



# LEMON DROPS

acumen: adaptive leadership

Group project and brainstorming

# ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Adaptive Leadership is a five week course set up with Acumen ( [plusacumen.org](https://plusacumen.org) ) and the purpose of this course is for mobilizing for change and disrupting the status quo.

Throughout the course students are given tasks to better understand the root cause of a stubborn and recurring challenge in your organization, team or community. They offer strategies to partner with those who are in positions of authority or power to leverage your own power for change.

Students are asked to design an experiment that strengthens their ability to create lasting change, learn to lead adaptively in environments with trust issues, political sensitivities, resistance, conflict and distress.

This course helps students identify and make progress on a leadership challenge in their own life, team, or community. We apply the tools and techniques of Adaptive Leadership, a practical framework developed at Harvard Kennedy School of Government for leading change, particularly during times of uncertainty or when there are no easy answers.

Adaptive Leadership is a critical skillset for anyone looking to drive systemic change in an increasingly complex world.

Working in a group of people from different work spaces we came up with collective gap's that many teams face in many spaces.

# THE GAP

After following the steps provided in the module 1 worksheets and put ourselves in a “on the balcony” mindset and took a deep honest dive into how we can make a better work environment for our team we came to the topic of **transparency** and reasons the group felt this was important was because we feel that people from all positions want the same thing, they want to be happy at work and feel as though they are contributing to something worthwhile. The areas we felt our fictional organization could improve in transparency is between senior managers and team, between team managers and team.

With the objective of transparency, we want to implement concrete processes among managers and concrete process standards for production development. We think if we can move in this direction this would support managers to be interested in ideas, provide support & offer constructive feedback. Many people in our group have experienced situations where feedback is asked from the team but when it comes time for leaders to act it feel as though they are talking at the team and not with the team.

Our goal is to create a supportive environment where all opinions can be expressed.

# FRACTION MAP

In this challenge we are asked to put all stakeholders into specific categories to better understand their values, loyalties & losses. In this exercise we get to understand that everyone wants what is best for the team but might not know or have the right tools in order to make progressive change.

## Partners / Allies

- Allies – Direct Team
- Partners - My team, Friends & Family

## Opposition

- Direct Manager
- Team Manager

## Authorities

- Owner
- Department Manager
- Direct Manager
- Team Manager

## Casualties

- Those unwilling to contribute to change
- Us if we are not strategic in our actions

## Troublemakers

- Ourselves – when speaking our mind we can come off as outspoken.

## My Values, Loyalties & Losses

- Values - My values root around creating a supportive work culture, I think that we can give power to the all team members and create a professional environment at the same time. People often surprise you with their great ideas if they feel supported to share them. I feel that transparency is the key to making people feel supported to make great ideas come to life.
- Loyalties - I am loyal to my team members and the people I work with on a day to day basis. I want to feel confident to talk to my manager and co-workers and feel like they are being honest back.
- Losses - I could potentially lose my anonymity among the group and be obliged to participate more but that is a good thing.

## Team Manager Values, Loyalties & Losses

- Values – From my point of view they would like to have a progressive work environment and inclusive design and development practices but appears to fear change and obsesses over minor details. Once they find an angle to shut down a new idea, they shut it down. That can come off as an “All or Nothing” attitude.
- Loyalties – My Team manager is loyal to the team – they genuinely want what’s best for the team however their fear of change clouds any room for growth.
- Losses – My team manager likes to be right and doesn’t like it if ideas are not their own. It appears letting others take the lead makes them uncomfortable.

# OUR CHALLENGE REDEFINED

After going through the modules and learning about being on the dancefloor vs. On the Balcony in module 1 and about the different stakeholders in module 2 and now in module 3 getting external feedback from outside sources on what we consider to be “The Gap” I can see that while yes we are on the correct path of moving toward a transparent work environment, being correct is not everything, we are still dealing with and are people with unique personalities, strengths, weaknesses and flaws.

One thing that has become clear is that everyone is trying their best and reacting to their own situation based on what they think is the best solution.

Usually when people seem unwilling to see your side of a scenario it's usually because they don't see or agree with your point of view. Be the patient, compassionate and empathetic person you want to deal with and lead by example.

Another discovery found is that while we are defining the different stakeholders and how we perceive their point of view and the constant breakdown of the how's and why's I can see that we are all flawed humans trying our best and sometimes can let ego, pride and perception of what we think is our responsibility stop us from making the best decision for the group. We all deserve a little compassion and understanding

# ADAPTIVE EXPERIMENT

I plan on engaging with my direct manager and team manager, they would both be considered opposition and authority in relation to my group's gap transparency. The reason I feel they could be considered opposition is because at times they can reject new thoughts when adapting to new ideas.

I plan on discussing my views on transparency and that I think the gap could be narrowed by having more frequent one on one meetings and open conversations where I can voice my opinion or concerns and just be in the know of what's going on around my team.

I plan on acknowledging the gap and taking on the issue directly as I feel that method to be most effective when communicating to people on my team. I will be direct while also being empathetic and understanding.

I predict that the discussion to go well but on the other hand a reason this might not go well as the stakeholders could become defensive and in that case I must be understanding and solution focused.

# HOW IT WENT

We approached our team manager and asked to speak to them and we got straight to the point voicing our concerns in an empathetic way showing that we are not in any way blaming or upset. The team manager took this very well acknowledged our concerns as valid and suggested we move forward with more frequent one on one's and team discussions. My direct manager however seemed to avoid the situation and once we finally spoke came off as defensive and we did our best to be empathetic to their concerns and felt we left our meeting on a good note.

We learned that defining our problems in a team scenario and approaching the gap strategically helps take any emotion out and allow us to come up with constructive creative solutions. Talking to stakeholders and being as understanding as we can goes a long way, we are all trying to do a good job and if we can approach stakeholders with that in mind we can accomplish a lot.

# NEXT STEPS

Next steps in our group are following up with management to continue frequent one on one's with open group discussions in a safe space. Group discussions can take the form of group critiques and using research sessions to define objectives.

We must lead by example in order to establish the open communication style we desire. If we can work together to create a judgement free zone that could also contribute to more transparency. The more people feel comfortable to speak their mind the more change we can see.

One very important factor is trying to be as understanding as we can in order to narrow the gap of transparency. Another great lesson from an earlier module is that you can only make small steps for lasting change so one must be patient and make progress one step at a time.

Being understanding and empathetic to other stakeholders needs, this helps turn them into allies so I plan on trying to be as inclusive as I can with solutions by going through the brainstorming techniques discussed in this course.



# TAKEAWAYS & REFLECTIONS

This course has truly opened my eyes to more possibilities when considering adaptive change. A key takeaway for me is that only through understanding and patience do we see lasting change.

Now having gone through this course I see that being adaptive is not just going with the flow it means taking every change, evaluating by moving from the dancefloor to the balcony and contributing in a positive way.

My confidence has increased dramatically now that I have the tools to evaluate situations in depth and make educated decisions when taking action.

I will try and be more understanding to the needs of team members around me. When confronted with information or situations that make me feel uncomfortable I want to take a step onto the balcony and analyse the dancefloor empathetically.

I have already been implementing practices from this module everyday whether it's as simple as listening to my team's concerns without taking action and knowing when it's appropriate to take action. I also found categorizing stakeholders very informing as I can see the values and how to make different stakeholders allies.