

YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAM

for Health Systems Strengthening

Adaptive Strategy:
Overcoming Failure to Change

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Distinguishing Technical & Adaptive Work



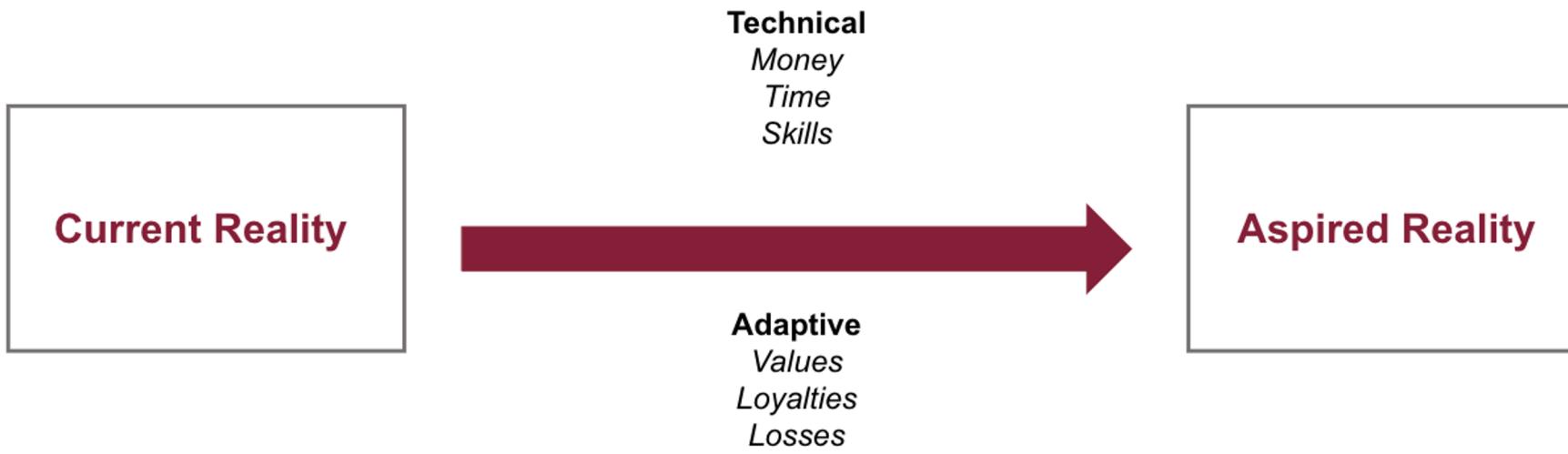
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Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges



Technical problems are clearly understood and prone to expertise, whereas adaptive challenges need **learning, experimentation and collaboration**

Difference between technical and adaptive challenges

- **Technical Work**
 - Doesn't require shift in values
 - It is procedural, administrative or straight-forward – **we have the knowledge and expertise to a particular problem**



Adaptive challenges

- Difficult to identify and easy to deny
- There are no off-the shelf and quick solutions
- Needs to involve the Authority and the affected stakeholders
- Solutions require:
 - Experimentation & Trial and error
 - Changes in numerous places/levels
 - Changes in hearts and minds, and deeply held values and ways of operating

Why is this important?

Effective leadership requires being able to differentiate between
a **Technical** Challenge and an **Adaptive** one.

Usual mistake

Diagnose and treat adaptive challenges
as if they were technical problems

Types of challenges

Technical vs Adaptive work

SITUATION	PROBLEM DEFINITION	SOLUTION	FOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY	CATEGORY
Type I	Simple to define	Simple to implement	Easy to understand who is responsible to get the work done.	Technical
Type II	Partly complex, unclear with grey zones.	Partly simple. Partly complex - need a change in behaviour and value systems.	Complex to understand who has the responsibility to make the change. Numerous stakeholders involved e.g Covid-19 pandemic; access to medicine policy.	Technical and adaptive
Type III	Complex and unclear	Complex - need a change in behaviour and value systems.	Unclear who is responsible for solving the problem E.g vaccine misinformation, non-communicable disease	Adaptive

