Build an Adaptive Culture

Key Tactics for Improving the Organization’s Ability to Tackle Adaptive Challenges

Excerpted from
The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World

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Fostering an adaptive culture will enable your organization or community to meet an ongoing series of adaptive challenges into the future, a future that is almost guaranteed in our day to keep pitching new challenges toward us. Although building adaptive capacity is a medium- and long-term goal, it can only happen by moving on it today and the next. Indeed, every challenge you currently face is another opportunity to both work the immediate problem and institute ways of operating that can become norms for taking on whatever comes next.

In chapter 7, we discussed five distinguishing characteristics of an adaptive culture, based on our experience working with all types of organizations from every corner of the globe.

- Elephants on the table are named.
- Responsibility for the organization is shared.
- Independent judgment is expected.
- Leadership capacity is developed.
- Reflection and continuous learning are institutionalized.

In chapter 7, you assessed how well your organization stacks up against each of these criteria. In the sections that follow, we will
explore a few things you can do to improve your organization’s rating on each criterion.

Make Naming Elephants the Norm

The capacity for naming elephants in the room, tough issues that no one talks about, is a common and defining characteristic of an organization with extraordinary adaptability. At Toyota, as we've mentioned, anyone on the production line can critique and suggest improvements to the production process. Courageous conversations require far less courage there because critical ideas have become normalized, whereas that is far less the case on other production lines in other companies.

Of course, naming tough issues can be excruciatingly difficult in any organization. “Ignoring the Merger Elephant” gives one example.

What does it take to strengthen an organization’s ability to name its elephants? Here are some techniques.

Ignoring the Merger Elephant

A few years ago, we spent some time talking with a global energy company based in South America that was only a year out from a huge merger with a very different firm of almost equal size. Our last meeting with the top team was scheduled for two hours, with the CEO joining us for the last hour.

During the first hour, two members of the team spoke openly and intensely about the unresolved cultural clashes generated by the merger that were preventing the corporation from moving forward. The rest of the team members agreed that cultural differences presented a serious problem. Then the CEO entered. We asked him how he felt the merger issues were going. He said there were no issues left over from the merger. We looked around the table. Heads were looking down. Watching the two most outspoken members, we asked whether anyone wanted to add anything to the CEO’s comments. Silence. A few weeks later, we decided to recount this story in our formal proposal to consult to the firm. The resistance was nearly overwhelming.
Model the Behavior

People at the top of an organization are always sending out clues that indicate what behavior is acceptable. And that is nowhere more critical than in naming elephants.

Not long ago, we consulted to a global bank. During an early meeting with the firm’s ten-member top team, one of the most junior members of the team made a passing reference by name to a project managed by one of the most senior people in the room. Even though we had done a slew of due diligence interviews, this project had never come up. At a meeting the following day, another member of the team, also one of the most junior, mentioned the project again, once more in an almost off-hand way. Afterward, we discovered that this project was a very large elephant in the room. Many members of the team thought that the project was draining resources at an alarming rate, resources that could be used for critical investments in the firm’s future. Moreover, everyone (including the project’s sponsor) knew that the project had no chance of delivering as promised. The range of possible outcomes from the project had gone from modest benefit (disproportionately small, given the costs involved) to utter failure. But the sponsor was a candidate to succeed the CEO, who had an aversion to conflict and wanted to believe the sponsor’s reassurances that the project would work out fine. But no one on the team was going to name that elephant unless the CEO signaled clearly that he wanted it discussed.

Beginning in childhood, people take their cues from authority. Therefore, when you are the authority, you have to model the simple act of naming the sensitive issues simmering under the surface, because if you do not, the odds are high that no one else will.

Protect Troublemakers

As we have suggested, almost every organization we have worked with has a few troublemakers, those we called dissenters, people who are experienced as “difficult.” They are contrarians, often pointing out an entirely different perspective or viewpoint when the momentum seems to be swinging in one direction. They come up with ideas that appear impractical or unrealistic. They make suggestions that others see as off-point. They ask questions that seem tangential. They often
claim the moral high ground when most everyone else is just trying to solve the day’s problems. But some of the time, they are the only ones asking the questions that need to be asked and raising the issues that no one wants to talk about. Your task is to preserve their willingness to intervene and speak up.

This is not easy. If you’re in a position of authority, you will undoubtedly come under pressure to silence troublemakers. But if you want to signal that unpopular thoughts deserve a hearing, you must resist that pressure.

