

PRACTICING ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

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LEADERSHIP**

DON'T DO IT ALONE

**RESIST THE LEAP TO
ACTION**

**DISCOVER THE JOY OF
MAKING HARD CHOICES**

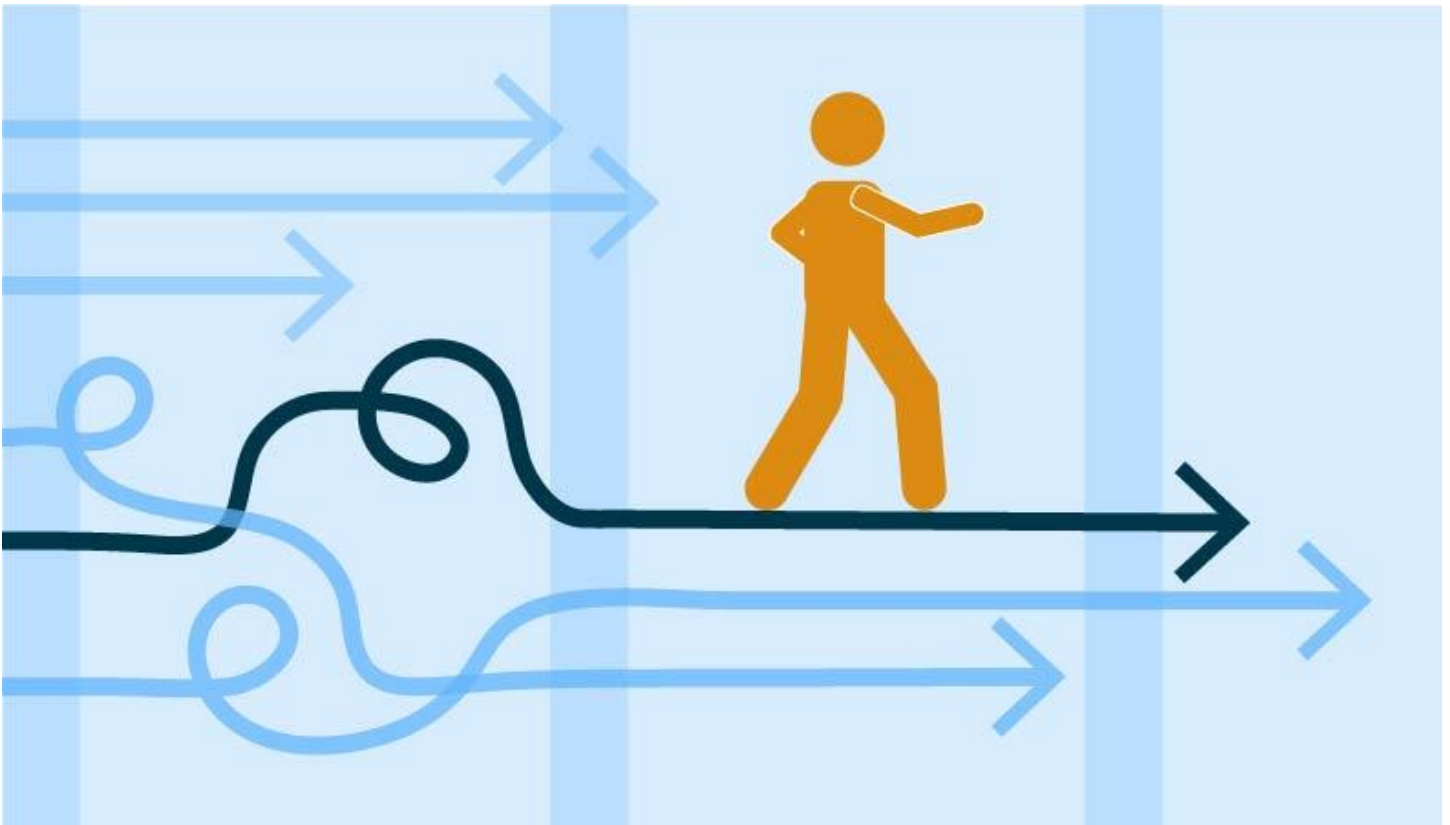
**THE ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP
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OVERVIEW

This book covers practicing adaptive Leadership. Practicing adaptive leadership is difficult on one hand and highly meaningful on the other hence not something that one should enter into casually.