Technical and Adaptive Work

SITUATION & TYPE OF CHALLENGE	PROBLEM DEFINITION	SOLUTIONS & IMPLEMENTATION	PRIMARY LOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORK
New virus emerge TECHNICAL	Need a new vaccine CLEAR	Scientists CLEAR	Research institutions, Academia, Government AUTHORITY
Vaccine inequality TECHNICAL & ADAPTIVE	Populations do not have equal access to vaccines CLEAR	Change in supply chain, business models, address power dynamics - countries REQUIRES LEARNING	Governments, Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines Manufacturers, Medical equipment suppliers, populations AUTHORITY & STAKEHOLDER
Vaccine misinformation and disinformation ADAPTIVE	Lack of trust in the vaccine REQUIRES LEARNING	Improve transparency in the system, educate, address lack of trust in authorities, other countries REQUIRES LEARNING	Populations, NGOs, Community Organizations, Government, etc STAKEHOLDER > AUTHORITY

Exercise:

Identifying Technical Challenges vs Adaptive Challenges in Health Policy

Thinking of a health policy challenge you have discussed in your group and where you would like to make an impact, identify the technical challenges and adaptive challenges that need to be tackled for progress to be made.

Work at the center

E.g Improving the mental health treatment at health centers level

Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges

	Technical Challenge	Adaptive Challenge
• Problem	• Understood	• Unclear and requires learning
• Solution	• Known	• Unknown and requires learning
• Responsibilities	• Authority & Experts	• Authority AND affected stakeholders
• Obstacles	• Time, money and skills	• Hearts, minds, loyalties and deeply held values