If you are not in a position of authority, then you can help protect troublemakers by making sure they are invited to meetings. And when they do say something that creates disequilibrium, you can choose to be curious: ask them to say more about their idea rather than allow everyone else in the room to ignore them.

4 Mobilize the System

Nurture Shared Responsibility for the Organization

To what degree do people feel responsible for the whole organization where you work, as distinguished from their own piece of that whole (such as their team, department, business unit, or division)? Here are some signals suggesting that people feel a shared sense of responsibility for the organization overall:

- Rewards (financial and otherwise) are based at least in part on the performance of the entire organization and not solely on an individual employee’s or unit’s performance.
- People lend some of their own resources (personnel, time, budget, equipment, office space) to help others in the organization who need it.
- People share new ideas, insights, and lessons across functional and other boundaries in the organization.
- Individuals who advance to positions of authority have worked in a wide range of departments or divisions in the organization.
• People take time to “job shadow,” following colleagues around to understand what those in other parts of the organization do all day, to see what kinds of challenges they are dealing with, and to identify practices and norms that could help them in their own part of the company.

Encourage Independent Judgment

In an organization with an adaptive culture, people in authority do what only they can do and make decisions only they can make. Other tasks and decisions are handled by others capable of doing so. Those in authority are constantly asking whether the task or decision they are about to take on could be handled by someone else and, if so, how they will delegate it to that person. This is not about palming off unpleasant chores to underlings. It is about investing in people’s independent judgment and resourcefulness, in addition to their technical skills.

Too many people in authority work to make those under them dependent on them. The more dependent the followers, the more indispensable the authority figure feels. Your job in exercising adaptive leadership is to make yourself dispensable. The only way you can do that is to constantly give work back to others so you can develop their abilities and calibrate their current and potential talent for skills such as critical thinking and smart decision making. However gratifying it may be in the short term, you don't want followers at all. You want distributed leadership in which everyone, as a citizen of the organization, seize opportunities to take initiative in mobilizing adaptive work in their locale. In other words, adaptive leadership generates leadership so that people routinely go beyond their job descriptions.

You need to prepare your people to develop a tolerance for the ambiguity that comes with understanding that individuals in positions of authority do not have all the answers and that the easy answers are not necessarily the right ones.

In organizations that encourage independent judgment, people ask before making a decision, “What is the right thing to do to advance the mission of the organization?” rather than, “What would the boss want me to do here?”
ON THE BALCONY

- At what level in your organization do people begin to feel and act as if they are valued more for their judgment than for their technical expertise?

ON THE PRACTICE FIELD

- Most people dislike ambiguity and gravitate toward clarity, predictability, and certainty. And this can manifest itself in a premature push for closure on an adaptive challenge, rushing to a solution before the diagnosis is complete. You can help people strengthen their tolerance for ambiguity by watching for signs of a premature push for closure, for example, complaining about not moving to action, jumping over basic diagnostic questions to focus on solutions, or reaching for a work avoidance mechanism (displacing responsibility or diverting attention from the tough issues). The next time you are at a meeting, look for these signs. If you see them, try asking questions such as “What bad things could happen if we did not make this decision today?” “What else might we learn if we waited another day [or week or month]?”

Develop Leadership Capacity

The development of leadership talent is a line manager’s job. Although training, coaching, and support from human resources and external sources can be invaluable, nothing can replace the development potential of high-quality day-to-day supervision. Building a leadership pipeline is essential to long-term adaptability because the key bottleneck to growth is so often the quantity and quality of leadership available in the organization. People learn to lead on the job. Managers who have made a real commitment to individualized leadership development give their employees a clear sense of their own potential in the organization, review how they are operating and stretching week to week, and help them develop plans for reaching farther.
One way to foster line responsibility for leadership development is to establish a norm of developing succession plans. A manager with a good succession plan will often look for her replacement from the talent close at hand and will be developing that talent.

**ON THE BALCONY**

- Do you have a plan for your succession?
- Do you and your boss have a clear and shared sense of your potential in the organization and a clear strategy for how you will maximize your chances of getting there?

**Institutionalize Reflection and Continuous Learning**

Several practices can help you institutionalize reflection and continuous learning in your organization or team. Below we take a look at some of these practices.

