# Jazz and Jam Sessions as Metaphors for Creative Leadership
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*A problem is a chance for you to do your best.* **Duke Ellington**

**Jazz** allows for individuality and demands collaborative freedom to invent news ways to perform while honoring past excellence. It's governed by individual improvisation and imagination with the collective responses of the group providing direction for "where to take" the music.

**Jam sessions** are often used by musicians to develop new material, uncover suitable arrangements, or simply as a social gathering and communal practice session. They may be based upon existing songs or forms, may be loosely based on an agreed chord progression or chart suggested by one participant, or may be wholly improvisational. These sessions can range from very loose gatherings of amateurs to sophisticated improvised recording sessions intended to be edited and released to the public.

***Schedule Jam Sessions with the Management and Staff***—on a regular basis create opportunities for collaborative improvisation where ideas flow and participants are encouraged to think beyond the current mindset. These are not free-for-all sessions, it's not anarchy – there are rules. The courage and confidence to successfully innovate comes after extended collaboration. Once a year in a strategic planning session is not nearly enough.

What rules do both groups operate under for thinking and acting outside the box and beyond the status quo? What agreements are needed for board and staff jam sessions to ensure productivity?

***Plan for Spontaneous Improvisation*** and ***Continuous Improvement***—learning as you go and building on what has been experienced. Dizzy Gillespie's "upswept" horn was created when a dancer accidentally kicked his instrument off the stage and bent it. The resulting twisted instrument became a new model for brilliance and individuality once Dizzy realized the unique sound it produced AND recognized his skill at modulating it. What processes are in place to intentionally challenge "the way it is" even as you use it to deliver the current level of value and service?