PRACTICING ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

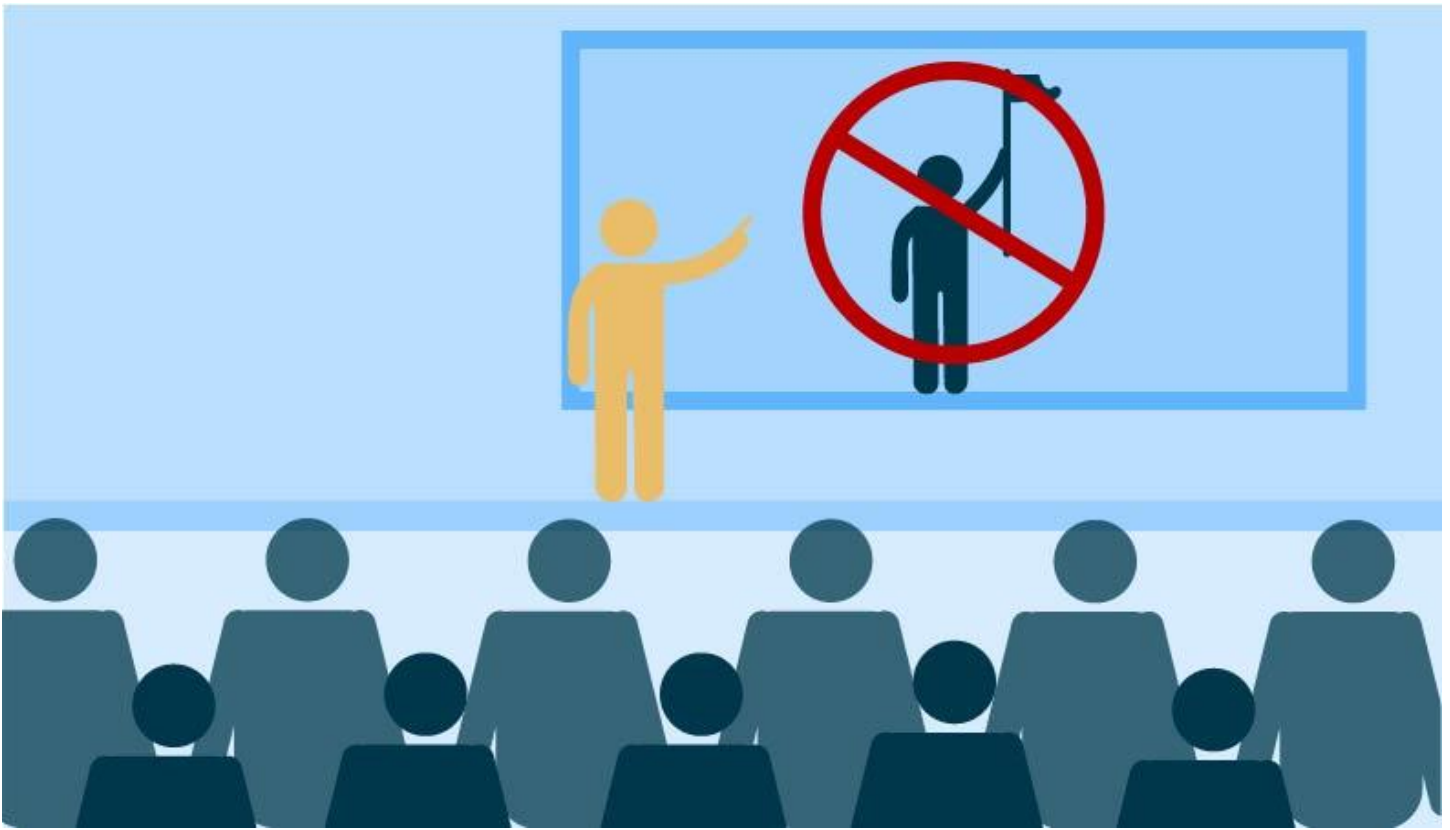


Practicing adaptive leadership is difficult on one hand and highly meaningful on the other hence not something that one should enter into casually. In this segment, we will take you through three tips or guidelines you should consider before starting practicing adaptive leadership. The three tips we will cover in this session are:

- 1) *Don't do it alone***
- 2) *Resist the leap to action; and***
- 3) *Discover the joy of making hard choices***

We will then dig further to give you scenarios where individuals who exercise adaptive leadership incorporate in their leadership journey.

DON'T DO IT ALONE



This is the step that sounds easy and obvious. However, many people who try to do the right thing end up falling in the trap of taking on the journey by themselves. By doing so, the journey ends up lonely and dangerous as one becomes an easy target to those who find threat in the good work.

Why do so many people end up doing it alone when the danger is so obvious? Why is there the temptation of trying to do it alone? There are various reasons which include:

Opponents trap - Your opponents will do everything to make you vulnerable. They will encourage you to have courage in fighting for what you believe in. This will make you happy to oblige and even isolate yourself more.

Praise for being on the front line - Many people enjoy the plaudits that come from being on the front line. This danger even rises when your allies' sense that you are fully committed. They will encourage you by praising your steps towards your goal. However, none of them is ready to make a step to support you.

Passion and commitment - Belief in what you are doing is indispensable to your willingness to take the risks of leading adaptive change. This makes one vulnerable ending up getting caught in the cause that they do not detect danger signals leading to failure.

SCENARIO

During the apartheid regime, South Africa had a dubious reputation of boasting one of the highest prison populations in the world. This became a concern for the two most educated lawyers then; Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. The two thought they knew what racial injustice was all about. But their experience of overflowing human misery in their cramped lawyers' offices opened their eyes to the real suffering of ordinary people.