*Ask Difficult Reflective Questions*

To build a more adaptive culture, you might regularly explore questions such as these:

- How is our external environment (including government regulations, competitors’ actions, and customers’ priorities) changing?
- What internal challenges are mirroring those external changes?
- What are the gaps between where we are (for example, in terms of profit, sustainability, or the diversity of our workforce) and where we want to be?
- How will we know that we are successful?
- What challenge might be just beyond the horizon?

None of these questions is easy to answer. But we believe they are essential if your organization is to thrive amid a constantly changing
and challenging world. When people discuss these questions as a normal part of their jobs throughout the organization—whether it is in the board room, staff meetings, performance reviews, or elsewhere—they enhance the enterprise’s ability to secure long-term success; deepen commitment from employees, customers, and other stakeholders; and stimulate innovation. Such organizations are much more likely to be around in sixty years than organizations that have ignored these questions. And that is because they have strengthened their people’s capacity and will to identify and deal with emerging challenges, no matter how disturbing these may be.

In many organizations, it is extremely difficult to institutionalize time for reflection and continuous learning. For many successful action-oriented, task-driven, outcome-focused people, taking time out to reflect feels like a waste: “There is so much to do and so little time to do it.” But in our experience, creating and maintaining time for checking in with people, teasing out the lessons of recent experiences, and sharing those lessons widely in the organization is critical to adaptability in a changing world.

**Honor Risk Taking and Experimentation**

Another way to foster reflection and continuous learning is not only to run experiments, but also to reward learning from them, particularly when the experiments fail. Experiment widely enough, and you increase the odds of hitting on some great new ideas. For example, at the beginning of Jack Welch’s tenure as CEO of General Electric, he did not know that GE Capital would become the company’s major engine of profitability. GE Capital was just one of many experiments with new services and managerial processes conducted in Welch’s years as CEO.

To survive and grow, economies, societies, and organizations alike depend on an abundance of risk takers: private-sector entrepreneurs who sink their life savings into an invention, people who set out to ease a social problem by creating a nonprofit without secure funding, parents and teachers who devise alternative education platforms, farmers who gamble on new seeds and agricultural technologies, and political activists who make public nuisances of themselves to draw attention to an egregious social inequity.

Running many small risks is less risky than running a few big ones. So encouraging widespread risk taking, particularly with small
experiments from which lessons are captured quickly, is in the medium run a safer strategy. But most people do not enjoy taking risks—and for good reason. By definition, risks are dangerous and often fail, and failure is rarely rewarded in organizations and politics. “The Case of the Risk-Averse Retailer” shows one example.

Send the Right Signals to Your People

One way to think about smart risk taking is that people are willing to extract lessons from whatever results or nonresults they produce, getting smarter because they took the risk. Each successive experiment thus becomes informed and smarter because of the previous effort. Try some of the following techniques to signal to your subordinates that it is okay to take smart risks:

- Ask subordinates to think of several small experiments in new ways of doing things that support the organization’s mission.

The Case of the Risk-Averse Retailer

At an international retailer, executives and store managers dreamed of seeing the company become number one in its industry and number one in each of its major markets. But they were also under immense pressure to meet quarterly projections. One year, anticipating the big Christmas shopping season, store managers struggled with a dilemma: should they do what they had always done to meet their numbers? Or should they try to make some changes in their stores, such as offering more aggressive customer service and entertainment to see whether the firm’s position improved? They knew that experimenting with some changes could help them learn a lot about what might make a real difference going forward. But it could also put their jobs at risk if it meant they could not meet short-term goals. Headquarters, of course, wanted both: “Try your experiments, but not at the expense of current revenues.” Not surprisingly, most store managers chose to play it safe because it had worked fairly well before. They shelved their experiments, even though they knew that sticking with the tried and true would not enable them to catch their biggest competitor.
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- When you approve an experiment that could generate new knowledge, give it time and resources by clearing something else from the to-do list of those responsible for conducting the experiment and extracting its lessons.

- When people are struggling with an experiment, acknowledge how hard it is to learn from failure and success. Give them resources to figure out the lessons.

- During regular performance reviews, evaluate employees’ ability to take smart risks (low-cost, high-learning). Make increases in smart risk taking a goal for the coming year, encouraging some specific experiments that employees could run.

- Take risks yourself, and report your failures as well as your successes to your people.

**Reward Smart Risk Taking**

How do you reward risk taking? You need to base rewards on criteria other than measurable outcomes, such as how committed people are to experimentation, how many small experiments they have run, and how well they extract lessons from the efforts, their risk assessments, and the mistakes they have made. Otherwise, only successful experiments are rewarded, and people will go underground with the ones that are not, and take fewer risks altogether.

