

Leadership: Don't Break the Ice Style
"Putting the Pieces Together Leadership Conference"
NWACUHO Conference
February 22, 2006

Introduction

Explanation of presentation:

This topic is relevant to the conference because constant change and ambiguity are some things we as student affairs professionals deal with on a daily basis. We are constantly confronted with ever changing student and staff dynamics at all levels. Despite that we may have some of the most developed (and thickest!) operations manuals in the world, we are confronted by situations that we have never seen more times in a year than some people are in a lifetime. Heifetz helps teach us new ways to approach the challenges that ambiguous situations present us.

Activity one:

Card Houses (add restriction- no hands, no eyes, no talking)

- make the biggest house possible with only one deck of cards
- Groups of 3 or 4

Debrief:

- Challenges of the activity
 - Lack of rules (biggest as widest or highest?)
- Uncertainties
 - Point where it was going to fall
 - Frustrations

Discussion:

"There is a point of time in critical situations when it feels like everything around us will shatter and that nothing we do can prevent that from happening. Our emotional capacity for ambiguity and uncertainty are what allow us to deal with these situations."

Examples:

- Sports: When a key player gets hurt.
- Brushing your teeth: Fine for some people, but what if you are OCD and don't have toothpaste?
- Residence Halls: Not having your keys might not be one, but not having your keys, and being locked out of your room after a shower or before class might be traumatic.
- Can they think of other examples?

Adaptive Work

Ronald Heifetz, Harvard Professor

"Cofounder of the Center for Public Leadership. Known for his seminal work during the past two decades on the practice and teaching of leadership, his research focuses on how to build adaptive capacity in societies, businesses, and nonprofits."

Adaptive vs. Technical Work

Adaptive work is “As process of looking at problems, seeing how a community’s values conflict with the problem and mobilizing people to face the challenge by confronting their values.

Technical work: This type of problem is basically noncomplex, and does not require deep intellectual stimulation and analysis. Some problems can be resolved with a “quick fix.” For example, when you take your car to a mechanic for repair, you are giving him authority to resolve the problem.

Adaptive work: More complex, not a by the book answer.

Residence Life Example: Can’t use an operations manual.

Example In medicine, for example, there are illnesses for which the doctor's job is to diagnose the problem and prescribe the remedy. For example, the remedy penicillin for pneumonia is straightforward and doesn't require work on the part of the patient. This cure doesn't require the patient to change his or her ways or learn new habits or reevaluate his or her values. On the other end of the diagnostic spectrum, there are a host of problems that patients present to doctors for which a straightforward remedy is not available. In these cases, the responsibility for treating these problems cannot be taken from the patient's shoulders and placed solely on the authority's shoulders: the physician. It is in the nature of the condition that progress is going to require people to make adjustments in their life-style, reevaluate priorities, and change habits. The changes in these cases present an adaptive challenge, not a technical solution.

Activity:

Identify as many communities as you belong to.

List three values of those communities

Ask: Examples of communities and values. Now, what kinds of events/people/things could challenge those values?

My examples: Brett Favre

Heifetz’s Seven Principles of Adaptive Work

1. *Providing a holding environment-* Adaptive work is challenging. Leader have to monitor the amount of stress and burden places on followers, and make sure it stays at a tolerable level to incite work, but not to eliminate all stress. A certain amount of stress is healthy.
Example of healthy stress for some people: Doing papers at 12 am on the night before they are due.

Remember the Titans Example: Taking the players to camp, away from the pressures of the town, and everyone who didn’t want them to play football together. Remember though, the coach is very, very nervous about all of this, but never lets on. Threatened that at the first loss, he will be fired.

