

46 primes - a book overview

“How any group can solve any problem”

www.theprimes.com



Author **Chris McGoff**

Business builder and international consultant; focus product and process innovation, growth strategies and vision, high performance groups and organizations and value chain and customer management.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmaHvuxLBR8>





What are **Primes**

- **Universal patterns** of group behavior
- **Show up every time people join up groups** to solve problems, drive change and transform systems
- Master the primes and **you can master leading groups**



Usage of the **Primes**

- **Inspire** people to join groups
- Get **aligned**
- **Generate** sufficient **power** and
- **Sustain alignment and power** until the problem is solved

1

Universal patterns of leading in uncertain times

"The future ain't what it used to be" *Yogi Berra*



Successfully leading groups - 3 Characteristics

- ◉ *Groups >7 members need to be led*
- ◉ **Be clear** about what they are up to and how they spend their precious time
- ◉ **Be intentional** and be willing to go first
- ◉ **Master the art of enrolling others** to join



Leading

Leading is ambiguous
and offers terrific
opportunity to look bad
in front of others

Set Direction

Align Resources

Inspire Action

Be Responsible
for Results

LEADING



leading vs managing vs operating

Leading

Setting direction,
allocating resources,
inspiring action and
being accountable for
results

Managing

Balancing capacity
with demand and
ensuring predictable
value is created using
an efficient system

Operating

Using the system as
designed to produce
value

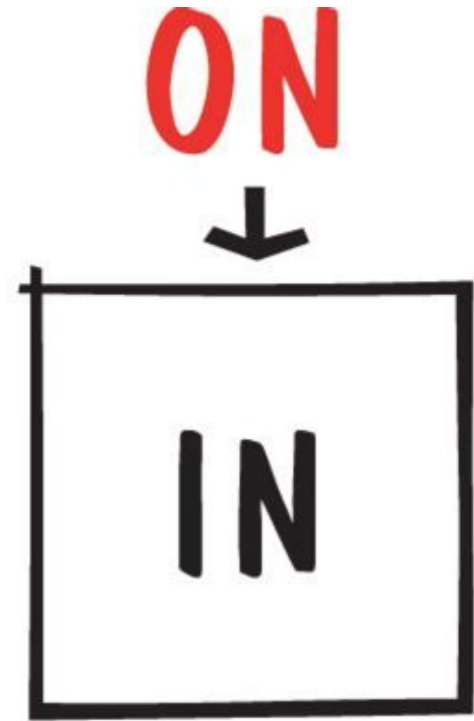
More certain and less risky



In-On

Are you seduced by working “in” the business at the expense of “on” it?

- **IN – operate the systems and solve the problems that already exist** (seductive; anyone can do it)
- **ON – your activities either change or transform the business** (ambiguous and scary; leader must start it)



IN-ON



Are you spending enough time working **ON** your business?

Leaders typically shortchange the time they devote to working on the business
“Only I can do it”; “This chance will never come again” ... are myths and convenient
excuses to avoid the responsibility of leading change.

Too much IN is the number one reason why change and transformation efforts fail

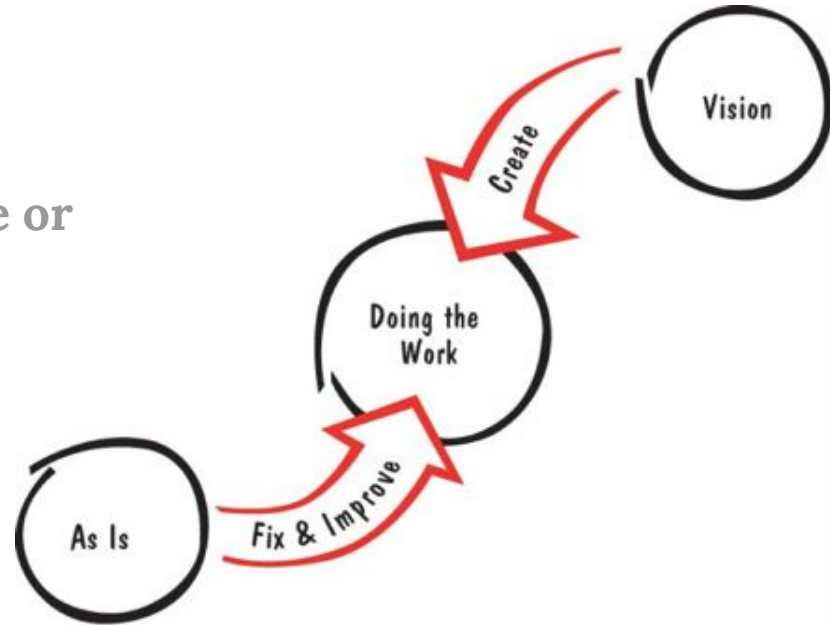




Change vs Transformation

Does solving your problem require Change or Transformation?

Are you fixing or creating?



CHANGE VERSUS TRANSFORMATION



Change vs transformation

Change

- Making a better, faster, cheaper **version of the past**
- Use it **when a problem is simple** and the current system needs only a tune-up
- Success is judged by efficiencies and economics compared with where we started.

Transformation

- Create a future and **break with the past**. Needs: a clear objective, a specific outcome and a certain date.
- Use it **when problems are wicked** and a completely new system is required.
- Imagination, declaration, invention, innovation – requires a childlike fascination with “mashing” things together to create something new.

Be a person who never says “try”

As long as you’re “trying” to do something, you are “not doing” something.

As long as you are “doing this so that you can have or be that,” you are “not having or being that”.





Integrity

I say what I am going to
do, and I do what I say
... every time!

SAY  DO

INTEGRITY

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The most important persuasion tool you have in your entire arsenal is integrity

Integrity is an essential value of high performance groups.

There are no small or big promises ... there are only promises and all will be kept.





3 skills to live in integrity

Recognition

Recognize when you have been requested to, or are about to give your word

True “Yes”

Say “yes” only when you mean it.

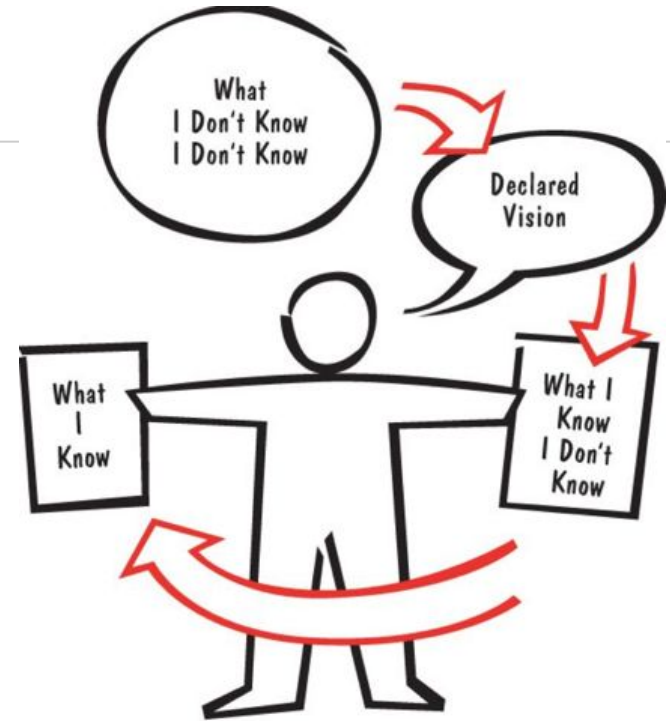
Learn to say “no”

Get very good at saying “no”, because that is going to be your most common response.



Trust the universe

...promises no guarantees, it gives us the ability to imagine without limit and watch what shows up.



