritual endeavor. It

cannot be accomplished through the mere manipulation of material things. We make the mistake of using things to develop people instead of using people to develop things.

**JSD:** What fundamental resource do you find yourself going back to often, and therefore you would be quickest to recommend (and why)?

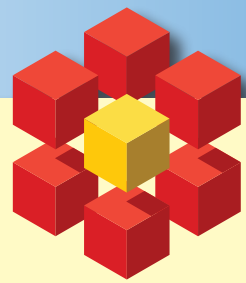
**Milliones:** Two things: I use the Cynefin Framework from the Cognitive Edge to help people understand that all problems (and solutions) are not created equal. When I present Cynefin, the entire room breathes a sigh of relief. Cynefin makes sense of what they are experiencing. There are levels of problem complexity that require different solution approaches on certain levels of the organization. We think that we should solve problems, but it is much more desirable to dissolve them instead. Rather than solve the same problems over and over, you can dissolve them by redesigning the

systems that create the problems in the first place.

Second, I use Influencer from VitalSmarts to help people understand what it really takes to change behavior. We use the levers of influence to design cohesive synergetic strategic plans aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning to dissolve the problems we identify using Cynefin. Influencer is pragmatic, user-friendly, and can be applied to every aspiration from a lesson in guided reading to years-long system change.

**JSD:** What have we not asked that you would most like to say to beginning learning leaders?

**Milliones:** Become a professional learning designer. Study design thinking and use design principles. The Standards for Professional Learning are critical parts. Their power lies in how they interact together in a cohesive whole. ■



#### advice

#### FROM LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

We asked Learning Forward members around the country for the counsel they'd like to give to new learning leaders.