Adaptive Leadership

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Reform Communication: Leadership, Strategy and Stakeholder Alignment

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Nails Exercise

POSSIBLE OR IMPOSSIBLE?

Your Goal

Balance the 12 nails on top of the nail that is standing on the base

We work in 5 (6-8 members per table) teams. We have 30 minutes to accomplish our goal.

- This is a team challenge where learning will take place in each team. There must not be any watching what other tables are doing or inter-table consultation. *Assume each table is a planet, completely uncommunicated with another.*
- No googling: phones and computers off please ☺
- 12 nails must balance simultaneously in a self-sustaining manner (no external support, hands, rubber bands, clips, magnets, etc.) for at least 3 minutes
- The wooden base must remain flat on the table all the time—do not put it on its side
- Please leave the nail on the base as is (you cannot twist it, push it in, etc.)

Possible or impossible …?

- Who started from "the impossible"? "This cannot be done"
- Where did you look for answers?
- Change the rules, turn everything upside down
- How did you overcome frustration?
- How many (new) ideas did you try?
- Certain ideas were paradigms that were (very) difficult to change

Exploring Alternatives

> Was there another way to do this?
> - Bend them? Glue them? Soldering?
> - How much effort would those "solutions" require"?

> How often do we want to bend "nails" in our personal and professional lives?
> - "Nails" can be likened to stakeholders either at home or at work; what are *their* perspectives?

Leadership Principles

1. **Base**: Increase space for change

2. **Balance**: Interests and opinions

3. **Alignment**: Shared sense of purpose and shared values

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

"Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth"

James MacGregor Burns (1978)

Getting to know each other

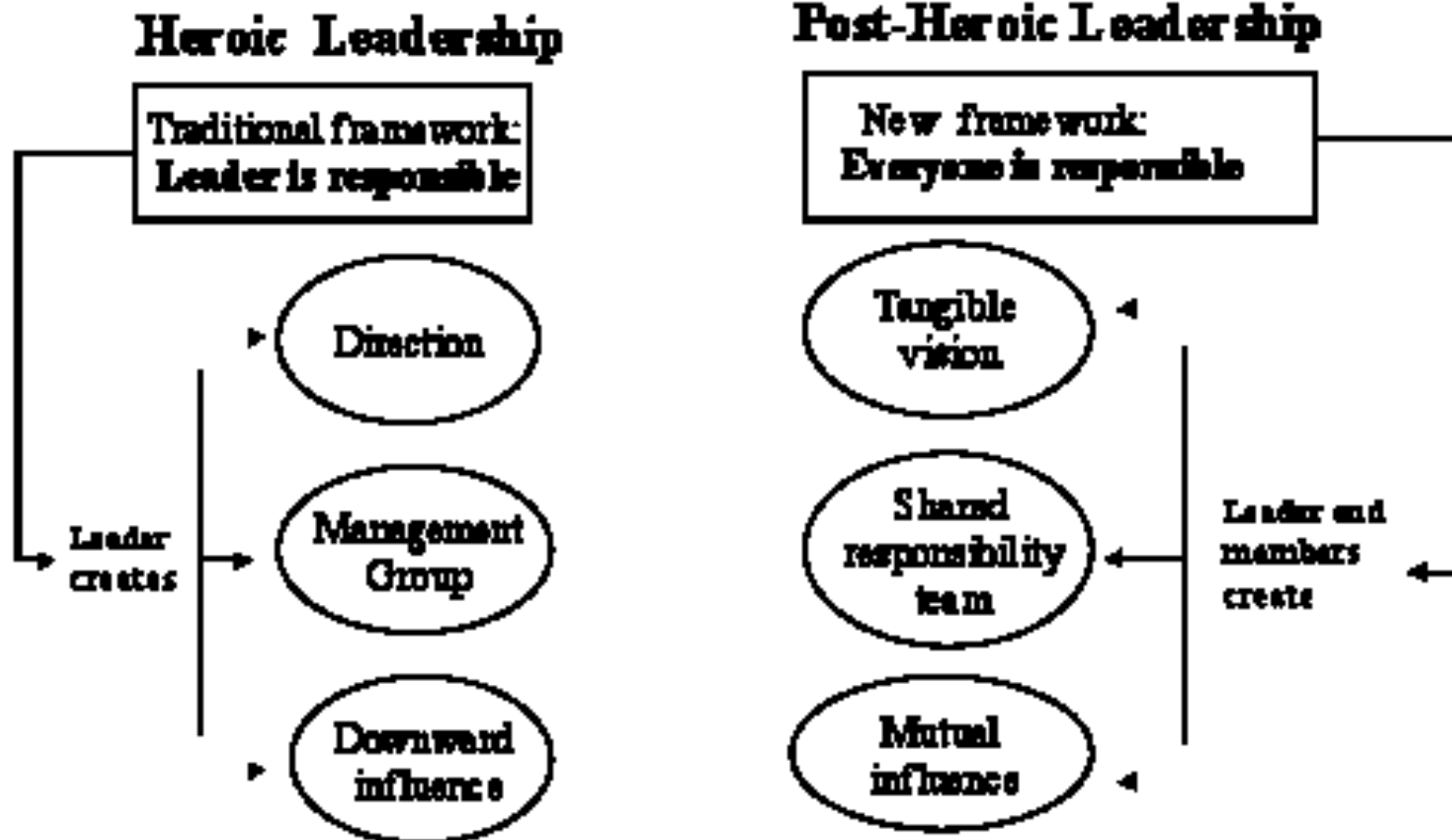Tell us a story about a leader you admire and why?