TRUST THE UNIVERSE

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Declaration

A declaration is a statement of “what” will be achieved by “when”



DECLARATION



language shift from passive to powerful

Passive voice

plan

try

I should

I'm going to

We ought to

But/If

I support the effort

With conditions

Soon

Powerful voice

declare

do

I shall

I am

We are

Regardless

I commit to the outcome

Unconditionally

Now



If your actions inspire others to
dream more, learn more, do more,
and become more, you are a leader

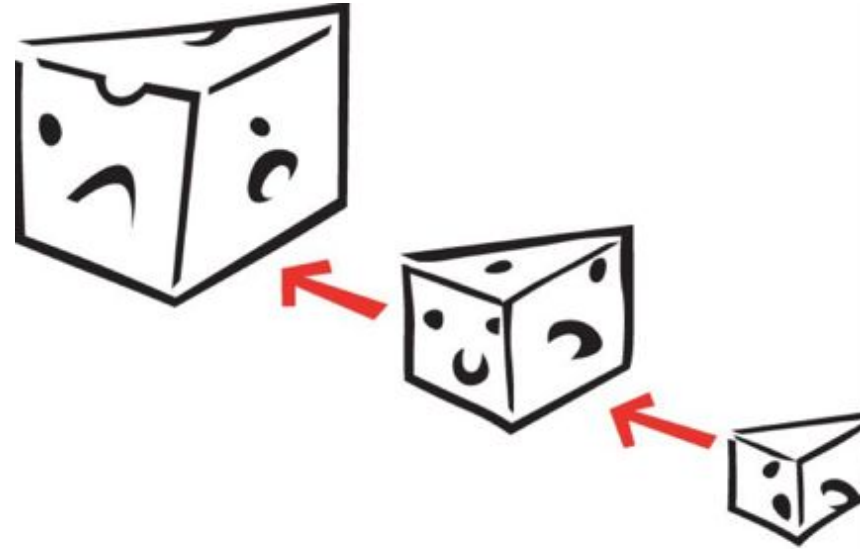
(Johny Quincy Adams)





Dynamic incompleteness

Can you create a vision that is compelling because of what it says and at the same time inviting – for what it leaves yet to be said?



DYNAMIC INCOMPLETENESS

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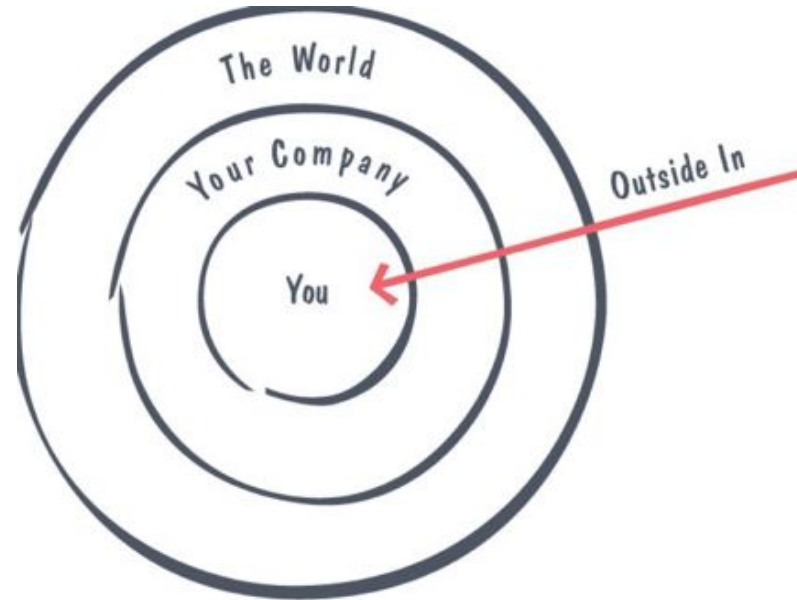
Visions with Dynamic incompleteness

- Leaders are responsible for creating vision that informs the strategic direction and inspires the people to act
- The worst leaders take no responsibility for creating a vision
- Too much form causes resistance and too much void causes chaos ... the leader's job is to bring just enough form to inspire the people and frame what needs to be articulated.



Ennoblement

What do I stand for
outside in the world we
serve, as opposed to
inside our own
organization?



ENNOBLEMENT



Powerful visions are developed from outside in

- Do not begin with yourself or your organization but instead with the world – the largest possible frame of reference. Imagine this world in a manner that inspires and motivates your team–
- Describe your group's role in this imagined world and how your team will serve its needs
- Then imagine what you and your group need to do to make the vision real

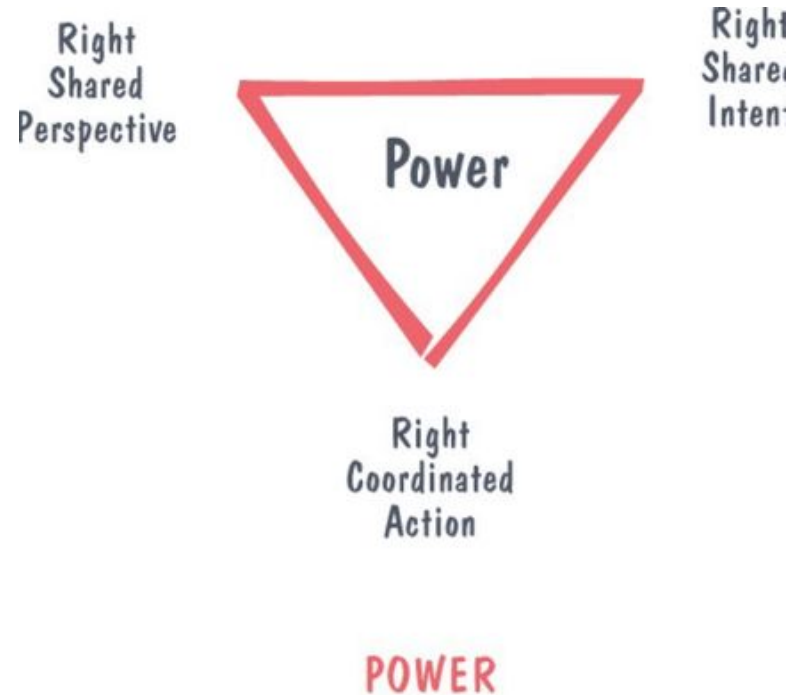
To tap into the human desire to
participate in something
meaningful sets free an almost
miraculous power source that
compels us to go beyond the limits
we perceive today.





Power

Any group's power is a function of (1) the degree to **which its members are willing to operate from a shared perspective**, (2) the degree to which they will **commit to a shared intent**, and (3) the **level of coordination** of their actions.





Force vs authority vs power

Force

Get members of a group to do something because they are intimidated by your sheer strength. Energy comes from the simple fact that you can beat others up if they do not comply

Authority

Requires that you compel someone to do something because you have been empowered by a larger community to enforce its will.

Power

Is the energy that is generated from within the group by the group itself when members freely choose to work collectively toward a common outcome.

The highest skill to master is the ability to generate power in **groups** composed of strangers, competitors, cautious allies, and suspicious stakeholders.



2

Universal patterns of powerful alliances

Go slow to go fast

The trick is to gather the individuals into a group so that they can look at and discuss the problem from various angles and levels together.

