WHAT THE HECK IS ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP ANYWAY?

Bryan Miles and Darren Hoevel
2020 Project Management Symposium
Type in the chat...

What kind of leader do you want to be?
A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential.

- Brené Brown
How do you show up?
And us goofballs who make it happen...

PLIANT SOLUTIONS

Core Values
Shaping Who We Are & How We Do Business

Resilient
leadership and operating model for our customers and our own organism

Personal Growth
of our clients and employees

Making oneself vulnerable with the support of a great team and safe environment

Diverse approaches and perspectives for adaptable solutions

Freedom within guardrails to choose and do the right thing

Embody an experimentation approach of not why, but WHY NOT innovation

And us goofballs who make it happen...
The Goofballs
Our Whole Imperfect Selves

Resilient
adaptable
vulnerable
freedom
experimentation
Personal Growth
Ron Heifetz

“The single biggest failure of leadership is to treat adaptive challenges like technical problems.”
Most challenges involve BOTH technical and adaptive dimensions.
The problems lie within people...
The solutions lie within people too!

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# Intervention Map

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THE COURAGE TO DO THE DARING WORK...
“If we are brave enough, often enough we will fall. Daring is not saying ‘I’m willing to risk failure.’ Daring is saying ‘I know I will eventually fail, and I’m still all in.’

I’ve never met a brave person who hasn’t known disappointment, failure, even heartbreak.”

-Brené Brown
The Illusion of a Broken System

“There is a myth that drives many change initiatives into the ground: that the organization needs to change because it is broken. The reality is that any social system is that way because the people in that system want it that way. In that sense...the system is working fine, even though it may appear to be “dysfunctional” in some respects to some members and outside observers. There is no such thing as a dysfunctional organization, because every organization is perfectly aligned to achieve the results it currently gets.”
Looking at Leadership through the lens of Transformation causes **PROBLEMS:**

- **It encourages self-referential grandiosity. (I have a transformational vision and now I’m going to sell it to you.)**
  - Becomes about “me and my vision” rather than about the collective work to be done.
  - It skips the crucial step of listening to comprehend the gap between values, capacities, and conditions.
  - Begins with a solution and then views leadership as a sales problem of inspiration and persuasion.

- **Transformation mindset tends to be ahistorical. It has little respect for the soil in which change ideas need to take root.**
  - It creates a cultural “immune reaction” that rejects and distorts the original idea.

- **Emphasizing transformational change alone encourages passionate and courageous people to only seek big, systemic change.**
  - It causes leaders to discount the incremental and transactional day-to-day work of leadership.
People don’t resist change…they resist loss.
3 Actions for Adaptive Challenges

• Figuring out what to keep from the past
• Figuring out what to discard from the past
• Inventing new ways to build from the best of the past

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Move the needle a little bit each day.
What does this look like for us?

Adaptive leadership is everywhere. It’s not just a work thing…it’s an “everything thing”.

Adaptive Leadership

Company

Clients

Customers

Personal

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Our Vision

We aim to work with purpose and actually give a damn—in the best possible way. We aim to exceed the needs of the client by delivering quality work and our best selves. We will choose interesting work, and work with interesting people, and not grow just to grow. We will not sacrifice quality for margins. We are committed to continuously improving and nurturing our whole selves, because we, our company, and our clients benefit when each of us is curious, balanced, personally growing, and feels secure within our tribe.

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Our challenge to you…

Now you know.

It’s OUR responsibility to ask the tough questions and up our game.

If we don’t do it…who will?
Pliant Solutions is an Agile and Lean consulting firm that closely collaborates with its clients and customers to define clear, measurable goals, integrate quality, accelerate delivery, and enable product innovation. We support and drive sustainable Agile maturity in both the public and private sectors through coaching, advisement, staffing, and training.