Systemic Leadership

Ecology of leadership: adapting to the challenges of a changing world

Taken from article by Kathleen E. Allen, Stephen P. Stelzner and Richard M. Wielkiewicz published in The Journal of Leadership Studies, 1998, Vol.. 5, No. 2

Profundity

Leadership is in the space between the individuals, like Music is in the space between the notes

Implications for "New" Leadership Skill Sets

- Adapting to change and rapid change
- Organizational learning and personal development
- Tension around value differences
- Diversity in our daily lives
- Perspective on the long term
- Ecology of leadership
- Complex leadership systems
- Power of relationships

Principles of Ecological Approach to Leadership

- Interdependence
- Open systems & feedback loops
- Cycling of resources
- Adaptation

Adaptability

Adaptability of an organization will be determined by the richness of the feedback loops that influence leadership processes and individual actions

Redefining Leadership: Ecological Approach

•Leadership is a process that emerges from individual actions and interactions which influence systems both inside and outside an organization.

•Each individual action in the system potentially influences the leadership process

•Leadership processes evolve in a context of continuous interactions involving the systems in which the organization is embedded.

•Leaders' must develop the capacity to recognize:

- the system(s), the interdependence, the feedback loops vs.
  - the individual who performed an action

- processes of influences vs..
  - control

Open Vs. Closed Leadership Processes

- Closed
  - Control information
  - Control relationships
  - Control feed back loops
- Open
  - Facilitate/enhance the Flow of information
  - Foster relationships
  - Assist the emergence of shared purpose

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The greater the diversity, in terms of skills, cultures, interests and passions, the more adaptive the organization will be.

Effective Organizations Systems

Open vs. Closed leadership processes

the degree to which organizational systems are open or closed to:

- Feedback Loops
- Diversity
- Human Development
- A long Term perspective
- Cooperation
- Free flow of information

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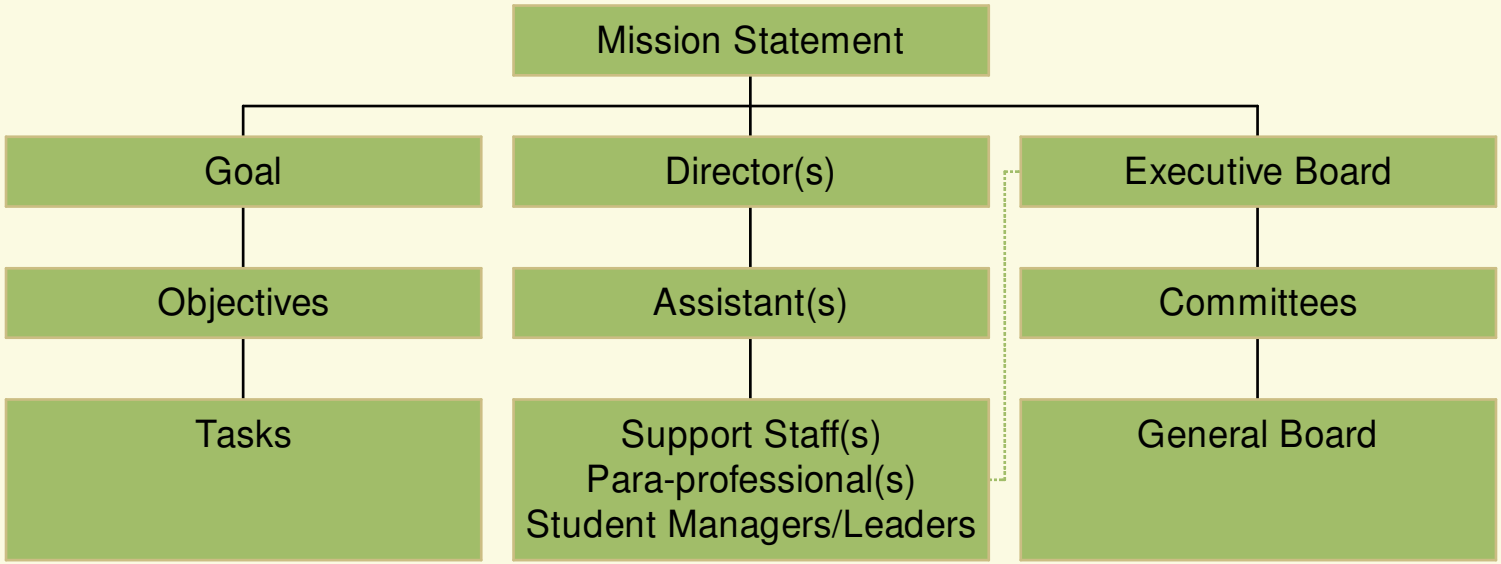
- *There can never be too many people at the table*
- *There are an Infinite number of ways to analyze the same data*

Inverting the Models



Inverting the Models

Adaptive Challenge #1

Living and working with a global perspective

- •Mass communication
- •Global Economy
- •environmental & cultural interdependence

- •Tension/Struggle:
  - •work w/ many different cultures
  - •continuing tension between rich & poor

- •Leadership Challenge:
  - •adapt to systemic dynamics of world wide challenges (i.e. global warming)
  - •exploration of the values of justice and equality in terms of global distribution of economic and natural resources

Adaptive Challenge #2

Living within environmental limits

- learning to live in harmony and balance w/ nature

- Tension/Struggle:
  - economic vs. environmental interests

- Leadership Challenge:
  - live w/in environmental limits to support future generations
  - collective discipline and making choices as to not consume limited resources

Adaptive Challenge #3

Transforming information into knowledge and wisdom

- information doubling every 18 months

- Tension/Struggle
  - never know enough
  - difficult to assess the meaning of events in life and work

- Leadership Challenge:
  - determining which information is relevant
  - discarding misinformation
  - comprehending data in ways that increase knowledge and wisdom

Adaptive Challenge #4

Developing the wisdom and ethics to respond to scientific discoveries

- •research on human biology applied to biological warfare
- •mapping human DNA and genome

•Tension/Struggle

- •value, ethics and long-term perspective to scientific breakthrough

•Leadership Challenge:

- •full understand the implications before we decide to use, develop and disseminate scientific knowledge

Adaptive Challenge #5

Developing the capacity to adapt to changes in our social ecology

- •environments where people live and work (I.e. families, churches, schools, government, communities, economies, cultures)

- •Tension/Struggle:
  - •ripple effects of change to any one social ecology

- •Leadership Challenge
  - •new designs for organizations and communities to be better adapt to rapid changes and pressures

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- *The possibilities are endless*
- *The likelihood is questionable*
- *The uncertainty is absolute*

Practical Guidelines

- Connection & communication across sectors
  - enhance flow of information throughout the organization
- Facilitate environments that fosters
  - individual growth, trust and organizational learning
- Tension is a positive force in organizational learning
- Reflect on the process
- Articulate core purpose and values
- Build structures around purpose, not purpose around structures
- Reward Risk-Taking

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Significance proceeds momentum