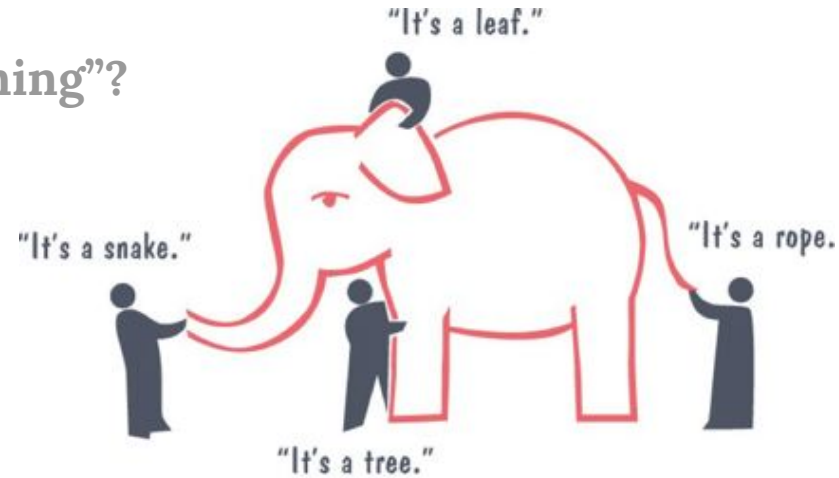




Blind men and the elephant

How do you help people to see the “whole thing”?

A useful model is one that positions people at a common vantage point that allows them to discuss what they see – and how to affect it.



BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

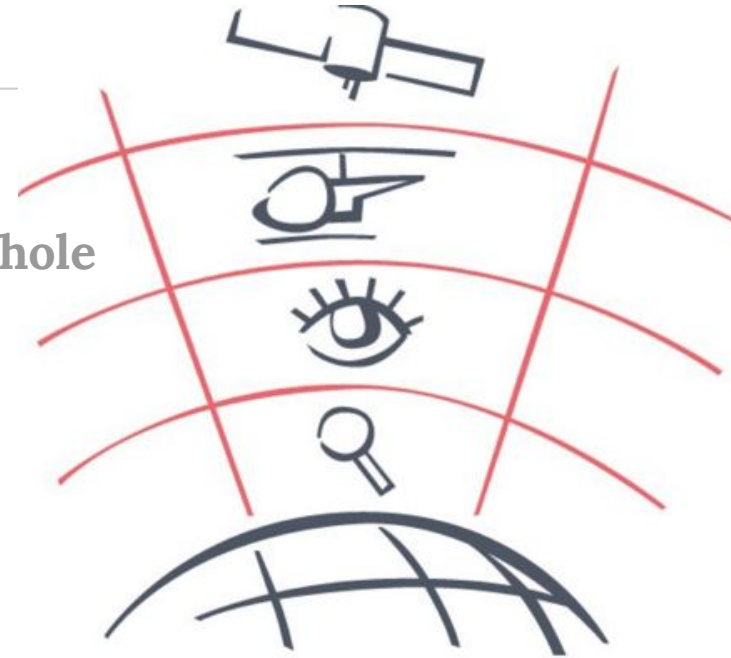
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Levels of perspective

How do you help people to see the **same** “whole thing”?

Each individual in a group enters the problem-solving process already seeing the situation from some level of perspective and abstraction. **The trick is to get everybody to share the optimal level of perspective.**



LEVELS OF PERSPECTIVE

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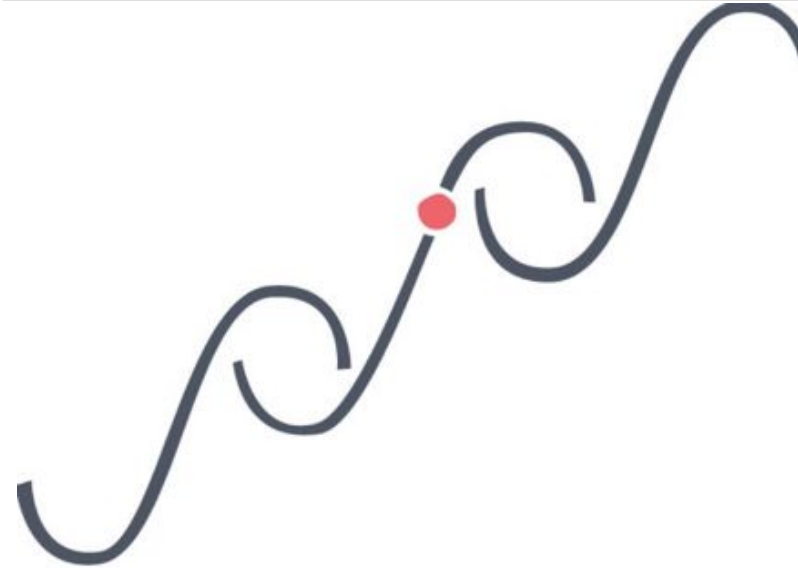
It is usually best to begin with the big picture - an overall perspective. When points of leverage become apparent, you want to do your best to zoom in and address them.





S-Curves

- Do we need to change? If we do need to change, how fast?
- Phases: Figure it out – growth – collapse.
- Build a 2nd one before the 1st one goes down.



S-CURVES

If it's not broken, now might be the ideal
time to jump to the next S-curve

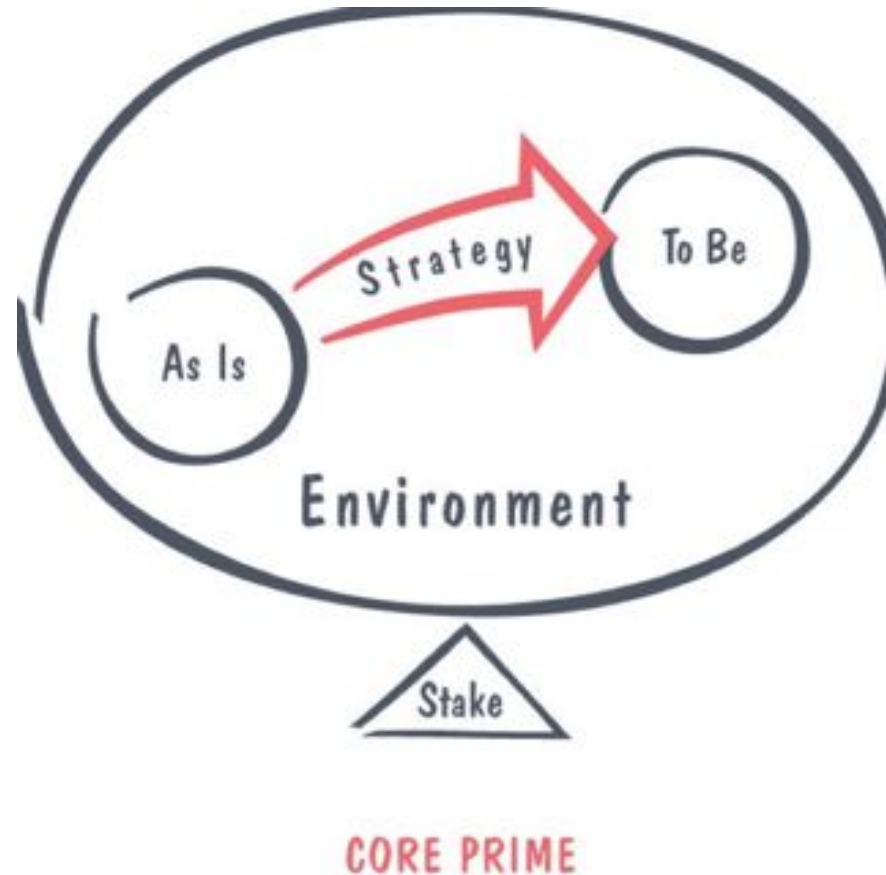
Most people and organizations wait until it is too late, until they are on the down side of the curve.





Core prime

Take people beyond mere compliance.





Five essential agreements that generate creative tension

As is

Stakeholders must see their current situation – as it really is as opposed to how they want it to be.

What you resist persists. What you embrace loses all its power over you.

To Be

They must agree on a vision of the future with which they have fallen in love.

Environment

They must agree on what's happening around them—which they're unable to affect but which will affect them

Recognize and leverage the uncontrollable.