1. What comes out in all these stories?

2. What of that (leadership style) do you have in yourself?

3. What does leadership mean to you?

Why adaptive leadership?

1. Key distinctions
2. Product of teaching
3. Developed from and for the public sector
4. Provides a strategy
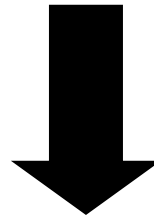5. Breaks away from "heroic leadership"

Heroic vs. post heroic leadership
(Bradford & Cohen, 1998)

Heroic Leadership

Traditional framework:
Leader is responsible

Leader creates

- Direction
- Management Group
- Downward influence

Post-Heroic Leadership

New framework:
Everyone is responsible

Leader and members create

- Tangible vision
- Shared responsibility team
- Mutual influence

Authority

(Heifetz, 1994)

Conferred power to perform

a service

Authority is **given and can be taken away**

Authority is conferred as part of an **exchange**

Social functions of authority

1. Direction and sense of purpose
2. Protection
3. Order:
    i. Roles and responsibilities
    ii. Conflict resolution mechanism and cohesion
    iii. Norms

(Heifetz, 1994)

Formal and Informal Authority

Formal Authority: comes with various powers of the office and it is granted because the office holder promises to meet a set of explicit expectations (job descriptions, legislated mandates, etc.).

Informal Authority: rests on legitimacy and trust and comes with the power to influence attitude or behavior *beyond compliance*.

Trust: Predictability on values and skills

(Heifetz, 1994)

Authority Resources

Formal

www.bigstock.com · 5082241

Where you are?
Position.

Informal

What you do, and how you are perceived?

❑ Competence

❑ Reliability

❑ Trust

❑ Legitimacy

❑ Integrity

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Technical Problems

The necessary knowledge about them already has been digested and put in the form of a legitimized set of known organizational procedures guiding **what to do** and role authorizations guiding **who** should do it.

(Heifetz, 1994)

Adaptive Challenges

No adequate response has yet been developed. They require learning to overcome the conflicts in values, or reduce the gap between the espoused values and reality.

They require changes in values, attitudes or habits of behavior.

(Heifetz, 1994)

