

PRACTICAL ADAPTATION NETWORK SPRINT- July 2016- Oct 2016

Task: Identify a key constraint to organizations using adaptive management and make progress in a 3 month sprint in tackling it.

The Targeted Constraint: Management and Leadership. Managers in all types of organizations will be on the front lines when it comes to putting into use adaptive management. If they are resistant to the approach, overwhelmed by its complexity or unclear about how to proceed, adaptive management will not get to square one.

Approach: Get a small group of managers to ‘walk the adaptive management talk’ in a doable, limited, easy to understand way. By doing so we will promote an understanding of what the approach is and what it looks like in an everyday management setting, gather learning around deploying it, begin to distill in concrete terms the elements of what constitutes the approach and create a small set of adaptive management champions.

Proposed Sprint: Quickly distill 3 practical elements that are at the core of what adaptive management should encompass, put those into a short compact that 20 managers representing a cross section of organizations will sign on to for implementation during a 3 month period.

Three Adaptive Management Elements for a Manager Compact

1) Rapid Feedback

Adaptive management is all about rapid feedback loops. Annual performance review approaches that are built around highly formalized feedback systems and take place once a year have been shown to demotivate staff and lead to little professional growth. Adaptive management will use rapid informal feedback delivered on the spot to mentor and motivate staff.

Commitment: Each week you will give immediate, positive or negative feedback to one staff you supervise in a 5-10 minute unscheduled conversation on one issue e.g. conduct in a client meeting, timeliness in creating a deliverable, interaction with peers and higher ups. The aim is to contribute to making the staff a more effective professional and a more valued member of the team while contributing to their motivation and professional growth.

2) Ability to Pivot

Adaptive management is all about making changes to activities once they are underway in order to get better outcomes. It doesn't happen often enough and it is difficult to do, but managers need to know how to encourage this type of rapid positive change after documents have been signed and implementation begun.

Commitment: In the 3 month period you will precipitate one change of direction on an ongoing activity as a result of evidence, formal or informal feedback, or the wise council of colleagues. You will make the course change public and you will proudly say this is what adaptive management is all about. You will write 2 paragraphs on this change - paragraph one: what factors led you to make the change and paragraph two: any learning that you acquired about how to manage such pivots in the future.

3) Positively Engage on Failures

There is a lot of talk about celebrating failures but many cultures continue to see failure as a total negative and are focused on finding ways to avoid failure rather than embracing it.

Commitment: In the 3 month period you will identify something as a failure and convene a meeting with at least 5 individuals in which you state “This is a failure because.....”. You will then facilitate a discussion of the learning that

came out of the failure with a focus on those that be benefitted from and write one paragraph on what the failure was, and what you learned about managing a “failure process”.