Strategy

Finally they must agree on how to break out of the “As is” and chart a course toward the “To Be”

Focus everything on what you want.

Stake

They must agree on what's at stake if they stay where they are and don't change.

What happens if we fail to drive toward the To Be and remain where we are, doing what we're doing?



Parity

Ensure that you pay the right amount of attention to each of the five components of the core prime.

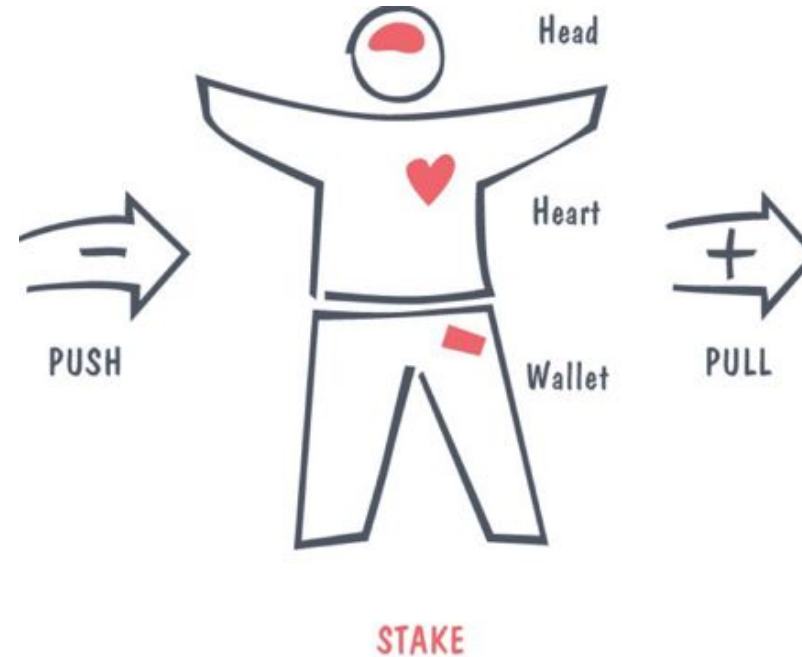




Stake

How do you get the group “all in”?

- Analytical people who listen with their brains.
- Emotional people who listen with their hearts.
- Financially motivated people who listen with their wallets.





Push and Pull

Push

People avoid or push away from pain: "If we don't change, something bad is going to happen to us!"

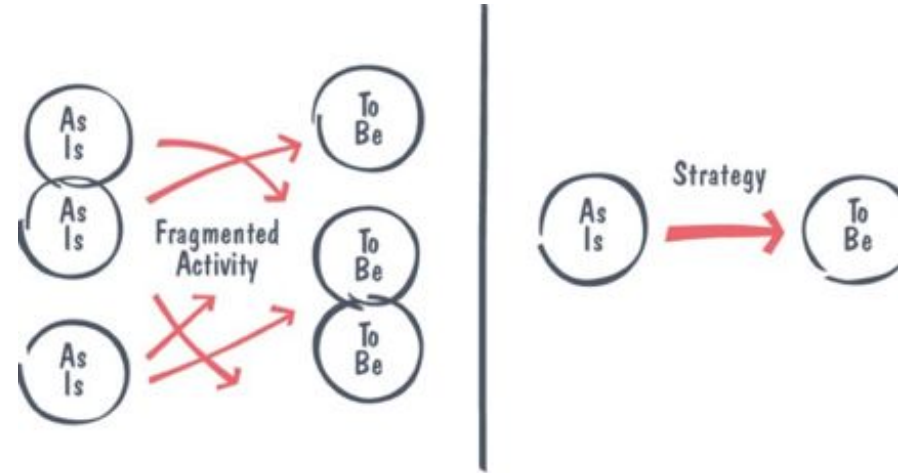
Pull

Positive aspects – What people desire and want to pull toward them.



Cohesion - the act of sticking together

- Cohesion is unnatural and needs constant energy to maintain.
- Otherwise differences fragmented group's focus, dissipate its energy and create an environment ripe for conflict.



COHESION



Redpoint

Of all the important things we could do, what are the fewest, most important?

Powerful leaders and teams do everything about the fewest most important things.

FOCUS



REDPOINT

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Muda

Can you distinguish “non value added activity”?

- Stop spending time and money on non-value-added activities.
- Start investing freed-up time and money on unfulfilled business and customer needs.



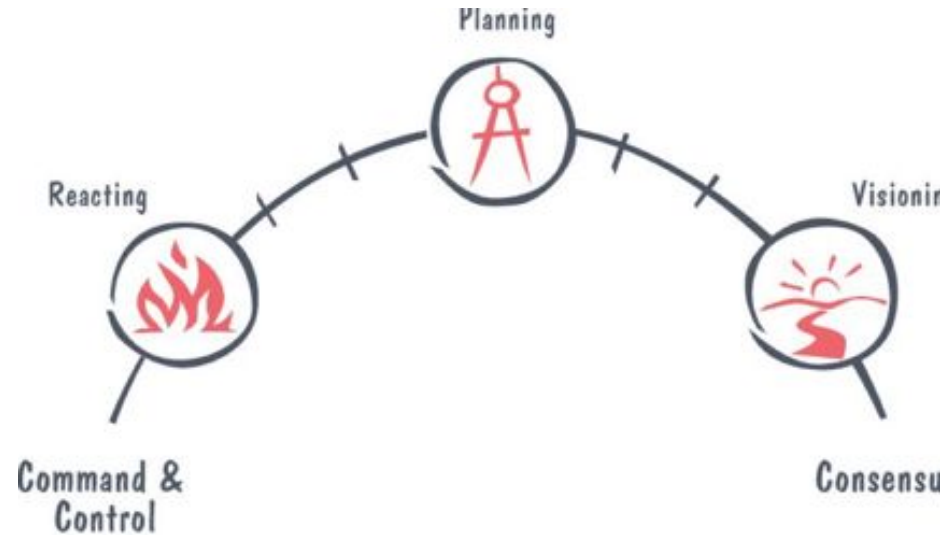
3

Universal patterns of outstanding group performance



Leadership spectrum

The most effective leaders use this prime and match the decision process to each situation.



LEADERSHIP SPECTRUM

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Four leadership styles for making decisions

Command and Control

When the situation is urgent and stakes are high.

Someone has to take command and control in the heat of the battle.

For emergency or small decisions (where cost of collaborating is too high)

Consensus

Use for high stakes strategic planning and visioning (five year plan to take a new company into the marketplace).

Informed Command and Control

In situations that are still urgent but with lower stakes.

Limited consensus

For low stakes strategic planning. (e.g. choosing between similar health insurance plans)

- Give a deadline
- Define a backup decision process right from the start



Consensus

1. ☒ The process was explicit, rational, and fair;
2. ☒ I was treated well and my inputs were heard;
3. ☒ I can live with and commit to the outcomes.



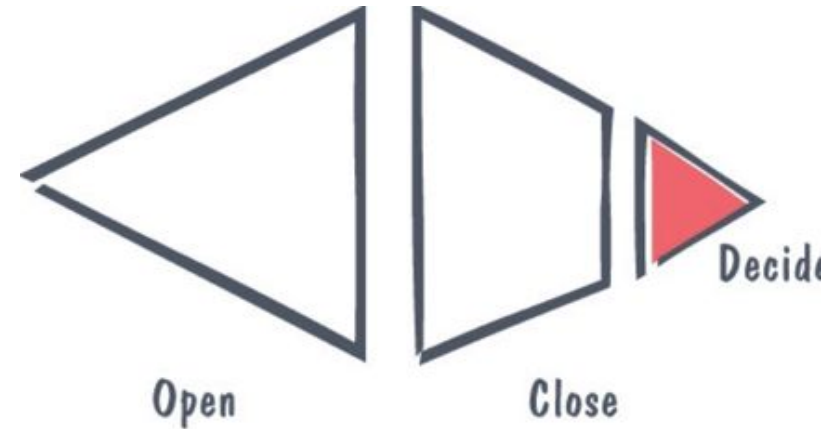
CONSENSUS



Open-Close-Decide

How do groups actually make decisions?