Dealing with disequilibrium and adaptive challenges

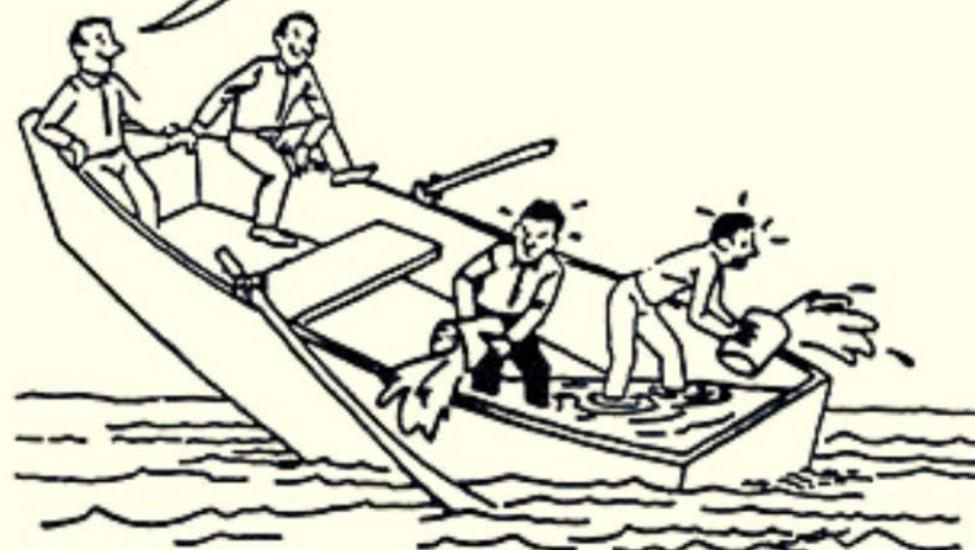
- *And why people resist change*



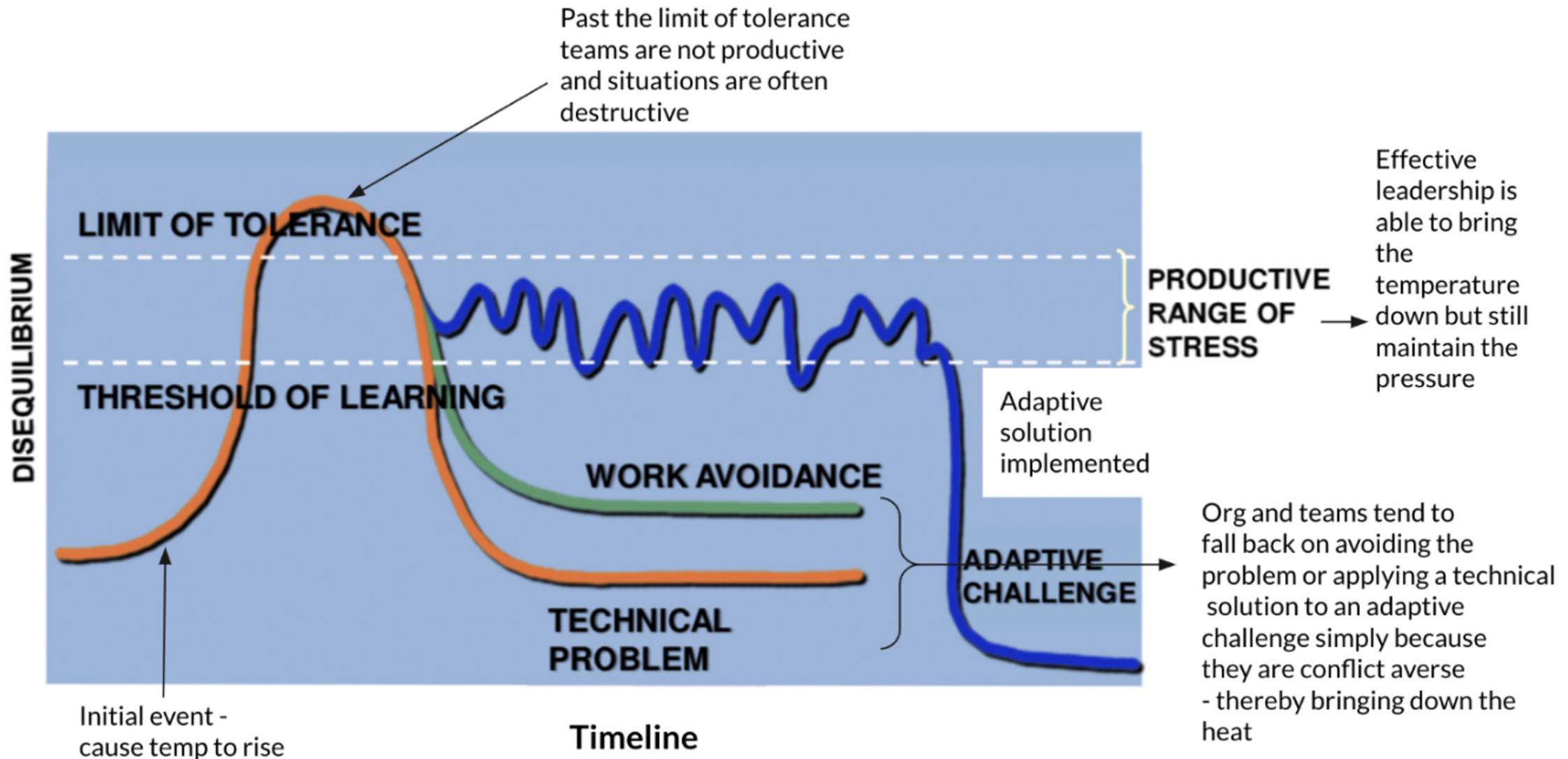
Adaptive strategy = disequilibrium



I'm sure glad the
hole isn't in our end...



Working in a zone of productive disequilibrium





Essential questions of adaptive work?

- What DNA do we retain?
- What DNA are we removing?
- What innovative DNA will allow us to thrive in a new and demanding environment?

