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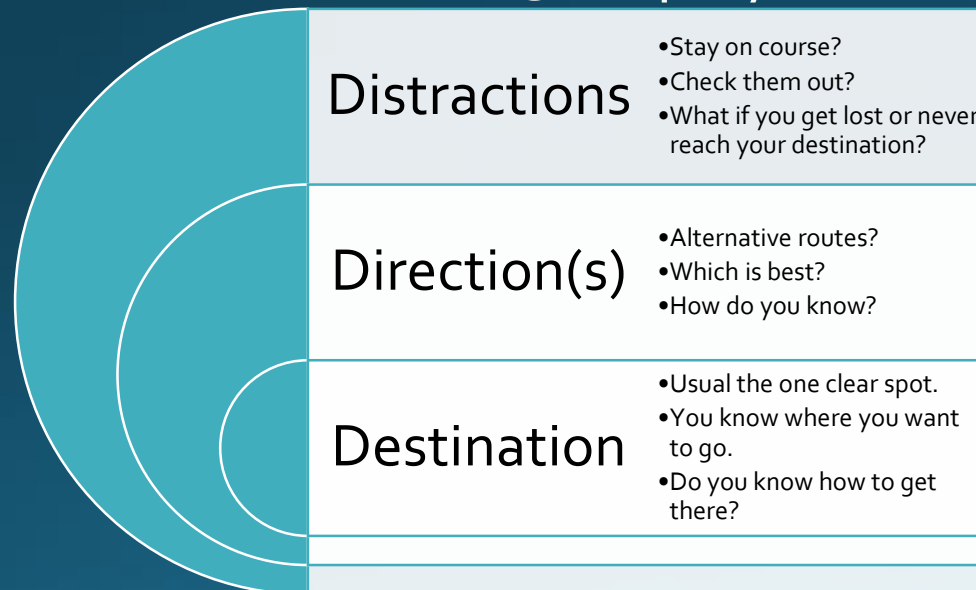
# Facilitating Learning Communities

# What does it take to be an effective facilitator?

- Learning Communities don't run themselves; they require leadership. But given the different interests and pressures – personal growth and development, programmatic and institutional impact, as well as task completion and goal attainment– learning communities require something more than just leadership. Leaders must be effective facilitators.
- What does this mean?
- Think about it. Think about Socrates and Polonius. And yourself.

# Being an effective facilitator

- I like to think about this in terms of 3 “D”s: Destination, Direction, and Distractions.
- Imagine you had to develop an app like google maps for a learning community. How would those 3 Ds play out?



# It is, to a certain extent, about the journey

- The 3 Ds give us a good start, but they don't deal with the trip itself.
- Any childhood/roadtrip nightmare stories??
- Yes, a lot of it is about relationships. Indeed, a good LC requires facilitators who understand and can negotiate group dynamics, who can articulate and map a course towards goal attainment, and who can build and maintain strong, stable, and rewarding relationships.
- What does this entail/require?
- Easier or different in a cohort- or topical LC?

# Directions and distractions

- While the destination typically is a fixed star, the routes there must sometimes change.
- Why?
- Successful LC facilitation requires intentionality and direction but also:
  - Flexibility
  - Tolerance for ambiguity
  - Mindfulness
  - Patience
  - Creativity
  - Respect

# Avoid potholes and pitfalls

- LCs need to be clearly structured, but not too structured. But not too loosely structured.
- Find a balance between the goals of the community **and its members!**
- Even if you are *the* content expert, do **not** adopt a model of formal authority to lead your LC. Remember taking that class with the leading scholar in the field and learning nothing from it? Don't be that person.
- Remember, you are a facilitator. You want creativity and expression to flourish. Personal growth and development matter.
- But so do results...

# Make a checklist

- Articulate goals
- Align them with overarching structures (departmental objectives, institutional ethos, etc)
- Figure out ways of assessing if you've accomplished them
- Cultivate a meaningful social presence among members
- Optimize use of time and technology
- Maintain community
- Balance staying on task with pursuing tangential interests
- Maximize learning
- Stay engaged with one another and with content
- Be inclusive
- Stay organized