- Open - generate ideas
- Close - less tolerant of new ideas and begins to prioritize and converge
- Decide - a selection is made



OPEN-CLOSE-DECIDE

Voting represents the lowest form of decision making. **When collaboration fails and leadership can't be trusted, people surrender their opinions and allow math to decide.** A vote represents the failure of consensus; it's the process of last resort and it's the least effective.





Culture

Culture represents the difference between the behaviors that groups tolerate and encourage and those that they do not tolerate.

Behaviors
We Tolerate

Culture

Behaviors
We Do Not
Tolerate

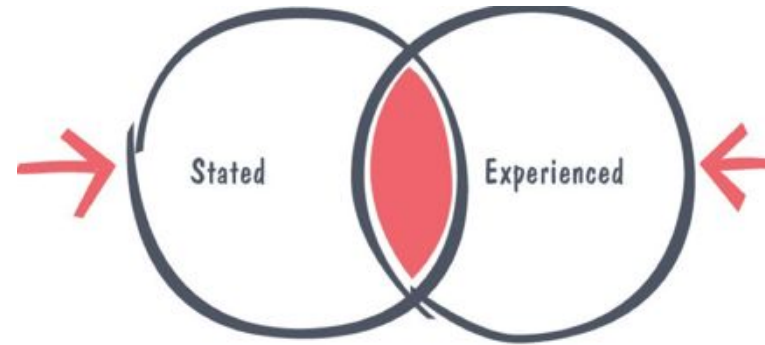
CULTURE



Congruence

What is the dark side of a stated culture?

- This primes reveals the constant tension between what is “stated” and what is “experienced”
- Arrows represent the continuous investment of energy to ensure that “state” equals “experienced” culture.



CONGRUENCE

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Feedback as caring

- High-performance groups see the giving of feedback as an outward expression of caring for someone.
- The capacity to give and receive generative, effective and timely feedback is essential to achieving powerful group performance.



Right Message



Right Time



Right Person



Right Way



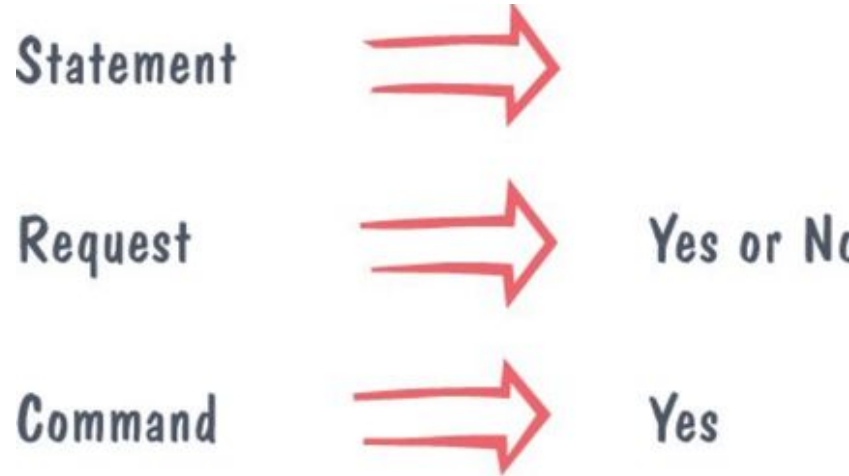
Right Reason

FEEDBACK AS CARING



Request-Command

All members of a group must be able to distinguish between “statements”, “requests” and “commands”.



REQUEST-COMMAND



Statement vs request vs command

Statement

Is a description of something of the condition of someone.

“Our profits are declining”; “I’m so frustrated by what you did”

No response is required

Request

An invitation to give your word.

“Will you let me explain why you frustrated me?”

Requires a response – YES or NO (no other response)

Command

Is a requirement for someone to make a good in his or her word.

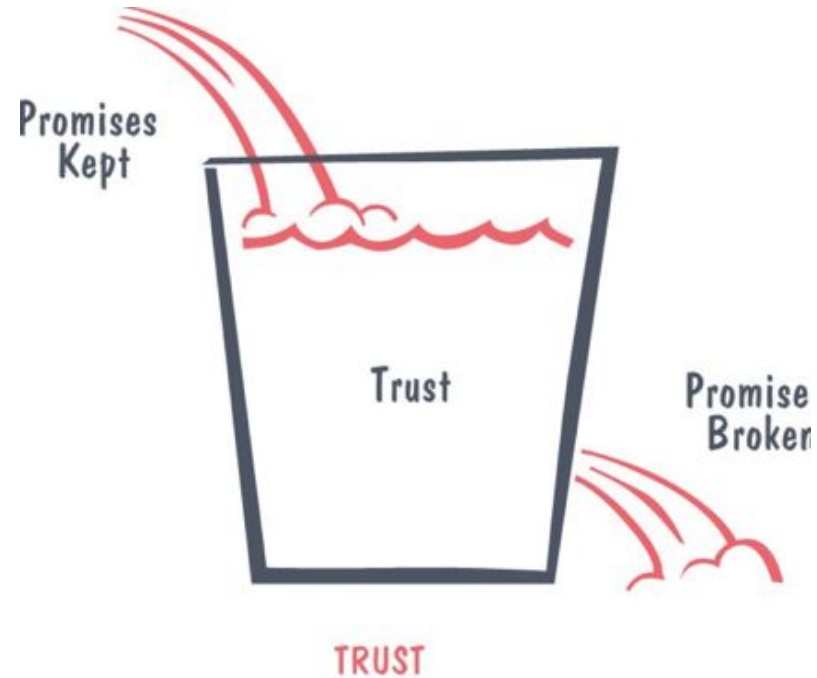
“Sit down. I am going to tell you why I’m frustrated”

YES is the only response (including showing the consequences).



Trust

The key is to give your word and keep it – over and over again.





Breach

What do you do when your “yes” turns out to be a “no”?

Acknowledge (the breach) and **Recommit** (to integrity)

SAY  DO

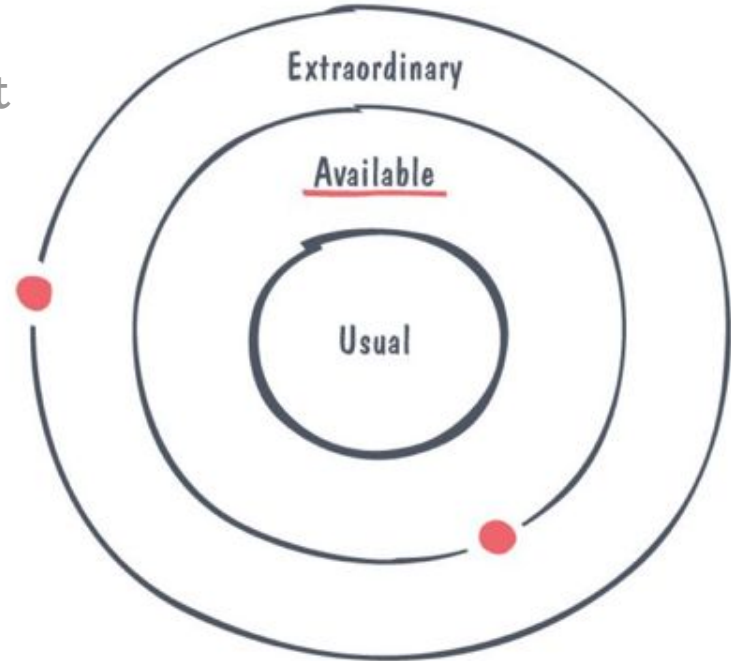
BREACH



Perimeter

How small a fence have you built around what can and cannot be said?

