



Technical Problems versus Adaptive Challenges

Our single biggest failure is not in our inability to solve a problem but believing a problem can always be solved. The complexity we face today may be creating adaptive challenges. When we believe we can use problem-solving to address an adaptive challenge it can feel like a draining, reoccurring failure.

Technical Problems

- Can be solved
- Easy to identify & difficult to deny
- Often lend themselves to a quick and easy fix involving a cut-and-dried solution
- Often can be solved by an authority or expert
- Solutions can be implemented relatively quickly
- Method isn't as important as the end result
- Requires change in just one or a few places
- It is controllable

Adaptive Challenges

- Must be managed
- Difficult to identify and easy to deny
- Managing the challenge requires a long time commitment
- Must be managed by those who are touched by it
- May require changes in values, belief systems, relationships and approaches to work.
- Requires change in multiple ways and places
- It can feel like a long-term wicked reality
- There is a sense of mystery and frustration to the issue
- The method of management is critical

Examples

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| • Costs that exceed approved budget | • Language barriers to effective learning |
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