Exercising Leadership From Where You Are

Adaptive Leadership

Christopher Behan
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Child Welfare Strategy Group

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What is leadership?
Upon completion of this workshop participants will be able to:

- Articulate the difference between leadership and authority
- Define leadership not only as exercising authority but also as mobilizing group resources towards progress
- Distinguish leadership without authority or with limited authority—leading from below
- Be familiar with concepts, such as
  - Identifying the adaptive challenge
  - Getting “on the balcony”
  - Protecting voices of leadership from below
Defining leadership

- **Authority**
  - A conferred power to perform a service
  - The ability to deploy the power that comes with a position

- **Leadership**
  - Influencing the community to face its problems
  - Mobilizing group resources towards progress
Two types of leadership challenges

**TECHNICAL CHALLENGE**
- When there is a problem for which the group has knowledge about how to respond; known solutions can be applied to ameliorate the situation

**ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE**
- When there is a gap between the shared values that people hold and the reality in their lives, or a conflict among people in a community over values and strategy
Why adaptive leadership is important and necessary

- Often the issues we face are systemic problems with no ready answers
- Leadership in the form of solutions doesn’t work when there is adaptive work to do
- In an inclusive society multiple viewpoints must be valued
- The collective intelligence and feedback from all levels must be taken into account
Glory, a 1998 film about the US Civil War's first all-black volunteer company, fighting prejudices of both the Union army and the Confederates under the leadership of Robert Gould Shaw.
Adaptive leadership

- The learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold or
- To diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face

Mobilizing people to learn new ways:
- Values
- Beliefs
- Behaviors
An adaptive leaders’ behavior must change

FROM

- Fulfilling expectations that they will provide the answers
- Protecting people from outside threats
- Orienting people to current roles
- Quelling conflict
- Maintaining norms

TO

- Asking tough questions
- Allowing people to feel the pinch of reality to stimulate them to adapt
- Disorienting people so that new relationships can develop
- Drawing issues out
- Challenging “the way we do business”
The ability to help the group see through the blind spots of the dominant point of view to move the group forward

Operating beyond one’s prescribed power to challenge one’s own constituents’ expectations or engaging people across boundaries of the organization who would ordinarily pay him or her no mind

The scarcity of leadership from people with authority makes exercising leadership without authority all the more important
SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: Leadership without authority

- Take turns telling each other a story of a time when you exercised leadership without authority
  - What happened?
  - How did you feel?
  - What did you learn?
Many people see authority as a prerequisite for leadership.
Yet those who lead often feel they are taken action beyond the authority they have.
“Ripen” the issue; frame it so people comprehend the opportunity and it generates urgency.
Whale Rider

“My name is Paikea”

Whale Rider, a 2002 New Zealand film, where Paikea, an 11-year-old girl in a patriarchal New Zealand tribe, believes she is destined to be the new chief. But her grandfather Koro is bound by tradition to pick a male leader.
Pay attention to your “voice.” Often what it takes to speak up from below (passion, anger, frustration) is hard for others to hear.

Beware of becoming a “lightening rod” or a “martyr”

Find partners— with other followers, outside the group, and with the authorized leader(s). No one leads alone.

Don’t make the mistake of assuming that only the authority figures have the power to affect change.
Adaptive Leadership: Identifying the adaptive challenge

- Diagnosing what the gap in values and the threat the group is facing or conflict in values
- Look at conflicts for clues about what the values issue is
Often the deviant voices get crushed or silenced because they create disequilibrium. Provide cover for the people who point out the internal contradictions; they often have a valuable perspective the authority figures do not.
Adaptive Leadership: Getting on the balcony

- To be able to be both in and out of the game by occasionally pulling back to observe the system and allow others room to act
- Be able to identify struggles over values and power, recognize patterns of work avoidance and watch for the reactions to change (both functional and dysfunctional)
Resources*

- *Leadership Without Easy Answers* by Ronald A. Heifetz
- *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* by Ronald A. Heifetz & Martin Linsky
- “The Work of Leadership” by Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie
  
  [Link](http://www.nwresd.k12.or.us/instrserv/pdfs/work_of_leadership.pdf)

* Most of the material for this presentation was drawn from these texts.