2. *Direct attention-* The leader has to direction attention at the issues that are generating distress. Attention is central to leadership because without attention, no one will listen. At the same time, the attention cannot be focused only on the leader. The issues have to remain the central focus.
Example of directing attention: (23:30-25:50 Coach Boone forces them to go to 4 a day practices until they start interacting with their teammates.)
Example: George Bush as bad leader because of how Iraqi war has become “his war” vs. MLK who, though the figurehead for the civil rights movement, turned the work back to the people, and encouraged people to make the changes

3. Access to information- Authorities are expected to know so they are given access to all kinds of information. In order to mobilize other followers to do adaptive work, the leader needs to share this information at the right time and pace to maintain the holding environment.
4. Orchestrate conflict- The leader needs to understand that with any issue, there are a lot of different perspectives and opinions on the issue. A leader has to be able to understand these divisions and try to bring multiple groups together toward a common goal in a way that is value clarifying rather than hostile or destructive.

Ex: Remember the Titans (25:51 Comment: You do have a daddy...)

5. Frame issues- Issues have to be framed so that people comprehend and challenge them. Urgency is important in framing issues because it urges people to work harder. Issues have to be put in a way that makes people want to take action. It's the leader's job to help identify this point.

Ex: Coach forcing them to work together, and if they didn't they were going to practice even more. At this point though, they may comprehend the challenge, but they don't want to face it. Later, we will see an example of them facing the challenge.

6. Finding the razor's edge- Leaders have to balance how hard and fast they push people. Too hard and they will push followers to a point of unbearable instability. If leaders push too little, they will be blamed for not working hard enough. Leaders have to walk a fine line between being able to read followers and the environment to know when and how to push.

Five sub principles:

- A. Identify the adaptive challenges- Diagnose the situation with light of the values at stake, and unbundled the issues that come with.
- B. Keep the level of distress within a tolerable range for doing adaptive work.
- C. Focus attention on the ripening issues and not on stress reducing distractions.
- D. Give the work back to the people, but at a rate they can stand.
- E. Protect the voices of leadership without authority. (Julius and Berteere)

Ex: Pushing the players to the point where they are so tired they can't think about discriminating. Running to Gettysburg (32:00-35:45)

- Framing issues (Gettysburg is a final push to make people take action)
- Leadership without authority (1:03:45 Blue and the Rev want to talk to the team, but teammates want to walk out of the gym when they find out it wasn't the coach who called the meeting. Berteer and Julius as team captains stop everyone and remind them that when their teammates have something to say, they need to listen!)

7. Choosing the decision making process- Adaptive situations usually require a more participative process (rather than an autocratic process) because adaptive work requires people to do the work. The decision making process occurs as a result of the holding environment.

Ex: Coach is very autocratic at first... doesn't allow anyone else input. At the end though, when the captain wants to kick his friend off of the team for missing tackles on purpose, the coach turns the decision back to the captain and says it's his decision. (time: 1:12:13-1:13:45)

Heifetz's Seven Practical Suggestions of Adaptive Work (Leadership)

1. Get on the balcony- You need to be able to both lead and observe. To do so, you need to take time to step outside of your organization or challenge to examine how things are operating.
2. Role-self distinction- We have to be able to see the difference between ourselves and the roles we play so that we don't take to heart negativity that is about our role rather than about ourselves as people.
3. Externalize the conflict- if you have distinguished between yourself and your role, you should be able to focus on the issue at hand, and then turn the issue back to those people who are doing adaptive work. Internalizing conflicts allows us to get too wrapped up in them. We personalize them and let our emotions interfere. It becomes a personal problem or attack when that isn't really the case.
4. Partners
 - a. confidant- those you can cry out to and complain to
 - b. ally- person who has some sort of boundary but with whom you share points of view. You don't share everything.
5. Find a sanctuary- Leaders need a place to get away to really be able to be oneself. Expect to be swept up in leadership, but also need a quiet place to regain perspective and spiritual peace.
6. Preserve a sense of purpose- From time to time, one needs to step back and look at why he or she is in a leadership position and has committed to a cause. More so, the sense of purpose keeps people asking what the next adaptive challenge will be. It also helps us refocus and change the plan of attack if needed.
7. Listen to oneself and others- Leaders need to know their own biases in order to help with others. This requires us to take a step back, listen to what others say, and evaluate if our perceptions of what people say are accurate. Listening requires living with doubt because we can never exactly interpret what about person is saying because we don't have their frame of reference (context).

Do evaluations.

Have a great day!