- Usual – what we usually talk about
- Available – discuss matters relevant to what we are doing but that we have not yet said
- Extraordinary – have an extraordinary conversation



PERIMETER



Facts, stories and beliefs

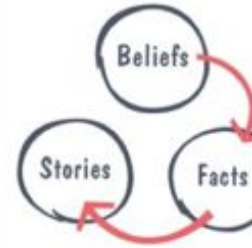
“Our revenue was \$50 million last year and that is simply not enough. Marketing is inept.”



Undistinguished



The Myth



The Truth

FACTS, STORIES, AND BELIEFS



(no) Gossip

Gossip is pure, negative energy that destroys possibility and is the most harmful behavior any group can choose to tolerate.



GOSSIP

Fire and swords are slow engines of
destruction, compared to the
tongue of a Gossip (Sir Richard Steele)

Eliminate the “listening” to GOSSIP – because Gossip stops when no one is listening.

Ask: “Before you go on, will either of us approach him directly about this?”



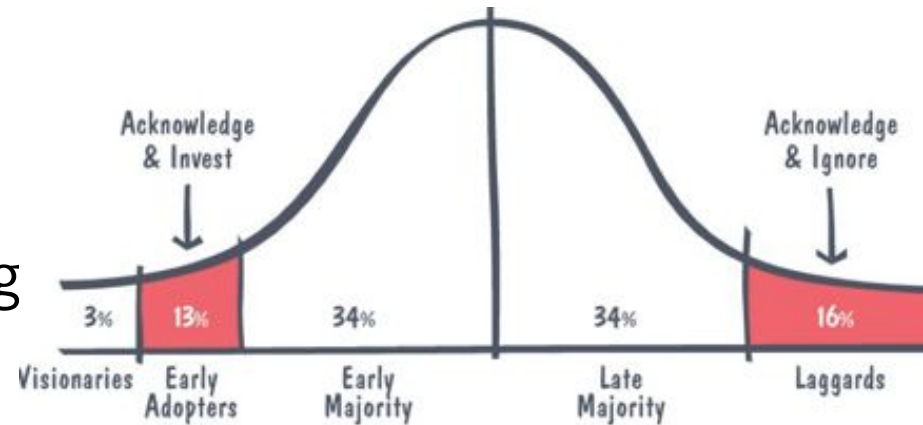
4

Universal patterns of group failure



Laggards

- Laggards never come along; they destroy possibility by constantly asking questions, ignoring answers and declaring why things won't work.
- Leaders have to ignore the Laggards and invest their time and energy in the Early adopters.



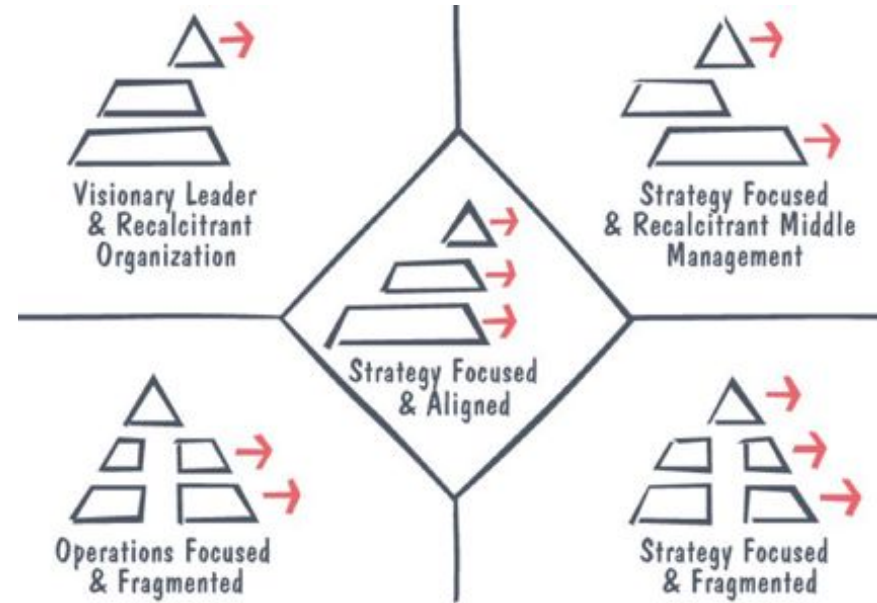
LAGGARDS

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Fragmentation

Fragmentation is the splitting of focus and commitment among stakeholders.



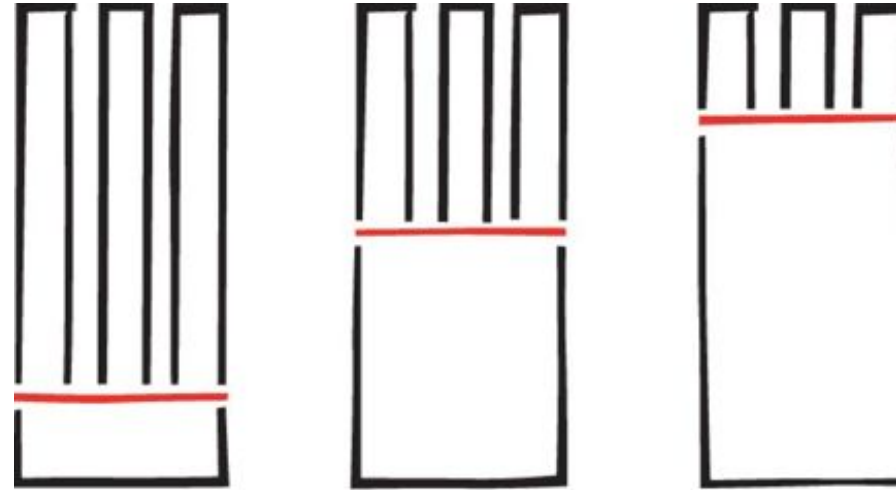
FRAGMENTATION



Same-Different

Everybody is special. Really?

Helps you realize how agreements among different stakeholders are facilitated.



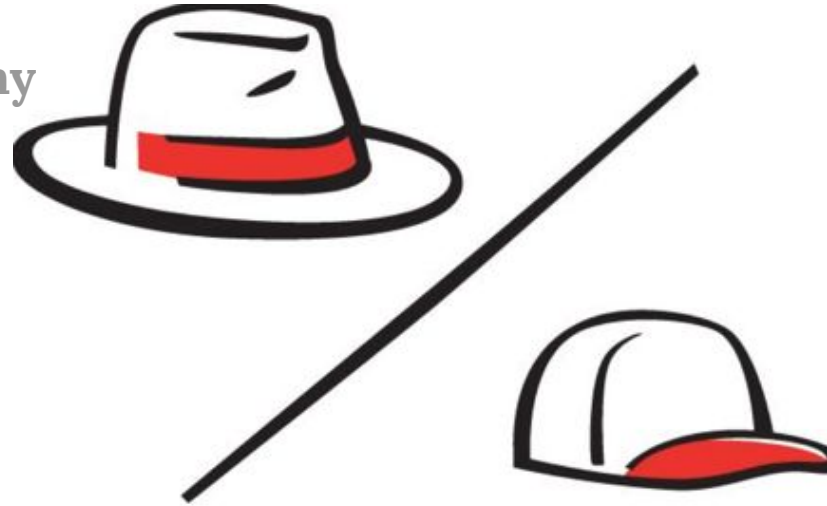
SAME-DIFFERENT



Big hat - little hat

What do you do when the needs of the many conflict with the needs of the few?