Distinguishing Technical from Adaptive Challenges

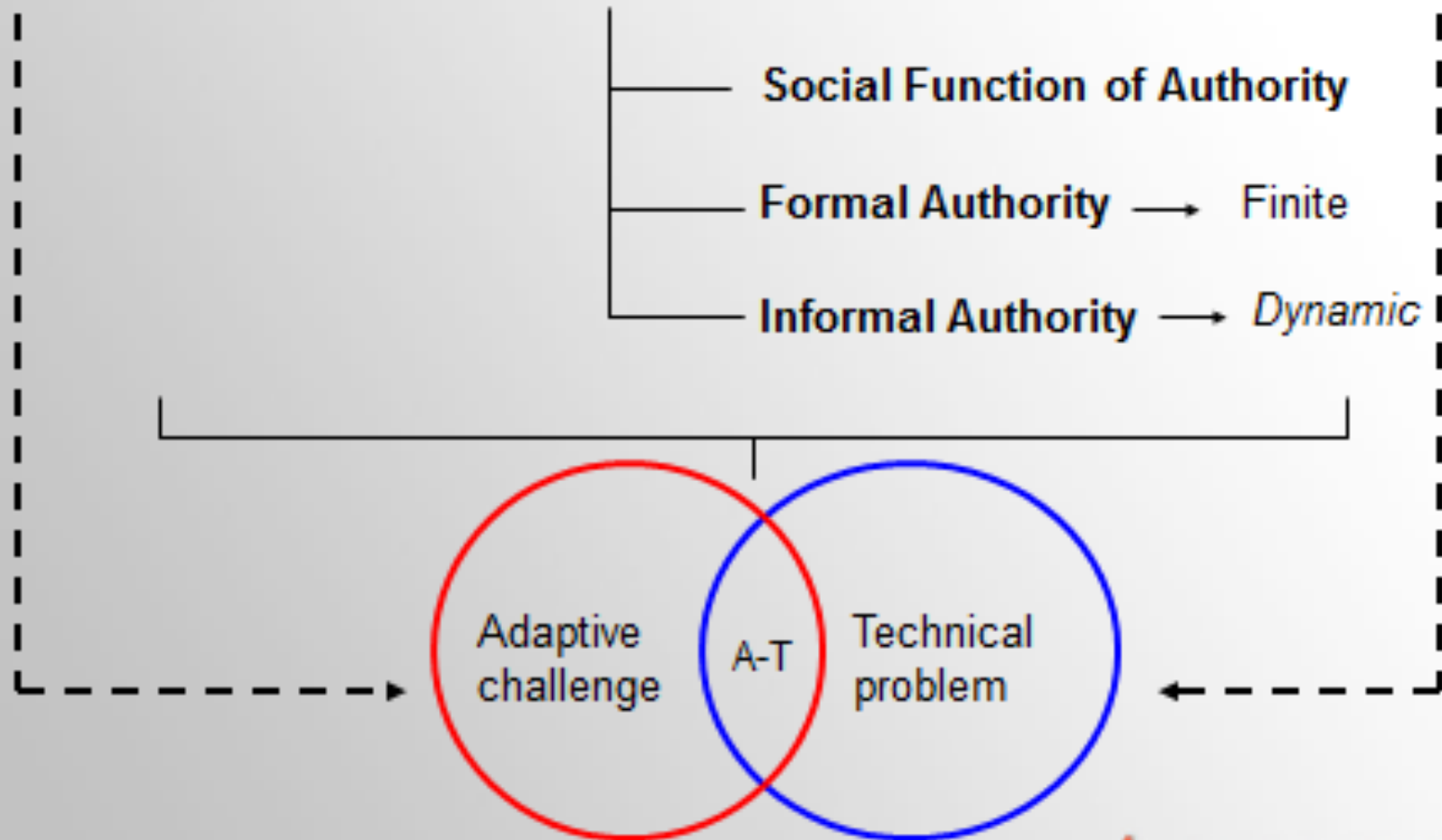|	What's the Work?	*Who* does the work?
Technical	Apply current know-how	Authorities
Adaptive	Learn new ways	The people with the problem

(Heifetz and Linsky, 2002)

Adaptive Leadership

When we face an adaptive problem and we treat is technical one and we turn to authority figures to develop technical solutions we develop inadequate dependencies.

(Heifetz, 1994)

Framework synthesizing Heifetz's contribution to exercising leadership

Leadership ≠ **Authority**

- **Social Function of Authority**
- **Formal Authority** → Finite
- **Informal Authority** → *Dynamic*

Adaptive challenge — A-T — Technical problem

(**>LEADERSHIP**)

Reflections

- The exercise of leadership is a **voluntary** activity.
- Thus, it's a time bound intervention: its *episodic*.
- It is oriented by the task of carrying out adaptive work.
- It implies **asking questions** more than **providing answers**.

Reflections (cont.)

