



## **ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP**

**If organizations must adapt to succeed, so must their leaders.  
Cambridge Leadership Associates shows them how.**

Cambridge Leadership Associates LLC (CLA) was created to help individuals and organizations thrive in the midst of change. We work to develop and support leadership cultures that include:

- Shared responsibility and accountability for the organization as a whole;
- Shared norms of peer consulting across internal boundaries;
- Expectation, encouragement and celebration of thoughtful risk taking on behalf of the mission and objectives of the organization, even when it fails; and
- Communication that produces a continuous process for identifying and addressing barriers to achieving the organization's full potential.

Our goal is to help people and organizations meet their most difficult challenges and achieve their most noble purposes by sharing and practicing the ideas set forth in two critically acclaimed books on leadership, *Leadership without Easy Answers* by Harvard University's Ron Heifetz and *Leadership on the Line*, by Heifetz and Marty Linsky.

What differentiates CLA from other leadership consultancies is the interweaving of three elements: a conceptual framework for thinking about challenges, called adaptive leadership; a set of techniques or skills for applying that framework, both strategically and tactically; and a delivery technology that strengthens the capacity of clients to endure the stresses of leading adaptive change.

### **Why change initiatives fail: The non-adaptive organization**

It's an increasingly complex and constantly changing world out there. No doubt about it. Business articles and books repeatedly call for organizations to be flexible, open and united in their readiness to welcome change wholeheartedly. This is exactly what many believe they are doing; yet they continue to struggle to meet objectives and reshape themselves in a meaningful way. They are what we call non-adaptive organizations. Hard questions not getting asked, private discussions and unrewarded risk-taking—these are typical signs of the non-adaptive organization. Without conscious effort to become otherwise, organizations tend to be non-adaptive because resistance to change is normal. At a personal as well as an organizational level, no one wants to give up familiar, safe, perhaps long held and cherished beliefs or behaviors. This acknowledgement is key; it is the starting point for CLA's work in helping organizations and the individuals within them make the changes required to reach their goals.



## **Leading the way to an adaptive organization**

CLA works to create adaptive organizations where people have the skills to deal with the powerful resistance that proposed changes to deeply embedded values and patterns of behavior elicit. Adaptive work is thus that which helps people bridge the gap between values they stand for (the proposed future) and current conditions.

Adaptive leadership is difficult and dangerous work. It's difficult because it involves helping individuals make difficult value choices. It's dangerous because it challenges what people hold dear, and many of those affected will resist mightily. When people resist adaptive work, their first goal is to preserve what they have, and that means shutting down those advocating for change. But adaptive leadership is also inspiring because it connects to the human spirit and reconnects people to what they care deeply about. Taking the risks involved in adaptive leadership only makes sense in the service of an important purpose.

To get to an adaptive organization requires an understanding of several key assumptions:

*Adaptive vs. technical issues.* Technical problems are the ones we can define clearly and know how to solve; they usually fall to some one with the authority to address them. Adaptive issues are often hard to identify clearly, require changing hearts and minds, and often are championed by someone who cares but may not have the authority to effect change. When adaptive issues are involved, people have to learn new ways and must choose between what appear to be contradictory values.

*Management vs. leadership.* Technical issues can be managed. Adaptive issues require leadership to resolve them.

*Leaders are made, not born.* Leadership is not about charisma, but about a set of skills that anyone can learn and practice.

*Leaders are part of the problem.* As a member of the organization, an internal leader ipso facto owns what we call "a piece of the mess."

These are among the assumptions that differentiate the adaptive from the non-adaptive organization. In an adaptive organization sensitive issues can be brought out in the open safely, and thoughtful risk-taking is encouraged, protected and celebrated. Leaders share responsibility for the organization as a whole, and there is a connection to shared values that promotes forward movement for both the organization and the people who are part of it.



## **WHAT CAMBRIDGE LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES DELIVERS**

We work directly with individuals, helping them develop the skills of adaptive leadership. They are human skills, meaning that anyone can learn them...and no one can exercise them perfectly or at all times. They are subject to reshaping, depending on your group and our ability to find more effective ways to communicate an idea, but they come down to a core group of 10 to 12 skills.

*Inspiring* others by identifying where people find meaning and by finding connections between specific tasks and the organization's purposes.

*Demonstrating courage* and stamina and an ability to both generate heat and take heat

*Getting on the balcony* to step back, observe the fray, and interpret organizational dynamics in real time, then stepping back onto the dance floor and into the action

*Demonstrating compassion and empathy*, respecting the pains of change and the coping mechanisms that people use

*Listening* musically as well as analytically

*Assembling both confidantes and allies*, and distinguishing between them for emotional support, as sources of information and to provide cover.