These kinds of reward practices take courage and careful thought: Will you give a raise to or promote someone who conducted an experiment that failed, but who learned and disseminated a valuable lesson from the experience? Will you reward such individuals more than people who scored successes (for example, making their quarterly sales goals) by playing it safe? If you do not reward smart risk taking, you may lose those team members to other organizations where their courage and creativity might be better valued. Indeed, your competitors may be looking for just these folks.

Like turtles, people need to stick their neck out to move forward. One company we know gives a Turtle Award each year to the initiative that generates the most lessons for the organization, even when the initiative bombs.
Foster a Taste for Action

Anyone contemplating a risky experiment may feel compelled to mitigate the risk by spending too much time meticulously planning the experiment. But often, the outcomes, however well planned, are unpredictable because the experiment engages a complex world in a new way. So action is the only way forward. One just has to run the experiment to find out. Often, then, it is better to sidestep analysis paralysis in planning and move forward on extracting lessons from taking action. This goes hand in hand, of course, with the idea of running many small experiments, each of which has less to lose, than a few larger ones.

Run Parallel Experiments

To maximize knowledge gained from risk taking, run parallel experiments. For example, suppose you have an idea for a new marketing strategy that you think will help your firm trounce a powerful new rival. Instead of testing that one strategy through an experiment, try out several different marketing strategies, in different regions or with different target markets where both strategies hold some promise and have some drawbacks. Testing several strategies at the same time generates much more data than experimenting with just one idea at a time. But more important, it also helps you demonstrate that you’re committed to ongoing adaptability and that today’s plan is always just today’s best guess.

ON THE BALCONY

- Look around at your team, and think about those who have been there for more than three years. Think of those who have left. Are more of the risk takers still around, or are they working somewhere else? What does this suggest about your culture’s ability to foster smart risk taking in your organization? Are you still around because you’re a smart risk taker or risk averse?
The definitions in this glossary have been developed and refined over twenty-five years, primarily by Riley Sinder, Dean Williams, and the authors. They are not definitive statements. They are meant to be useful, first-approximation concepts that serve as a resource for thinking more deeply and broadly about the subject and practice of leadership.

**act politically**  Incorporate the loyalties and values of the other parties into your mobilization strategy. Assume that no one operates solely as an individual but represents, formally or informally, a set of constituent loyalties, expectations, and pressures.

**adaptation**  A successful adaptation enables an organism to thrive in a new or challenging environment. The adaptive process is both conservative and progressive in that it enables the living system to take the best from its traditions, identity, and history into the future. See also *thrive*.

**adaptive capacity**  The resilience of people and the capacity of systems to engage in problem-defining and problem-solving work in the midst of adaptive pressures and the resulting disequilibrium.

**adaptive challenge**  The gap between the values people stand for (that constitute thriving) and the reality that they face (their current lack of capacity to realize those values in their environment). See also *technical problem*.

**adaptive culture**  Adaptive cultures engage in at least five practices. They (1) name the elephants in the room, (2) share responsibility for the organization’s future, (3) exercise independent judgment, (4) develop leadership capacity, and (5) institutionalize reflection and continuous learning.

**adaptive leadership**  The activity of mobilizing adaptive work.

**adaptive work**  Holding people through a sustained period of disequilibrium during which they identify what cultural DNA to conserve and discard, and invent or discover the new cultural DNA that will enable them to thrive anew; i.e., the learning process through which people in a system achieve a successful adaptation. See also *technical work*.

**ally**  A member of the community in alignment on a particular issue.

**ancestor**  A family or community member from an earlier generation who shapes a person’s identity.
assassination The killing or neutralizing (through character assassination) of someone who embodies a perspective that another faction in the social system desperately wants to silence.

attention A critical resource for leadership. To make progress on adaptive challenges, those who lead must be able to hold people's engagement with hard questions through a sustained period of disequilibrium.

authority Formal or informal power within a system, entrusted by one party to another in exchange for a service. The basic services, or social functions, provided by authorities are: (1) direction; (2) protection; and (3) order. See also formal authority and informal authority.

bandwidth The range of capacities within which an individual has gained comfort and skill. See also repertoire.

below the neck The nonintellectual human faculties: emotional, spiritual, instinctive, kinetic.

