

**MIDDLE GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY**



**STUDENT**  
**LEADERSHIP**  
**CONFERENCE 2023**

presented by  **AT&T**

# Full Length Session Descriptions

## BREAKOUT BLOCK 1

### **The Cs of Leadership - Like Diamonds but More Valuable**      **Presenter: Stacy Cimowsky**

Diamonds are a beautiful jewel that hold rare characteristics like clarity, durability, and longevity. These qualities make diamonds admired for their beauty and extremely valuable. Diamonds are composed of the single element of carbon, but it is the arrangement of the C atoms in the lattice that gives a diamond its amazing properties.

Leaders are often the same. We take the characteristics of leadership and arrange them in a way that makes the essence of leadership admired by many and valuable to all. Leadership is a state of mind, an attitude, a personal responsibility that each of us chooses to embrace regardless of our title. A leadership mindset can be contagious in an organization—personal or professional. Leaders are the people that others count on, respect, admire and support.

There is no such thing as perfect leadership—any more than a truly perfect diamond. But we can all work toward being an effective leader and having a learning spirit that will progress us each day towards a more perfect leadership style. A leadership style that, during the length of your lifetime, may truly serve to be more valuable than the rarest of diamonds! The 7 Cs of Leadership:

- Confidence – Leaders are grounded and confident in themselves. They exude a confidence that is becomes contagious to others.
- Calm – Leaders are calm. Calm is not windy or stormy. In other words, they are not blowhards or dark tempered. They bring a calm, thoughtful attitude to any circumstance.
- Committed – Bound to a person or thing. Leaders are devoted. Leaders are “all in”. Would you follow a leader that entertained failure?
- Consistent – Leaders are constant in their adherence to principles, course, and form but truly exceptional leaders do not fall into the trap of being stubborn or inflexible.
- Clarity – Good leaders communicate thoroughly. Taking time to ask for questions and seek understanding. The best leaders are the ones that communicate with clarity—reducing the opportunities for miscommunications and confusion.
- Constructive – The goal of leadership is to promote development and advancement. The steps along the way should never be biased or taken personal.
- Compassionate – The most effective leaders genuinely care. Not just about the outcome of the project but the people around them. Leaders should never be too busy to be kind.

#### Presenter Bio:

Stacey Cimowsky is an active Human Resources Manager with experience in the insurance and engineering industries. Over her career she has hired hundreds of employees – contractors, staff level professionals, and managers. Her current assignment is as an HR Manager for an actively growing Electrical Engineering Services firm in the utility industry. Throughout the span of her personal and professional journey, she has been a leader in a multitude of organizations ranging from her local and national sorority to a variety of civic, athletic, and church organizations. Ms. Cimowsky knows what it takes to be a leader!

## **Leadership When You Weren't Leading      Presenter: Dr. Jonathan Jenkins**

The opportunities to exercise leadership are a lot more common than we think and sometimes we don't recognize them when they appear. Because they are not always easy to recognize it can be challenging to effectively take advantage of such opportunities, beyond having the awareness and dedication to more fully see them.

A good way to begin is to identify the different aspects of life that draw us (or thrust us) into leadership, from a job, to a personal relationship, or a trying experience. The initial challenge is to recognize the situations in which we have an opportunity to influence the actions of a group. Being able to recognize these opportunities is in itself an ability that is part of the larger process of awareness of one's role in a community. Leadership roles include those beyond the ones labeled with titles and documents, encompassing also instances where the trust of many is put in a single person, making them a leader in that moment.

Once we learn to identify these moments, we will need to have the presence to learn the common lessons available across different leadership experiences. Like a set of requirements drives every software project, principles drive every effective human effort. Thankfully, a relatively small number of properties of an effective leader can capture most of what is needed, in particular competence and communication. Completing the development of a leader requires the competence to understand the task, but also the communication skills to motivate the people working on completing said task.

Growing from these lessons requires the decision and discipline to make self-evaluation a requirement of ongoing work. As occurs in software projects where the software engineer moves from the creative act to testing the creation for quality's sake, the effective leader will need to embrace practices that analyze past actions critically, including not only objective deficiencies but also how others both perceived and received our actions. Adapting principles and practices to different situations makes our leadership accessible to the people working with us in the moment. Leadership effects travel most effectively when carried by the language of the led, separately from the terms required by the task. Finally, adapting principles and practices to people, where possible, allows a leader to personalize the impact of the message.

Presenter bio:

Dr. Jenkins is an Assistant Professor with the School of Computing at Middle Georgia State University.