*Treating "ripe" and "unripe" issues differently* and, all else being equal, tackling the ripe issues first.

*Seeking opportunities* for catharsis and spiritual renewal

*Identifying and working "your piece of the mess,"* your own contribution to the problem you are trying to resolve.

### **CLA in action**

Working with CLA is not a one-shot proposition. We believe it is important not just to train, but also to remain involved with client groups in order to monitor, encourage and intervene as necessary.

*Training* encompasses all programs that introduce the concepts of and offer opportunities to practice the skills of adaptive leadership. These can include leadership retreats, formal training programs, speaking engagements and advanced training workshops. Training is custom designed for clients, and sessions usually last from 1-1/2 to 5 days. The first step in any client engagement is to interview and enroll the organization's senior leaders so that they can model adaptive leadership and promote its acceptance and practice down through the organization.



*Coaching* addresses the critical issue of sustaining enthusiasm and continued practice at the individual level after the initial excitement and immediacy of the training wear off.

*Shadowing* is a process we set up and supervise that allows people to shadow others in different parts of the organization. Shadowing is key to breaking down turfdoms and helping people take responsibility for all of the organization's problems issues.

*Team tasking* defines key business challenges and assigns a team responsibility for identifying and implementing solutions. It not only addresses problems the organization needs to solve, but provides a way of putting new leadership skills into real-world practice.

All of CLA's work is designed to make progress on real and current challenges that have deeply personal connections and implications. Thus progress requires the involvement of the whole person and interaction with the living systems around them.

### **About Cambridge Leadership Associates LLC**

Cambridge Leadership Associates LLC is a leadership consulting practice formed in 2002 after the publication of *Leadership on the Line* by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky. CLA works with large-scale organizations invested in developing organizational capacity to deliver on growth and strategic objectives.

To learn more about adaptive leadership and how CLA can work with you, please visit our website at [www.cambridge-leadership.com](http://www.cambridge-leadership.com)



## **Bio**

### **Lee Teitel**

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CLA Associate Lee Teitel is deeply practiced in the work of teaching and consulting on adaptive leadership having spent several years in Educational Leadership as both a full professor at the University of Massachusetts and as a lecturer at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. His most recent consulting engagements have included a stint as Partnership Development Consultant in work with a variety of Professional Development School Partnerships around the country on start-up, maintenance, and assessment issues; also, the Boston Public Schools, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the PDS Standards Project of the National Association for Colleges of Teacher Education. Other engagements have involved his expertise as an administrative coach in coaching a superintendent and working on the design and implementation of an urban superintendent executive leadership program in collaboration with the Graduate School of Education and Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Administrative experience in education has included as Co-Principal Investigator, Title II Federal Grant for Enhancing Teacher Quality and Student Achievement, the University of Massachusetts at Boston in which he coordinated a portion of a statewide coalition of seven universities and more than twenty schools; as administrative liaison to the Partnership between U-Mass Boston and Dorchester High School working half-time at the high school, on issues of restructuring, communication, teacher preparation; as Associate Dean, Graduate College of Education, the University of Massachusetts at Boston responsible for developing and coordinating community, university, and school partnerships; as Graduate Program Director, the University of Massachusetts at Boston coordinating the graduate program in Educational Administration, and as Institute Director, the University of Massachusetts at Boston Institute on Mentor Teaching.

Dr. Teitel holds both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard as well as a graduate degree from Tufts University and is widely published.



## **Bio**

### **Ronald A. Heifetz**

Ronald A. Heifetz, Principal, Cambridge Leadership Associates, and founding director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, will be engaged in the Spring 2005 inaugural meeting of the Ohio Leadership Forum.

Heifetz is renowned worldwide for his seminal work on the practice and teaching of leadership. His research at Harvard focuses on how to build adaptive capacity in societies, businesses, and nonprofits. His courses on leadership and authority are among the most popular in the University, and his widely acclaimed book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) has been translated into many languages and is currently in its twelfth printing. His new book, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, written with Marty Linsky, was published in May 2002 by Harvard Business School Press.

As a principal in Cambridge Leadership Associates ([www.cambridge-leadership.com](http://www.cambridge-leadership.com)), he speaks and consults extensively in the U.S. and abroad with leaders in business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

A graduate of Columbia University, Harvard Medical School and the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Heifetz is both a physician and a cellist, having studied with the Russian virtuoso, Gregor Piatigorsky. Heifetz lives in the Boston area with his wife, Sousan Abadian, and their two children.