carrying water Doing the work of others that they should be doing for themselves.

casualty A person, competency, or role that is lost as a by-product of adaptive change.

classic error Treating an adaptive challenge as a technical problem.

confidant A person invested in the success and happiness of another person, rather than in the other person's perspective or agenda.

courageous conversation A dialogue designed to resolve competing priorities and beliefs while preserving relationships. See also orchestrating the conflict.

dance floor Where the action is. Where the friction, noise, tension, and systemic activity are occurring. Ultimately, the place where the work gets done.

dancing on the edge of your scope of authority Taking action near or beyond the formal or informal limits of what you are expected to do.

default A routine and habitual response to recurring stimuli. See also tuning.

deploying yourself Deliberately managing your roles, skills, and identity.

disequilibrium The absence of a steady state, typically characterized in a social system by increasing levels of urgency, conflict, dissonance, and tension generated by adaptive challenges.

elephant in the room A difficult issue that is commonly known to exist in an organization or community but is not discussed openly. See also naming the elephant in the room.

engaging above and below the neck Connecting with all the dimensions of the people you lead. Also, bringing all of yourself to the practice of leadership. Above the neck speaks to intellectual faculties, the home of logic and facts; below the neck speaks to emotional faculties, the home of values, beliefs, habits of behavior, and patterns of reaction. See also below the neck.

experimental mind-set An attitude that treats any approach to an adaptive issue not as a solution, but as the beginning of an iterative process of testing a hypothesis, observing what happens, learning, making midcourse corrections, and then, if necessary, trying something else.
faction  A group with (1) a shared perspective that has been shaped by tradition, power relationships, loyalties, and interests and (2) its own grammar for analyzing a situation and its own system of internal logic that defines the stakes, terms of problems, and solutions in ways that make sense to its own members.

faction map  A diagram that depicts the groups relevant to an adaptive challenge, and includes the loyalties, values, and losses at risk that keep each faction invested in its position.

finding your voice  The process of discovering how to best use yourself as an instrument to frame issues effectively, shape and tell stories purposefully, and inspire others.

formal authority  Explicit power granted to meet an explicit set of service expectations, such as those in job descriptions or legislative mandates.

getting on the balcony  Taking a distanced view. The mental act of disengaging from the dance floor, the current swirl of activity, in order to observe and gain perspective on yourself and on the larger system. Enables you to see patterns that are not visible from the ground. See also observation.

giving the work back  The action of an authority figure in resisting the pressure to take the responsibility for solving problems off of other people's shoulders, and instead mobilizing the responsibility of the primary stakeholders in doing their share of the adaptive work.

holding environment  The cohesive properties of a relationship or social system that serve to keep people engaged with one another in spite of the divisive forces generated by adaptive work. May include, for example, bonds of affiliation and love; agreed-upon rules, procedures, and norms; shared purposes and common values; traditions, language, and rituals; familiarity with adaptive work; and trust in authority. Holding environments give a group identity and contain the conflict, chaos, and confusion often produced when struggling with complex problematic realities. See also pressure cooker and resilience.

holding steady  Withholding your perspective, not primarily for self-protecting, but to wait for the right moment to act, or act again. Also, remaining steadfast, tolerating the heat and pushback of people who resist dealing with the issue.

hunger  A normal human need that each person seeks to fulfill, such as (1) power and control, (2) affirmation and importance, and (3) intimacy and delight.

illusion of the broken system  Every group of human beings is aligned to achieve the results it currently gets. The current reality is the product of the implicit and explicit decisions of people in the system, at least of the dominant stakeholders. In that sense, no system is broken, although change processes are often driven by the idea that an organization is broken. That view discounts the accumulated functionality for many people of the system's current way of operating.

informal authority  Power granted implicitly to meet a set of service expectations, such as representing cultural norms like civility or being given moral authority to champion the aspirations of a movement.

interpretation  Identifying patterns of behavior that help make sense of a situation. Interpretation is the process of explaining raw data through digestible understandings and narratives. Most situations have multiple possible interpretations.
intervention  Any series of actions or a particular action, including intentional inaction, aimed at mobilizing progress on adaptive challenges.

leadership with authority  Mobilizing people to address an adaptive challenge from a position of authority. The authority role brings with it resources and constraints for exercising leadership.