- It requires good questions and the willingness to sustain uncertainty.
- The heart of the strategy is to center people's attention in complex and difficult issues instead of in distractions.
- In light of the above, one can exercise leadership from **any position**.
- Its development requires a **learning strategy**.
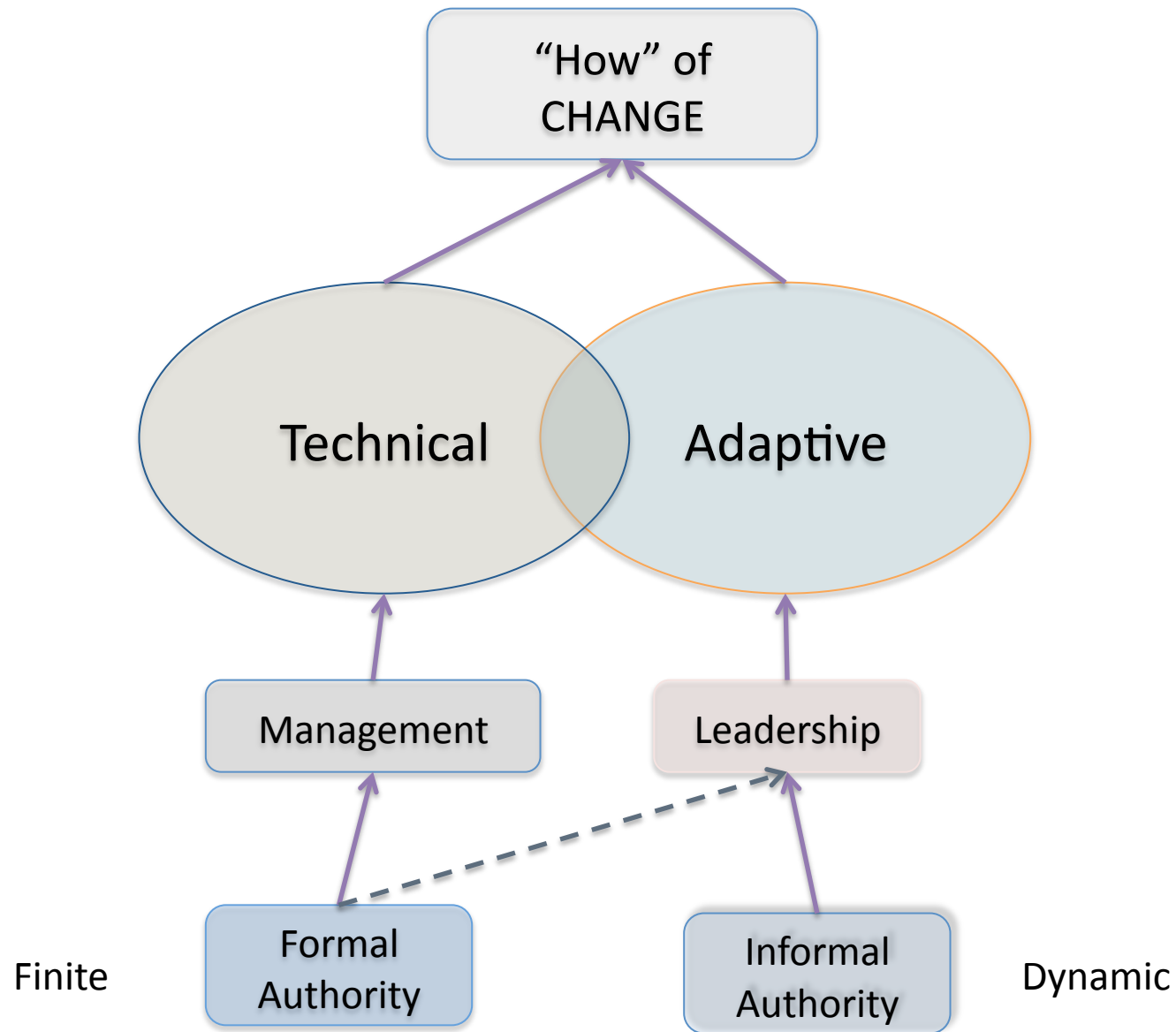
Leadership is NOT the same as **Authority**23

"The true journey of discovery does not consist in searching for new territories
but in having new eyes."

Marcel Proust

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