HARVARD
Online

Adaptive Leadership

Syllabus

Adaptive Leadership: Practical Strategies for Change provides an in-depth overview of one of Harvard's proven approaches to making a difference in any group, community, or organization. Following and analyzing the success stories of five practitioners, all former students of the course, you will gain effective tools and strategies for diagnosing challenges and generating lasting progress in the systems you're a part of, no matter what level of rank, authority, or power you may hold.

Modules		Case Studies	Takeaways	Key Exercises
Module 1	**Mobilizing Adaptive Work**	A Sudden Need for Change: Bringing the Vermont House of Representatives Online During the COVID 19 Pandemic (Mitzi Johnson)	• Determine when a system is ready to face tough challenges • Reframe change as a process of keeping, discarding, and innovating • Address opposition by engaging with it • View resistance as a response to perceived losses, not change • Recognize stress in a system as something that can be productive	• Distinguish technical from adaptive components of a leadership challenge • Identify adaptive pressures that create new capacities • Discern partnering and pacing as effective strategies for change • Analyze the level of stress in a system
Module 2	**Closing the Gap Between Aspiration and Reality**	Starting Somewhere: Closing the Tech Skills Gap in Thailand to Start Addressing Social Inequality (Korn Lapprathana)	• Connecting leadership efforts to a personal sense of purpose • Prepare to move beyond frontiers of competence when addressing unsolved challenges • Maintain curiosity while under pressure • Distinguish leadership from authority • Broaden options for engaging with authority figures, and for being one	• Channel personal purpose into clear, actionable goals • Analyze problems in terms of gaps to close between reality and aspiration • Assess how changing environmental conditions impact strategy effectiveness • Recognize patterns in how you engage with authority • Develop versatile strategies for exercising authority
Module 3	**Keeping the Work at the Center of Focus**	Through Conflict and High Stakes: Creating Wrap-Around Care for People with Substance Use Disorder in Ontario, Canada (Hasan Sheikh)	• Distinguish conflicting viewpoints on key issues • Make progress on major challenges from your current position • Enable collaboration by investing in relationships • Anticipate situations when leadership may disappoint others • Monitor progress without focusing solely on outcomes	• Analyze conflict as competing approaches to shared challenges • Evaluate how bonds of trust affect adaptive capacity • Discover ways of disappointing people at a rate they can tolerate • Identify direct and indirect signs of capacity growth

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Modules		Case Studies	Takeaways	Key Exercises
Module 4	**Building Capacity, Not Dependency**	Amidst Despair and Resignation: Lowering Maternal Mortality Rates by Building an Adaptive Culture in Meghalaya, India (Rebecca Trupin)	• Identify assumptions that block systems progress • Reframe listening as a form of active intervention • Evaluate when leaders need to "give work back" to others • Strengthen your personal ability to put tough issues on the table • Foster leadership by demonstrating adaptive practices	• Recognize and evaluate work avoidance patterns • Analyze roles and resources for generating change within a hierarchy • Strengthen tools and tactics to knock a system into a productive range of stress • Reflect on the significance of exiting a role or system well
Module 5	**Staying in the Game**	New Opportunities: Moving Duolingo Into English Language Learning (Uriel Kejsefman)	• Recognize appropriate times to exercise leadership • Identify new opportunities for change • Learn from setbacks, failures, and mistakes as a part of leadership • Anticipate the risks and dangers of exercising leadership	• Recognize how to enter a new system while building trust and credibility • Observe the power of slowing down before pushing for change • Reframe setbacks as a chance to collect more data and keep learning

Learning requirements: In order to earn a credential from Harvard Online, participants must thoughtfully complete all five modules, including satisfactory completion of the associated quizzes, by the stated deadlines.

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