As lawyers, they presented African grievances to the white leadership. However, the softer policies of negotiation and compliance achieved nothing. The ANC political and anti-apartheid party which had been formed by Mandela gained popularity as both blacks and some white people believed in the ANC politics. Mandela and Tambo were key in organizing the Defiance Campaign resulting in Mandela imprisonment and Tambo going to exile.

In prison, Mandela was offered freedom to denounce opposition to the government by President Botha. Having known how oppressed people of South Africa were, Mandela told president Botha "What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people

remains banned? And What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected?"

Mandela did not do it alone; Tambo assisted him to keep his initiative alive from exile and citizens who had subscribed to ANC party ensured that they kept the apartheid regime on toss.

Whether you are taking on a small initiative or a large one, do not go it alone. Find partners who will share the dangers and the exposure. Together, you will stand a far better chance of avoiding attacks from opponents and keeping initiative alive.

RESIST THE LEAP TO ACTION



Adaptive challenges require one to reinterpret, question their own values as well as habits and behavior. It requires a lot more reflection than spontaneous actions. In times of crisis, pressure mounts to take quick action. This plays out as strength for many people and as such many people rise to the occasion to do something. Emergency management is a needed skill. It has enabled people to save those who are trapped in a burning building and even those who were drowning.

Adaptive leadership is different from rescuing people from fire. Adaptive challenges are hard to define and require people to question their own priorities, habits, behavior and priorities. When leading adaptive change, you will encounter resistance by stirring the pot, upsetting the status quo and creating disequilibrium.

SCENARIO

Dr. Daniel had recently been transferred to ABC hospital. The hospital had just recorded a number of deaths resulting from a strange disease that had spread in Neema town. Patients had the same symptoms as those who were suffering from Malaria. His colleagues opted to administer Malaria vaccines to these patients. However, patients' conditions worsened resulting in deaths. Hospital management was desperate to find the cure of this disease and samples had been sent to different laboratories both locally and internationally.

Dr Daniel together with 2 more doctors were allocated the hospital wing dealing with the disease. As the patients were admitted, groaning in pain, his colleagues were looking at Malaria drugs as the only resort of helping the patients against the pain and to cure the disease. Dr Daniel believed the disease patients were suffering from was not malaria hence he could not administer the drug despite the noises from patients.

Some families were bitter with him as they felt the doctor, they came to seek help from was not helping. On realizing that, Dr Daniel opted to join the lab technicians, encouraging them to put more hours in finding out the cause and the structure of the disease. As this process continued, more and more deaths were reported especially on patients who were on Malaria treatment. A week later, it was discovered that the disease had a different structure from malaria and malaria drugs boosted the spread of the disease in the patient's organs. Patients who had not been given malaria drugs were treated and discharged.

Solving an adaptive challenge takes time and reflection. One has to resist the pressure to do something rather one should spend time diagnosing the problem. Spending time diagnosing a problem when a solution is urgent gets uncomfortable. However, you have to give yourself time to assess your own skills and to determine whether you are the right person to intervene. Feel free to leave the challenge to someone else if they will have a

better chance of success. Always take time to assess the risk; ask yourself whether the potential rewards are worth the risks.

DISCOVER THE JOY OF MAKING HARD CHOICES



Adaptive leadership is a difficult practice that requires learning, unlearning and relearning. What makes adaptive leadership more complicated is that it entails making decisions on what is so essential that must be preserved going forward and what value can be left behind. Determining what should be kept and what should be left behind requires making hard choices as it involves protecting what is dear to you and letting go of things that you held so dearly. It is a tough process; a moment of clarification which is different from making choices of right and wrong; which is straightforward as you already have the knowledge.

Adaptive challenges are encountered quite often. Acknowledging that you have opted not to exercise leadership because of something that is more important to you is a step towards self-knowledge. Taking responsibility for your choices helps you understand yourself more.

If you want to exercise adaptive leadership more than you have in the past, you will have to make some different choices from those you have made before. You will have to risk whatever commitment or concern that held you back on behalf of something else that you have been saying is more important to you.

SCENARIO

Having been imprisoned for opposing Apartheid regime, Nelson Mandela was focused on liberating the people of South Africa from oppression by the whites. He valued this and believed that the freedom of his fellow blacks supersedes his personal freedom.

While in prison, president Botha offered Mandela conditional freedom. Mandela was to denounce opposition to the apartheid government. He was to be released from prison if he accepted this condition. Mandela would then rejoin his family and friends. However, he refused since the freedom that was offered would be short lived and his fellow people would never enjoy the freedom that he was fighting for. He responded through his letter that was read by his daughter questioning the kind of freedom he would enjoy "What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned?"

In making hard decisions, one is supposed to focus on the big picture as our life is the sum total of all the decisions, we make every day, decisions are determined by our priorities. We have to know and believe in what we value while creating a necessary environment to learn from self and others.

RECAP

In a nutshell, we introduced practicing adaptive leadership. We identified the three guiding principles of practicing adaptive leadership and using scenarios, described each step and how you can use the 3 guidelines in your adaptive leadership journey.

Feel free to re-read any section to gain a deeper understanding of the concept. We encourage you to reflect on the way you have been handling challenges and start thinking how you can incorporate the above guidelines going forward.