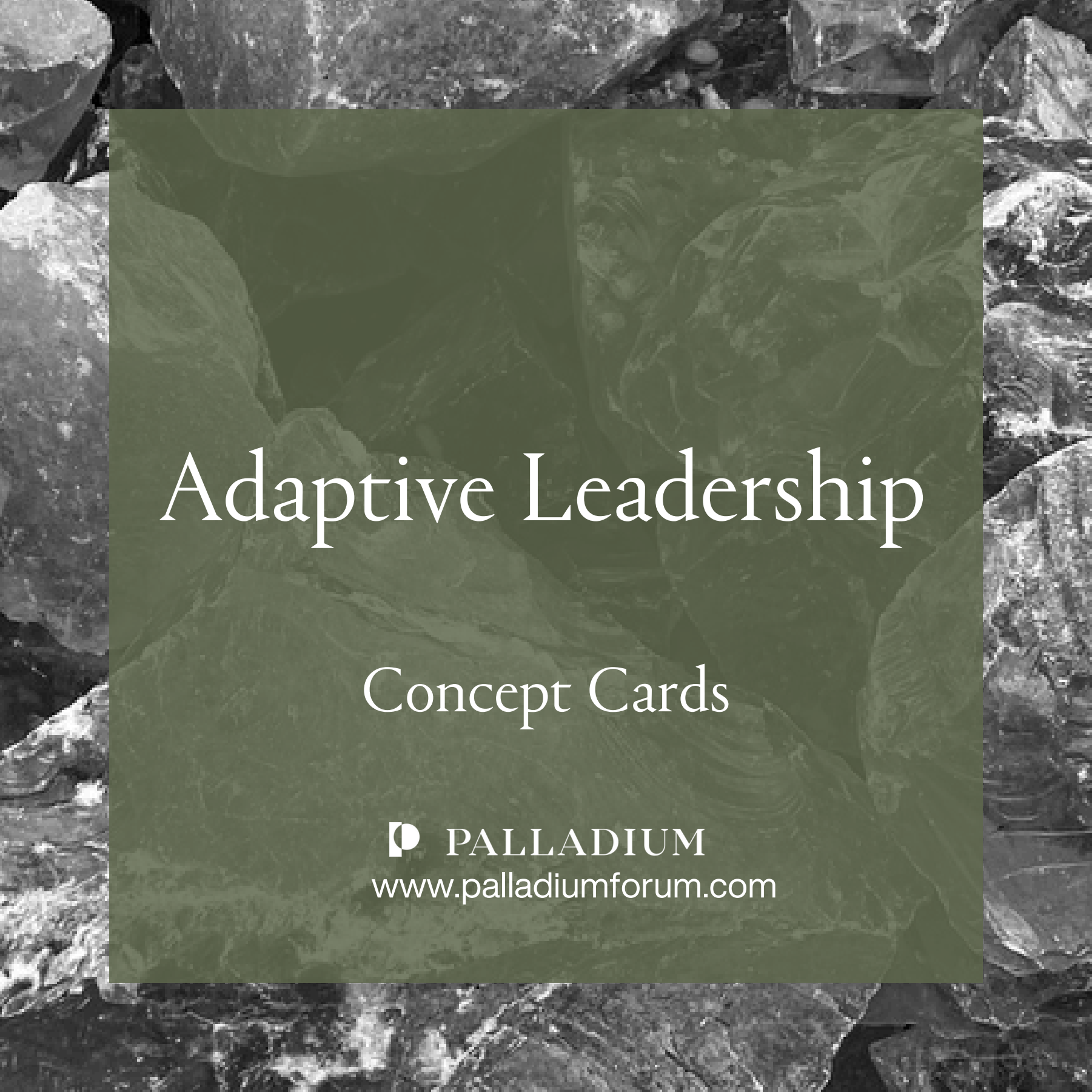


Adaptive Leadership

Concept Cards

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The Definition of Leadership

Two operative definitions of leadership are:

- Leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to address their toughest problems.

- Leadership in high-change environments is the effective management of a learning process.