It is essential that people agree not to threaten the Big Hat's existence. A unit has no right to hurt the whole system.

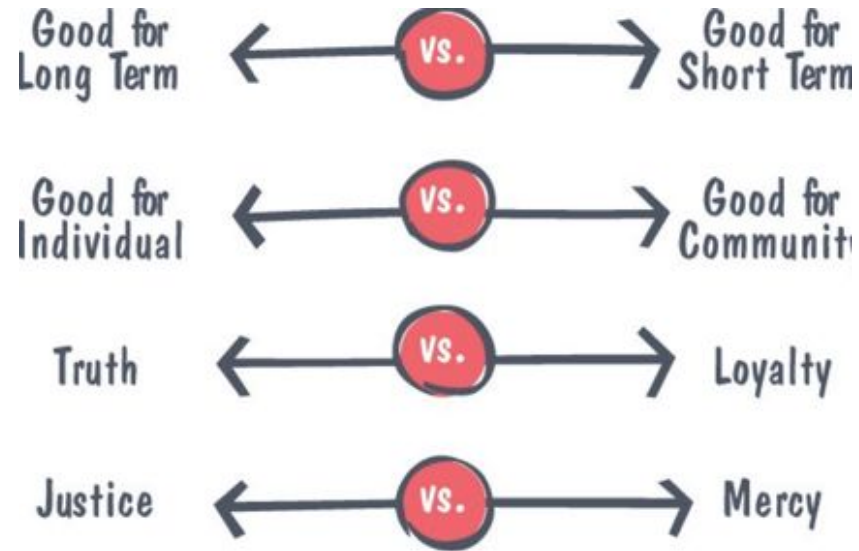


BIG HAT-LITTLE HAT



Right versus right

The great misperception is that one position must be right and others must be wrong.



RIGHT VERSUS RIGHT

It is imperative to recognize immediately the collision of two “rights” - it enables a leader to intervene, honor all the “rights” and reorient toward the defined “to be”





Resolution principles

“Out beyond right and wrong, there is a green field. I’ll meet you there.”



Ends-Based:
Do the
greatest
good for the
most people.



Rule-Based:
Act as if
creating
a universal
standard.



Care-Based:
Do unto other:
as you want
them to do
unto you.

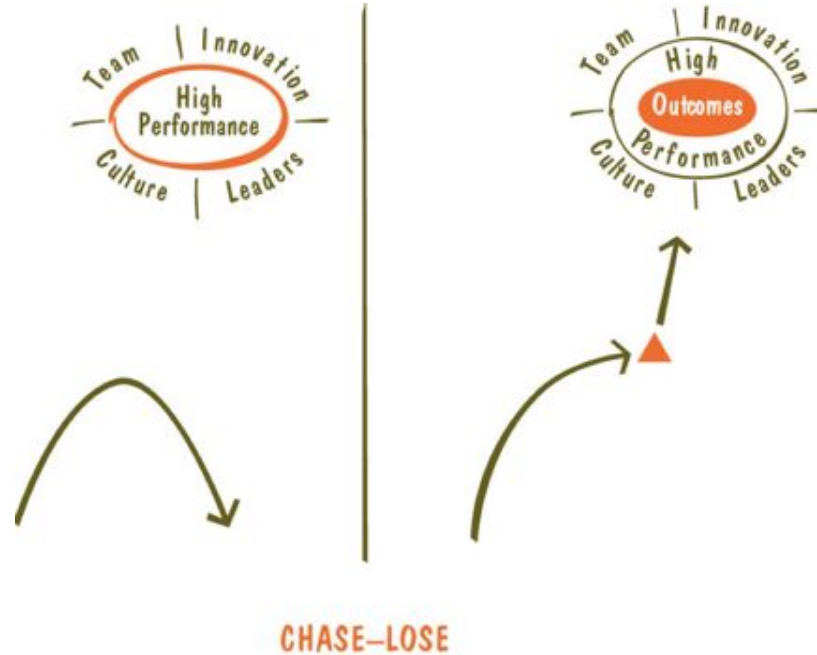
RESOLUTION PRINCIPLES



Chase-lose

Teamwork, innovation, leadership and all the other characteristics of high-performance culture are not ends in themselves.

- Chase a meaningful outcome
- Achieve the outcomes and improve your culture at the same time.
- Deal quickly with whatever put the outcome at risk

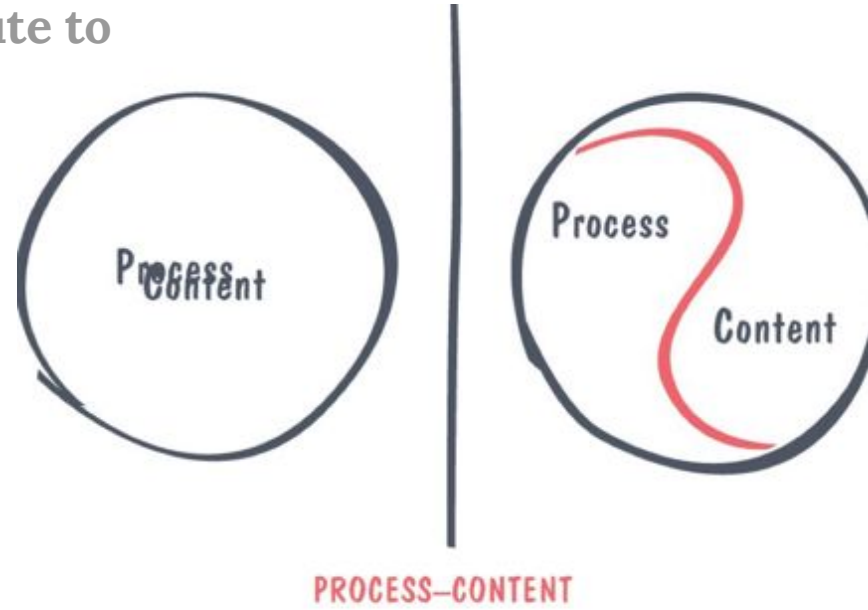




Process-Content

You can run the process. You can contribute to content. Pick one.

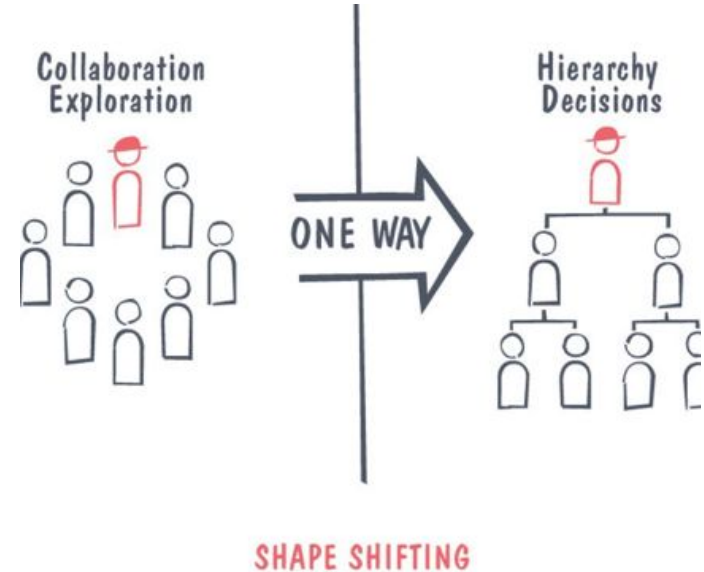
Whoever takes responsibility for facilitating the process must surrender his or her right to offer content.