leadership without authority  Mobilizing people to address an adaptive challenge by taking action beyond the formal and informal expectations that define your scope of power, such as raising unexpected questions upward from the middle of the organization, challenging the expectations of your constituents, or engaging people across boundaries from outside the organization. Lacking authority also brings with it resources and constraints.

leap to action  The default behavior of reacting prematurely to disequilibrium with a habituated set of responses.

lightning rod  A person who is the recipient of a group’s anger or frustration, often expressed as a personal attack and typically intended to deflect attention from a disturbing issue and displace responsibility for it to someone else.

living into the disequilibrium  The gradual process of easing people into an uncomfortable state of uncertainty, disorder, conflict, or chaos at a pace and level that does not overwhelm them yet takes them out of their comfort zones and mobilizes them to engage in addressing an adaptive challenge.

naming the elephant in the room  The act of addressing an issue that may be central to making progress on an adaptive challenge but that has been ignored in the interest of maintaining equilibrium. Discussing the undiscussable. See also elephant in the room.

observation  Collection of relevant data from a detached perspective and from as many sources as possible. See also getting on the balcony.

opposition  Those parties or factions that feel threatened or at risk of loss if your perspective is accepted.

orchestrating the conflict  Designing and leading the process of getting parties with differences to work them through productively, as distinguished from resolving the differences for them. See also courageous conversation.

pacing the work  Gauging how much disturbance the social system can withstand and then breaking down a complex challenge into small elements, sequencing them at a rate that people can absorb.

partners  Individuals or factions that are collaborators, including allies and confidants. See also ally, confidant, and the distinction between the two.

personal leadership work  Learning about and managing yourself to be more effective in mobilizing adaptive work.

pressure cooker  A holding environment strong enough to contain the disequilibrium of adaptive processes. See also holding environment and resilience.

productive zone of disequilibrium  The optimal range of distress within which the urgency in the system motivates people to engage in adaptive work. If the level is too low, people will be inclined to complacently maintain their current way of working, but if it is too high, people are likely to be overwhelmed
and may start to panic or engage in severe forms of work avoidance, like scapegoating or assassination. See also work avoidance.

**progress**  The development of new capacity that enables the social system to thrive in new and challenging environments. The process of social and political learning that leads to improvement in the condition of the group, community, organization, nation, or world. See also thrive.

**purpose**  The overarching sense of direction and contribution that provides meaningful orientation to a set of activities in organizational and political life.

**reality testing**  The process of comparing data and interpretations of a situation to discern which one, or which new synthesis of competing interpretations, captures the most information and best explains the situation.

**regulating the heat**  Raising or lowering the distress in the system to stay within the productive zone of disequilibrium.

**repertoire**  The range of capacities within which an individual has gained comfort and skill. See also bandwidth.

**resilience**  The capacity of individuals and the holding environment to contain disequilibrium over time. See also holding environment and pressure cooker.

**ripeness of an issue**  The readiness of a dominant coalition of stakeholders to tackle an issue because of a generalized sense of urgency across stakeholding groups.

**ritual**  A practice with symbolic import that helps to create a shared sense of community.

**role**  The set of expectations in a social system that define the services individuals or groups are supposed to provide.

**sanctuary**  A place or set of practices for personal renewal.

**scope of authority**  The set of services for which a person is entrusted by others with circumscribed power.

**social system**  Any collective enterprise (small group, organization, network of organizations, nation, or the world) with shared challenges that has interdependent and therefore interactive dynamics and features.

**song beneath the words**  The underlying meaning or unspoken subtext in someone's comment, often identified by body language, tone, intensity of voice, and the choice of language.

**taking the temperature**  Assessing the level of disequilibrium currently in the system.

**technical problem**  Problems that can be diagnosed and solved, generally within a short time frame, by applying established know-how and procedures. Technical problems are amenable to authoritative expertise and management of routine processes.

**technical work**  Problem defining and problem solving that effectively mobilizes, coordinates, and applies currently sufficient expertise, processes, and cultural norms.

**thrive**  To live up to people's highest values. Requires adaptive responses that distinguish what's essential from what's expendable, and innovates so that the social system can bring the best of its past into the future.
tuning  An individual’s personal psychology, including the set of loyalties, values, and perspectives that have shaped his worldview and identity, and cause the individual to resonate consciously and unconsciously, productively and unproductively, to external stimuli. See also default.

work avoidance  The conscious or unconscious patterns in a social system that distract people’s attention or displace responsibility in order to restore social equilibrium at the cost of progress in meeting an adaptive challenge.