5 Tensions of Adaptive Leadership

Authority	Leadership
Technical Issue	Adaptive Challenge
Power	Progress
Personality	Presence
“Vision”	Deep Purpose

The Adaptive (Creative) Process

The 5 Stages of Creative Change

The Adaptive Process describes the 5 stages that define how creativity and change come into being within a wider system:

- Conscious Conflict
- Pause
- Insight (Aha!)
- Prototyping
- Testing

6 Functions of Authority

The 6 Functions of Authority are to:

- Provide Orientation
- Provide Direction
- Establish and Uphold Norms
- Resolve Conflist
- Provide Protection
- Facilitate Healing

Leadership requires authority but authority alone does not necessarily provide leadership.

The Balcony and the Dance Floor

When leading adaptive change it is important to look at the work from both the “dance floor”and “the balcony”. The dance floor is the push-and-pull of where the work is happening each day. The balcony is where one can zoom out and see the larger dynamics and tensions at play.

Learning how to move between the balcony and the dance floor in real time can be honed as a skill. Establishing regular habits that protect “balcony time” is essential.

Technical Issues

A technical issue is a challenge you can address with the knowledge or tools you already have in hand or know how to get.

Every adaptive challenge has technical aspects to it. Drawing attention to technical issues (“quick wins”) can be an effective way to lower the heat as tensions rise around adaptive challenges.

Adaptive Challenges

An adaptive challenge:

- Requires people to learn new ways of doing things
- Requires the group to generate their own solution (not rely on authority)
- Can only be addressed with good questions in hand (there are no experts)
- Requires a change of heart and mind
- Does not resolve with technical fixes
- Is often present when there is persistent conflict or a crisis.

Regulating the Heat

Given the inherent disruption and uncertainty generated by adaptive challenges, a key leadership skill is learning how to take the temperature of the group and regulate the heat so the new challenge can be effectively worked in the system.

When an issue is too cold it does not warrant enough urgency or attention to be worked. When an issue gets too hot it runs the risk of exploding, which results in work avoidance behavior and other setbacks.

Raise the Heat

To raise the heat on an issue leaders can:

- Draw attention to the tough questions
- Give people more responsibility than they're comfortable with
- Surface conflicts and hidden issues
- Protect outliers
- Leverage Partners and Allies to keep attention focused on the issue.

Lower the Heat

To lower the heat when tensions start to run too high, leaders can:

- Speak directly to people's fear and disorientation
- Break the problem into parts, create timelines and clear roles
- Pace and sequence the issues
- Be visible and present to your team
- Slow it down
- Re-orient people back to the big why
- Get some quick wins

Pace the Work

Recall the wisdom that “Exercising leadership is disappointing people at a rate they can absorb.”

Also remember that, “Adaptive leadership is the management of a learning process.”

Use time and patience to allow your team to work at a pace of change that is stretching but tolerable. Allow issues to ripen, recognize where people need to learn more and give time for that process.

Holding Environment

The holding environment is a space formed by a network of relationships that bond people together and allow them to tackle tough, sometimes divisive, questions without flying apart. It must flex to meet the needs of the issue and the team working it.

Examples:

- An off-site or protected physical space to work through tough aspects of a conflict
- Shared language, metaphors, stories or traditions that bond people
- A clear set of rules or processes that give minority voices confidence

Pay Exquisite Attention

Paying exquisite attention means disciplining yourself and your practice to really hone in on what is happening in real-time and entertain a number of possible reasons that can help you postulate why it might be happening.

It can also help you better recognize and express heartfelt appreciation for team members and or moments of progress that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Read the Authority Figure for Clues

In an adaptive system the primary authority figure is the most constrained actor because of the many pressures acting upon him or her. As Heifetz notes, “The trap is thinking the authority figure is operating independently and expressing a personal view.”

Read the authority figure for clues about what else might be happening in the system before jumping into action.

Listen for the Song Beneath the Words

Listening for the song beneath the words is part of paying exquisite attention and reading people and situations well.

Ask yourself:

- What isn't being said right now?
- What is actually happening right now?
- How do I interpret this behavior relative to the change we need to advance?

Distinguish Role from Self

Remember Heifetz's insight that, "The resistance you receive is not a criticism of you, or even necessarily a dismissal of your point of view. On the contrary, it suggests that your input was worth reacting to, that it provoked engagement with the issue."

Recall the image of a soccer player running down the field with the ball trying to score. Others want to tackle him, not because of who he is but because he has the ball.

Let the Issue Ripen

When determining is an issue is “ripe” enough to be worked ask these questions:

- What are the other concerns that are occupying people?
- How deeply are people affected (or not) by the change I want to advance?
- How much do they need to learn to get on board with this change?
- What are the senior authority figures saying about the issue?

