Leadership: The Adaptive Framework

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Distinguish Leadership and Authority
Properties of Authority

- A service contract
  - Formal or informal
  - Power entrusted for service

- Key components of the contract
  - Power
  - Trust
  - Service
Services of Authority

- Direction
- Protection
- Order
  - Orientation to roles
  - Control of conflict
  - Norm Maintenance
Trust

• Predictability
  • Values
  • Competence
The Paradox of Trust

People will trust you when you fulfill their expectations for service

So what happens when you:

- Deliver information that conflicts with those expectations?
- Tell people what they may need to hear, but not what they want and expect to hear?
Role Analysis

1. What is your authorization, i.e., what is your job?

2. Who and what are the sources of your authorization?

3. In your authorizing environment, what do each of these sources of authorization expect of you?

4. What are the cultural norms--the unwritten rules--of behavior for being entrusted with the power that comes with your role?
How Should We Define Leadership?

Leadership is not defined by power, personality traits, or position.

Leadership is defined by the practice of tackling tough challenges.
Defining Leadership

- Leadership is a practice
- with and without authority
- that mobilizes people
- to make progress on tough, adaptive challenges
- in order to thrive in a changing and challenging world
The Practice of Leadership

Near-Term

• Mobilizing adaptive work

Long-Term

• Building a culture of adaptability
Distinguish Technical and Adaptive Work
Classic Mistake

Diagnosing and treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems
# Technical and Adaptive Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIND OF WORK</th>
<th>PROBLEM DEFINITION</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS &amp; IMPLEMENTATION</th>
<th>PRIMARY LOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL</td>
<td>CLEAR</td>
<td>CLEAR</td>
<td>AUTHORITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL &amp; ADAPTIVE</td>
<td>CLEAR</td>
<td>REQUIRES LEARNING</td>
<td>AUTHORITY &amp; STAKEHOLDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAPTIVE</td>
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<td>STAKEHOLDER&gt;AUTHORITY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essential Questions of Adaptive Work

1. What cultural DNA do we keep?

2. What cultural DNA do we discard?

3. What innovative DNA will enable us to thrive in the new and challenging environment?
Key Properties of Adaptive Work

1. Adaptive work demands responses outside the current repertoire.

2. Adaptive organizations are interdependent with their environment.

3. Sustainable success requires local adaptations to local environments.

4. Adaptive solutions are conservative as well as innovative.

5. The people with the problem are the problem, and the solution.
Key Properties of Adaptive Work

6. Adaptive solutions often lie within the society or organization.

7. Innovation toward adaptive change is experimental.

8. Solutions involve direct loss and indirect loss as people re-fashion loyalties and develop new competencies.

9. Adaptive work generates disequilibrium and avoidance because losses generate resistance.

10. Adaptive work takes more time than technical work.
Technical and Adaptive Work

![Diagram showing the relationship between time and technical and adaptive work]
Causes of Adaptive Failure

• We didn’t see it coming

• The adaptive challenge exceeded our capacity

• We didn’t face the challenge soon enough
Avoiding Adaptive Work

Societies and Organizations Tend to Avoid Adaptive Work

Why?

• To avoid real and potential losses

How?

• By diverting responsibility or attention
Displacing Responsibility

1. Externalize the enemy
2. Attack authority
3. Divide the top team
4. Kill the messenger
5. Scapegoat
Diverting Attention

1. Fake Remedies
   a. Define the problem to fit your competence
   b. Misuse structural adjustments
   c. Misuse consultants, committees, task forces

2. Denial

3. Unproductive Conflict
   a. Gladiator fights with spectators
Management and Leadership

**Management** mobilizes the efficient oversight of complex technical problem-solving

**Leadership** mobilizes adaptive work: honoring the essential, discarding the expendable, and innovating

- Determine what practices are core to the future and which are obstacles
- Run smart experiments and test new practices
- Integrate new practices
A Strategy of Leadership: Mobilizing Adaptive Work
Eight Strategic Tasks

1. Get on the Balcony
2. Diagnose the Adaptive Challenges
3. Keep Attention Disciplined
4. Give the Work Back to People
5. Build Trust
6. Regulate Distress
7. Generate More Leadership
8. Infuse the Work with Meaning
Get on the Balcony

- Take an interpretive stance
- Think politically
- Zoom in and out iteratively, macro and micro
- Consider the larger arc of change
- Take time for reflection
- Use partners
- Reflect on your own pre-dispositions and loyalties
  - Whose water are you carrying?
Diagnose the Adaptive Challenges

- Unbundle Technical from Adaptive challenges
- Distinguish ripe from unripe issues
- Identify the key stakeholders and their perspectives
- Listen across and outside the organization
- Look through authority figures to their constituents
- Listen to the “song beneath the words”
- Use conflict as a clue
- Use your team dynamics as a case-in-point for clues
The Politics of Leadership
Keep Attention Disciplined

• Ask “who needs to learn what”
• Frame the key challenges for each sub-group or faction
• Sequence the issues
• Keep key issues, questions and data at the center of attention
• Counteract work avoidance patterns that divert attention
Give the Work Back to People

- Place the adaptive work where it must be done
- Encourage widespread experimentation
- Model new norms to move from dependency to distributed initiative and responsibility
- Cascade leadership practice to local level
- Counteract work avoidance patterns that displace responsibility
- Support rather than control
Leadership Generates Capacity,
not Dependency
Build Trust

- Model the changed behavior
- Learn publicly
- Own your part of the problem
- Manage disappointing people’s expectations
- Acknowledge losses
- Find allies
- Keep the opposition close
- Accept casualties
Regulate Distress

- Strengthen the holding environment for cross-boundary work
- Maintain a productive level of disequilibrium
- Orchestrate the conflict
- Depersonalize the conflicts: distinguish role from self
- Pace the work
- Take the heat and hold steady
- Presence and Poise: tolerate uncertainty, frustration, and pain
- Maintain a collective sense of purpose
Generate More Leadership

• Protect unauthorized voices of leadership
• Control your reflex to squelch variant voices
• Coach creative/challenging people to make better interventions
• Tease out people’s intuitions and give them room for analysis
• Protect people who address internal contradictions
Infuse the Work with Meaning

Develop and extensively communicate a narrative that:

• Manages expectations for quick and easy solutions
• Helps people comprehend the developments in their lives
• Builds from and conserves the past
• Names the losses and sustains people through transitional pain
• Engages people in their adaptive work
• Calls forth people’s resourcefulness
Crisis

Properties:
1. High Stakes
2. High Uncertainty
3. Urgency – Time Compression

Two Phases:
1. Acute Phase
2. Adaptive Phase
Acute Phase

Goal:

Stabilize the situation

Purpose:

Survive and buy time for Adaptive work
Acute Phase

Tasks:

1. Regulate Disequilibrium
   a) Provide presence, structure, and hope
   b) Speak to people’s experience
   c) Maintain confidence and poise

2. Drive the organizational response
   - Improvise to the extent possible

3. Frame the key issues for the Adaptive phase
Adaptive Phase

Goals: Short and Long-Term

1. Meet the initial adaptive challenges
2. Build a more adaptive culture

Purpose:

To thrive in a changing and challenging world
Leading and Staying Alive

1. Get on the balcony
2. Seek confidants
3. Distinguish role from self
4. Listen
5. Manage your hungers
6. Anchor yourself
7. Purposes beyond measure
Leadership

Generates

Leadership