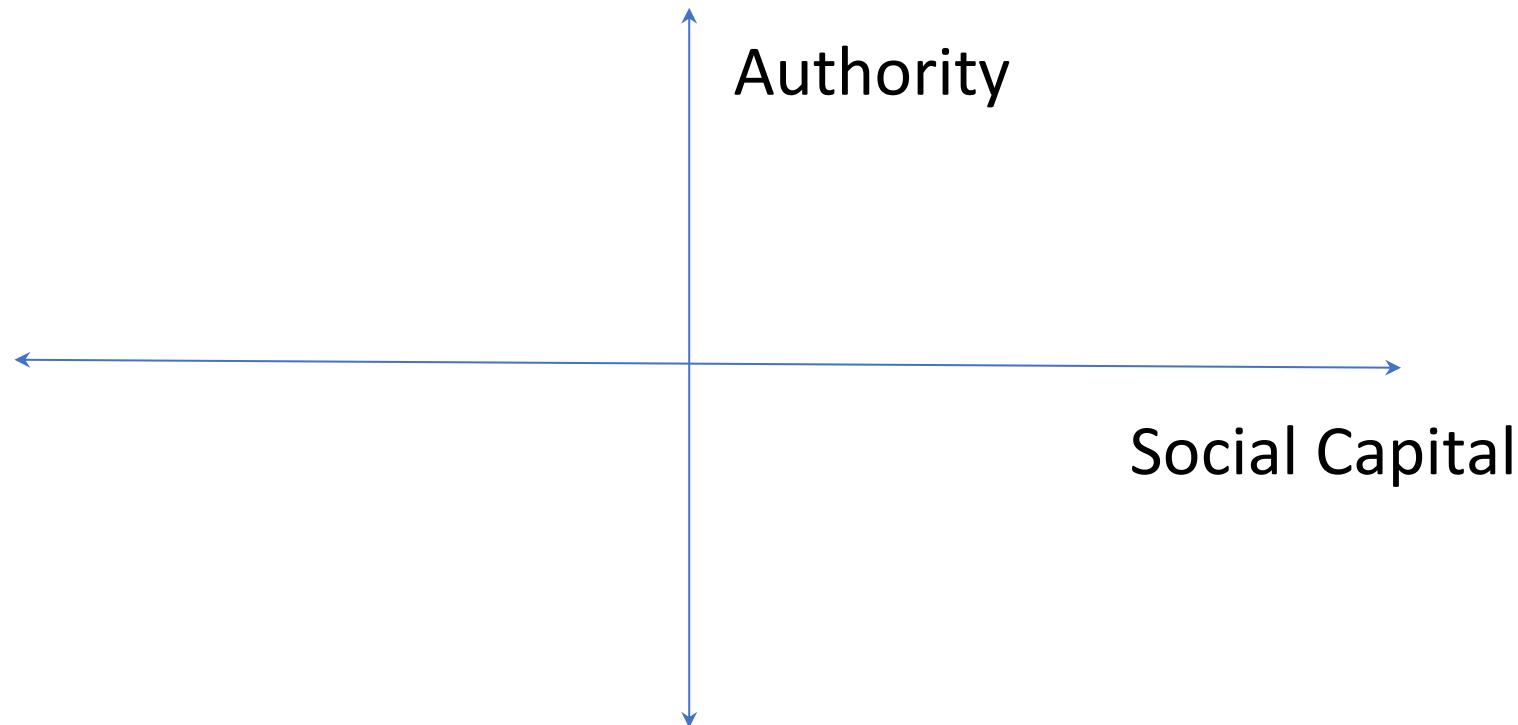
Leading through **disequilibrium**

- **Pacing the work:** Managing the rate of change. People can learn only so much so fast and cannot learn new ways when they are overwhelmed. The key is to balance between having people feel the need to change and having them feel overwhelmed by change.
- **Sequencing the work:** Prioritization is essential. Adaptive challenges are complex and therefore requires complex and in-depth changes. The key is to sequence the issues you believe the group need to work on and make progress based on a set of criteria (time, appetite, ripeness, impact, etc.)
- **Cushioning the work:** Provide support to those who need it the most in your team/peers. Usually, those who experience the biggest losses will need specific support to navigate change.
- **Accepting casualties:** Be ready to accept casualties. It could be people leaving the team, delays in delivering the objectives, etc.

What else do we need to be able to manage disequilibrium in the system?