Shape shifting

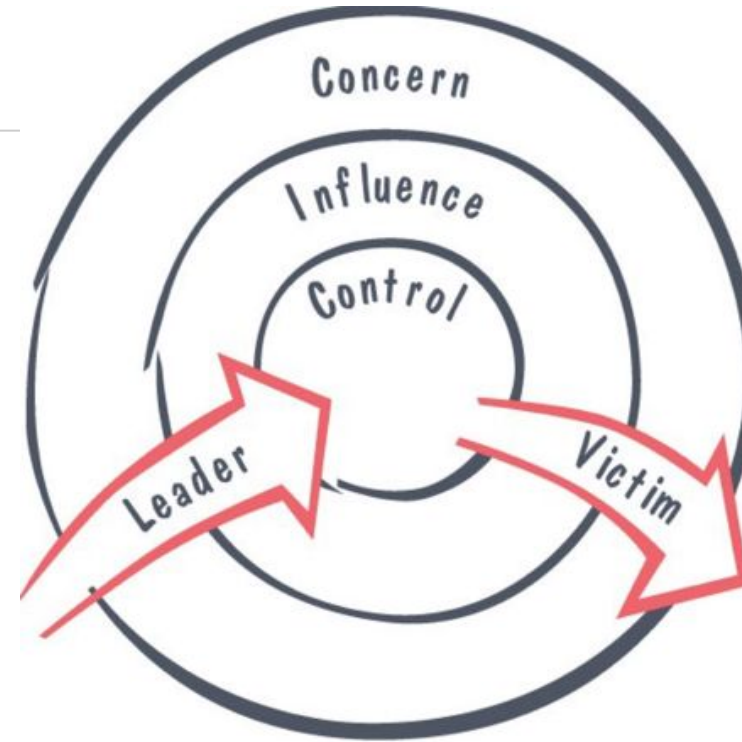
Leaders can assume a collaborative or an authoritarian relationship with a group, but not both at once. How explicit are you about your role?





Victim-Leader

Great leaders help victim-oriented groups regain their power and help empowered groups sustain theirs.

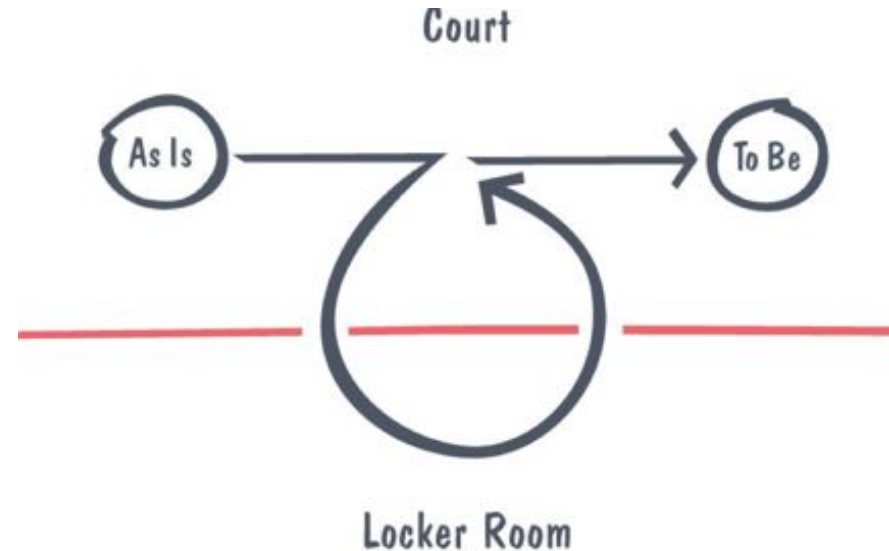


VICTIM-LEADER



Court-Locker room

- Planning is a near-death experience. We step out of living (Court) and we step into talking about living (Locker room).
- Is there anything obvious that we could take on now to get this transformation started?



COURT-LOCKER ROOM

The key is to never change the date.

The group gave its word. Time is running out. Pressure is building. It is this pressure that drives innovation.





Confusion

Confusion is the highest state of learning. In this context, being confused is a state to be appreciated and enjoyed.



A Powerful State of Learning

CONFUSION

5

Universal patterns of thriving in ambiguity

“The shorter way to do many things is to do only one thing at a time.”

“The successful warrior is the average man, with laser-like focus”
(Bruce Lee)

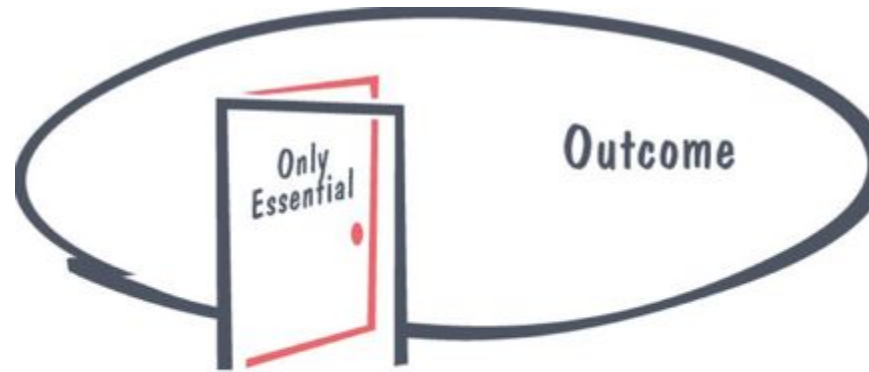




A clearing

How skilled are you at creating nothing?

- Keep your group as small as possible
- Minimize the amount of data you (must) consider
- Get off the grid when you need to do critical thinking
- Disconnect from text messages and e-mail as much as possible



A CLEARING

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Issues forward

What do we have to do now to eliminate the gap between our projection and our plan?

Leads to immediate, decisive action.



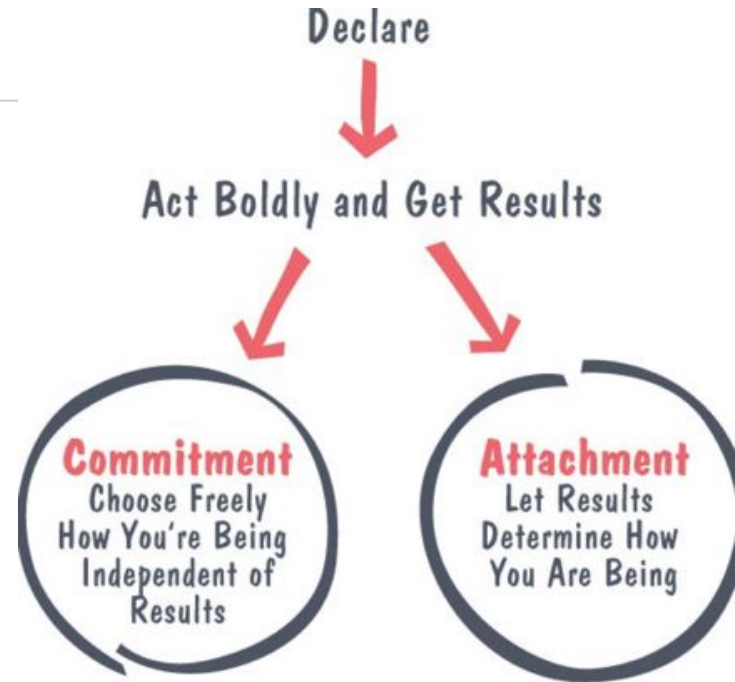
ISSUES FORWARD

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Commitment vs attachement

Our number one responsibility is to sustain our capacity to do this work over time.



COMMITMENT VERSUS ATTACHMENT



Be

- Be – Acknowledge that at any point in time you're being in some way
- Notice: Regularly pause what you're doing and notice how you are being
- Choose: In that moment of noticing, choose any way of being
- Be: Instantly become that chosen way of being

Be

Notice

Choose

Be

BE