## **Leadership & Metacognition: Understanding How You Learn Will Help You Lead      Presenter: Dr. Kelly Causey**

In this session we will use a variety of short activities to identify our learning styles and strengths, then we will talk about how knowing your learning styles can help you become a better leader. We will also be looking at how you can use a knowledge of your team members' learning styles to accommodate their needs in a way that leads to overall team success. Participants will receive information about several free tools and resources about metacognition, learning styles, personality types, and leadership. This will be a fun, interactive, discussion-based session!

Presenter bio:

Dr. Causey has been an educator for 30 years. She holds a Bachelor in Elementary Education from Saint Mary's College, a Masters in Educational Leadership from Georgia College & State University, and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia in Athens. She has taught 3rd and 4th grade at Sonny Carter Elementary School, served as an Assistant Principal at Sonny Carter Elementary, Bernd

Elementary, and Jones Elementary then was promoted to Principal at Sonny Carter. She has also worked as an adjunct professor at both Wesleyan College and the University of Georgia, and went back to work part-time at an independent school as a Curriculum Specialist and Technology Integration Specialist and she eventually became the Head of Preschool, PK-12 Curriculum Coordinator, and finally Head of Lower School at Stratford Academy in Macon. This is her first year at MGA and she LOVES it. Go Knights!

**Lead with Love      Presenter: Darra McClendon**

During this session we will explore the importance of finding and doing what we love so we can lead well from anywhere, anytime. Through a couple of interactive activities we will begin to identify what we really love, learn how finding our “real love” will help position students as leaders, and learn how leading with L.O.V.E. is a game changer for this next generation. We will elaborate on how we cannot lead if we are not inspired, if we don’t have a deeper meaning and purpose that drives us. The goal is to understand why we must dig and find what we love and really want to do, THEN lock in on the deepest “why” for doing that. We will elaborate on what it means to be a L.O.V.E.D. leader, what that looks like, and how we can start mastering these traits right now.

L: Listens to what’s in them

O: Observes what is needed in an entity/situation

V: Values people

E: Expects resistance and proactively plans for it

D: Delivers

**Presenter Bio:**

Darra McClendon has been building capacity and sustainability for businesses, nonprofits, and the Middle GA community for 10+ years. She has shared her expertise with local and national brands including Goodwill Industries, The 4-H Program, and Chick-fil-A. In 2018, she started Simply Ordered Solutions LLC, a professional organizing and wellness firm committed to relieving stress for clients by helping them streamline and declutter, saving them time and resources. As a Professional Organizer and a newly certified Holistic Health Coach, Darra enjoys being hands on in showing people how to cut clutter inside and out and keep it that way. Darra is a graduate of Mercer University’s Stetson-Hatcher School of Business and actively empowers the creative economy to rise together and do what they love. She achieves this as the Rising Tide Society chapter leader for the Macon/Middle GA Chapter. She’s proud to be a part of a global community of more than 77,000 creative entrepreneurs who believe in community over competition and have a desire to lead with love.

**BREAKOUT BLOCK 2**

**Communicating From Where You Are      Presenter: Prof. Liz Riley**

Effective leaders must clearly communicate in a variety of circumstances and with diverse groups of people. This flexible communication style should not only be grounded in the fundamentals of good communication but also be adaptable to the characteristics of the audience. Good professional communication is critical to good leadership and organizational success.

A study of 1252 business leaders and knowledge workers indicated that 93% of business leaders say that “communication is the backbone of business”. This could be said of any organization whether it be profit-

seeking, non-profit, or even a student organization. Clear, effective communication keeps people moving toward solving common problems and reaching common goals.

Poor communication, on the other hand, can be expensive as it can create a lack of focus at the team level, higher turnover, a decline in productivity, a lack of innovation, dissatisfied customers, lower morale, safety issues, and a loss of credibility. David Grossman studied 400 companies with 100,000 employees and estimated that \$62.4 million a year is lost due to poor communication. Business leaders in another study estimated that their teams lose an average of 7.5 hours of work each week because of poor communication.

This presentation will include important aspects of written professional communication within the framework of situational leadership. We will cover the fundamentals of good communication along with the importance of being able to adapt your communication to the situation and the audience.

#### Presenter Bio:

Prof. Riley is an Associate Professor in the School of Business and holds an M.B.A. and an M.A. in Professional and Technical Writing. She currently teaches business communications and social media classes. She is also also a freelance editor and writer, focusing mostly on travel writing.

#### **A Greater Understanding      Presenter: Mrs. Zoe Kakou-Pope**

I somewhat recently realized that I had been making excuses that halted my own happiness. I spent my early life modeling, traveling the world singing, dancing, and mentoring. After taking a break from all of that in order to enjoy my Mercer college career, I noticed that I felt a hole in my heart. I saw that I was no longer impacting people with joy or inspiration. At least it felt that way. I always complained that I can't do anything that I wanted to or worked on my whole life because I was in Middle Georgia. I know that may sound funny to some of you but I sincerely thought that because I was from the city, aka the Atlanta area, that I could not accomplish anything in so small of an area. In all honesty, I was a little intimidated by the intimate setting of it all. I thought that my personality would be too big or too out of place or too out of touch for the area and my endeavors wouldn't succeed.