To ripen an issue focus attention on it and engage in helping others learn about it.

Surface the Hidden Issues

The hidden issues in a group are “The usually undetected implicit, unspoken dynamics that must be surfaced and named to help the group move beyond them and make progress.”

They to do with unspoken fears, power dynamics, unaddressed concerns, self-protection or similarly vulnerable areas of resistance.

Always be asking : What is really going on here? What is this really about?

Work Avoidance Activity

Work avoidance is the strong, understandable temptation in the face of the conflict, anxiety, and pain of adaptive work to deflect attention fro the real issues and displace responsibility. It takes many forms, including:

- trying to find a technical solution
- blaming authority
- creating a scapegoat
- tuning out
- insistence on procedures or process
- other distractions, etc.

Give the Work Back

Giving the work back is, “the process by which a leader invites others to face the learning embedded in their own experiences of failure, misjudgment and and blindspots to better address adaptive needs.”

It is an important practice that helps leaders avoid micro-managing and it empowers individuals to solve problems or create solutions in ways that are a good fit for the team.

4 Faces of Danger

Marginalization

Being sidelined (e.g. personalizing the issue, tokenism, gender)

Diversion

Loss of focus (e.g. promotion, busyness)

Attack

Undermining your character or credentials (e.g. family, lifestyle or moral criticism)

Seduction

Your own desire for approval (e.g. pleasing your fans, lack of compromise/taking heat)

Useful Interventions

When leaders need to take the work off their shoulders and give it back to the group they may choose to:

- Make an Observation
- Ask a Question
- Offer an Interpretation
- Take Action

“Do the Pizza”

Principles of Pizzamapping

Pizzamapping, or “doing the pizza”, is a conceptual map that allows a leader to gain visibility to the dynamics, tensions and watchouts that are at work in their system.

It pays special attention to the work of partners, allies, factions, and the pressures acting on the primary authority both from inside and outside the system to drive clarity around key leverage points and areas to tread with caution.

Partners

A partner is inside your same faction:

- They see the issue the same way you do;
- They agree the work is best done in the way you are advocating for, and;
- They are willing to link arms and work together to move it forward.

Allies

An ally is someone who is in a different faction with some cross-over interest:

- They do not see the issue in the same way as you;
- There is a difference between how and what you both think needs to be done, or is most important, but;
- You share some common interest in a different piece of the puzzle and are willing to work together on that piece.

Confidantes

A confidante is someone completely outside the system:

- Every member of your Palladium cohort can be a confidante for you.
- You may have a long-term mentor or friend who serves this role.
- Many people overly rely on a spouse or significant other to play this role.
- A confidante is for YOU.
- They do not have any skin in the game.

Factions

Factions are the differing points of views that exist within the system relative to the work at hand. Often a faction is “embodied” in a particularly vocal or active team member. Not all factions are adversarial but they do represent definite differences that need to be addressed for the work to move forward.

Pressures

Pressures are any influence that is exerting pressure or heat on the system. They may come from:

- Inside the system
- Outside the system
- Personal circumstances

Knowing what pressures are acting on the stems can help leaders see more clearly where, how, and when to raise key issues most effectively.

Tell Stories not (only) Statistics

Data is essential but it does not inspire. When looking to drive change, constantly be looking and listening for stories that embody the vision, spirit, or opportunity you want to advance.

Ask yourself:

- Is there a story from my own life that captures the feeling of this moment I could share?
- Is there a story from our team that illustrates how we've succeeded before?
- Is there a story or anecdote of a patient or clinician that might be useful here?

Know the History of the Issue

ASK:

- Where did this issue come from?
- Why did we do it this way in the first place?
- What solutions have been tried before
- Is this a pet issue for anyone?
- Where have others failed and why?
- Where was I when this issue started/Where did I come in ?

Acknowledge Loss

Remember that, “People do not fear change, but they do fear loss.”

When advancing change, continually ask yourself:

- what people will lose - or what may they fear losing - due to this change

Acknowledge those losses and how difficult they are. This kind of empathy builds trust, orients the team, and keeps the focus on the tasks at hand.

Show Them the Future

When asking a team to endure the disruption of change they also need a vision of the future that feels worth the trouble.

Ask yourself:

- What new reality will be created with the change?
- What story or image can I provide for what it will look like when we've completed the change?
- What shared value will be affirmed by this change?



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