The Holding Environment

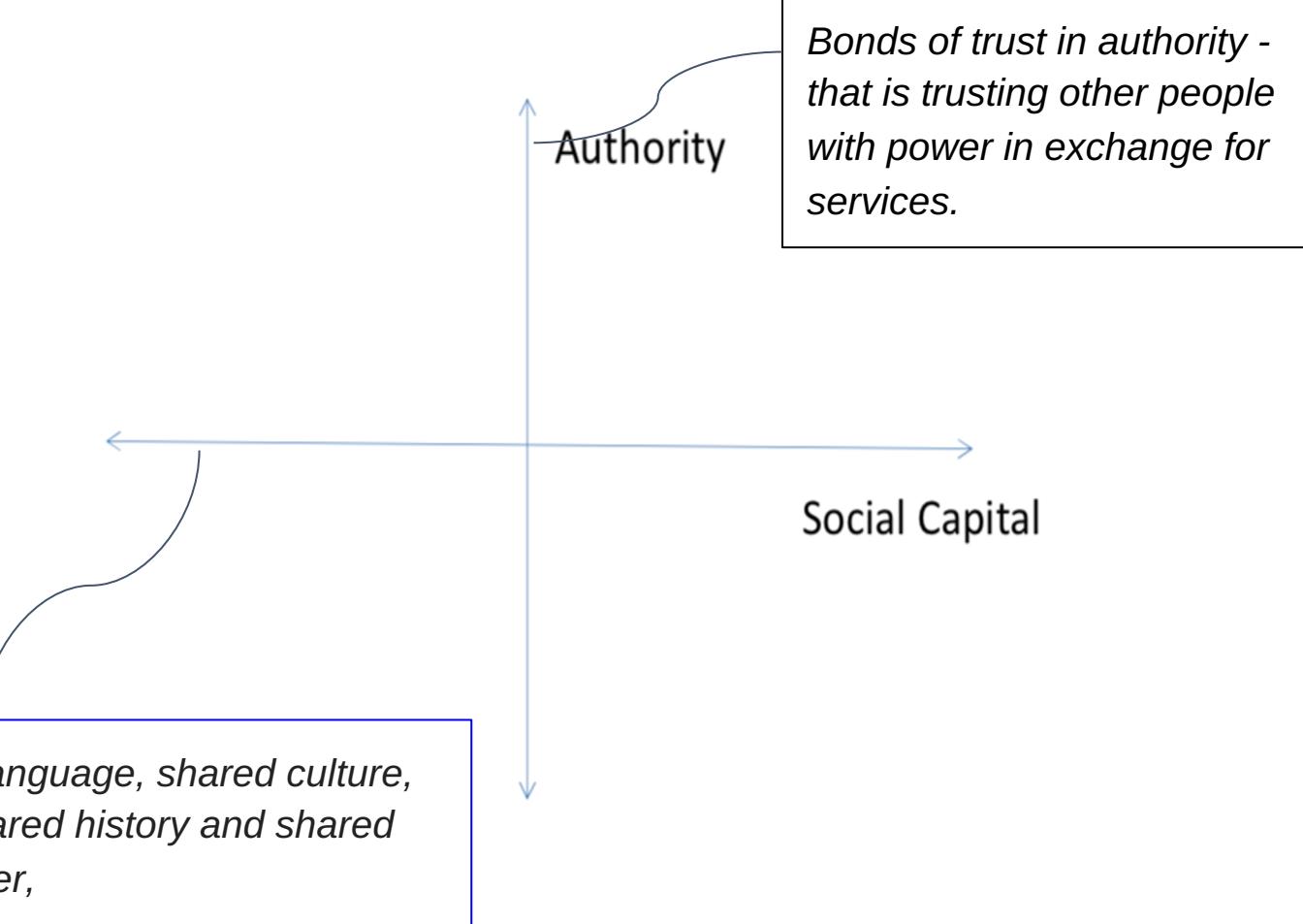
Vertical and Horizontal Bonds of Trust



Bonds of Trust

- The holding environment like human relationships are bonds of social glue.
- This glue hold people in a process that's tough to be in but that is necessary to tackle the adaptive challenge. You need strong bonds of trust to hold people through tough process and the pressure from the system.
- Lateral bonds of identity of shared experience give you more capacity to stay in difficult conversations and learn across your differences.

Vertical and Horizontal Bonds of Trust



Final thoughts

- People do not fear change. They fear loss.
- Leadership is about conducting adaptive work.
 - Identifying the losses and manage them
 - Balancing adaptive and technical components
- Understand what is happening beyond your organization (system)
- Use conflict as a clue
- Understand who your partners and allies are
- Be a smart troublemaker

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Thank you.



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