I had never been more wrong. I started trying to integrate my passions of performing arts, education and giving back. The more that I opened my eyes, the more that I saw. Just because you don't immediately see your perfect fit, does not mean that you can't see a need. For me, I saw the need for more educators that care. I also saw a need for resources to rocket talented businesses and students to their next level. These services were plentiful where I'm from but not where I currently stood. And that is where I found my passion for helping students from ages 5 to 75.

Today, I hope to ignite that spark within yourselves and realize that you serve an important purpose within all levels of your community: I hope to help you identify and build upon the necessary skills needed to positively impact your civic, university, and professional communities.

#### Presenter Bio:

Zoe Kakou-Pope was born and raised in Marietta, Georgia. She began her Middle Georgia journey by attending Mercer University in Macon. After pursuing Psychology and Spanish, she moved forward in her professional career with providing business development services such as start-up consultation as well as website and content creation. She also continued her love of education by continuing to manage daycares, a non-profit, and tutoring businesses. Her professional career revolves around community involvement, leadership, and education. She is the C.E.O. of Learning Empowerment Academy and ensures that community giveaways,

sponsorships, and job readiness is a must in the curriculum. After spending almost a decade leading in the classrooms, almost 2 decades in childcare ownership and management, and nearly 15 years in performing arts & academic mentorship, she realized her calling was in growing the minds of all ages and helping people to realize their worth and unlimited potential. Zoe hopes to raise awareness about the importance of remaining a critical thinker, striving a higher level of understanding, and seeking excellence in every little thing that you do.

### **Stepping Into Discomfort      Presenter: Dani Bowser**

Leadership is denoted by many official titles: Manager, Supervisor, Director, etc. And while it's great to have these on a resume, it's more important to be the best leader we can be, no matter what position we hold. To show up with integrity despite feeling overwhelmed. To support those working alongside us when they feel unsure.

It can take time to develop tolerance to frustration and anxiety. Not acknowledging our hesitations will only slow us down in this journey. The best way to break through and become the leaders we want to be is by embracing these fears and learning from them. I don't want to focus on just the literal interpretations of facing fears: skydiving, visiting a haunted house, or giving a public speech. There are many ways to step into discomfort. Traveling to another country, or even another state. Taking a job in a new field or a promotion when we don't necessarily feel ready. Not only having hard conversations with your peers and employees but also opening yourself up to feedback from them. It's only by moving through the uncertainty of these situations, instead of navigating around them, that we can really grow as people and professionals. No matter where you are in your career, challenge is inevitable. Taking steps early on in your journey to embrace it will allow you to develop confidence and self-efficacy. We can learn from past decisions, utilize the knowledge we gain, and move forward feeling empowered as leaders.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

Dani serves as the Recruiter and Lead Trainer for Blue Ridge Therapeutic Wilderness, based in Clayton, GA. She is in charge of all onboarding operations for new staff. Working in mental health has allowed her to step into various forms of leadership and she's excited to share what she's learned so far!

### **Passion, Purpose, & Presence      Presenter: Ms. Tamara McCann & Ms. Tokqiann Goodman**

Passion, purpose, and presence are all attributes that good leaders have. One of the main qualities of situational leadership is the ability to be flexible. This presentation will focus on helping you identify and reflect on your core values and passions. Understanding one's core values gives greater clarity over the direction that might be the most rewarding for one's life and helps us make better-informed decisions in the short and long term. Students will also participate in activities that will allow them to analyze various leadership positions to determine how being present in those roles might impact their ability to be flexible and make insightful decisions.

#### **Presenter Bios:**

Ms. Tamara C. McCann, Ed.S. is a native of Griffin, GA., and has been an educator for 17 years. She has served as a high school and middle school Special Education Teacher, a middle grade English Language Arts Teacher, and an Instructional Coach. Ms. McCann has also served in several different leadership roles throughout her educational tenure. She currently serves as Griffin-Spalding County School System's Recruitment and

Retention Specialist. She follows the prophetic philosophy of "To whom much is given, much is required." This belief fuels her passion for creating and supporting quality instruction inside and outside of the classroom.

Ms. Tokqiann Goodman is a lifelong learner and proud educator. During her 16 years in education, she has served teachers and students in various capacities including as a classroom teacher, an instructional coach, a Recruitment and Retention Specialist, and a Secondary ELA Curriculum Coordinator.