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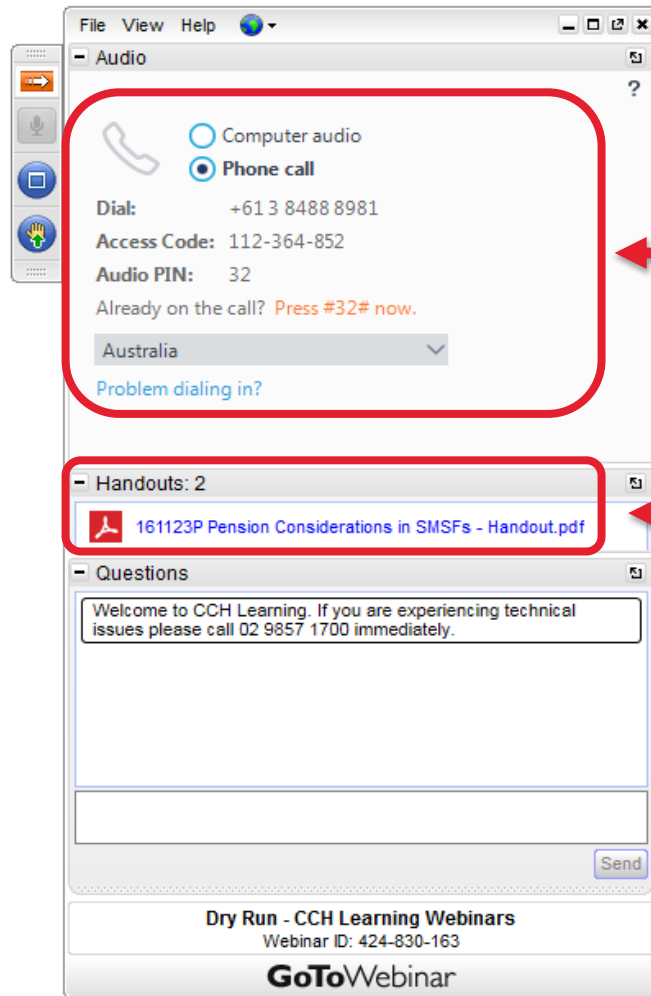
# Combining Strategic and Operational Leadership

Deborah Assheton

Wednesday 8 May 2024



# How to Participate Today



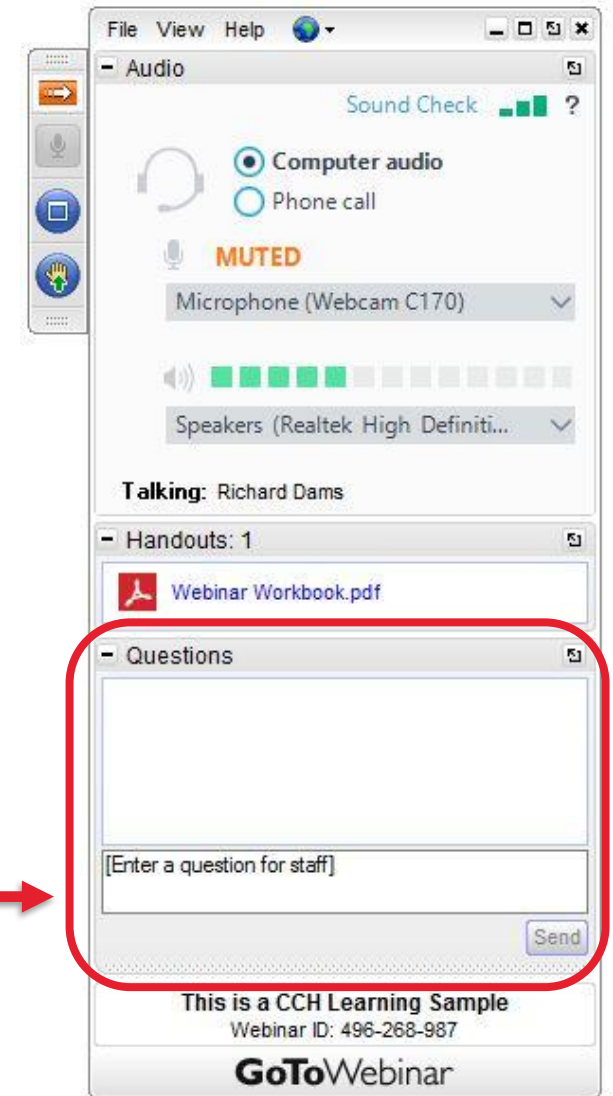
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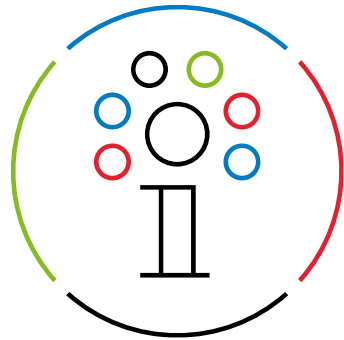
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# Your Presenter



- Deborah Assheton
- Director
- The Amplify Group

# Today's session will cover



## Combining Strategic and Operational Leadership

- What do we mean by strategic?
- What do we mean by operational?
- The case for both forms of Leadership
- Strategic and operational perspectives
- Strategic and operational skills sets
- What does this mean for you?

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# Strategic and Operational in practice



Strategy is  
about  
Setting Direction



Operations are  
about  
Mobilising Resources

# Why do we want or need both strategic and operational Leadership?

- Strategic and operational Leadership are two distinct domains (of perspective, skill and focus)
- They are complementary perspectives; skill sets and areas of focus
- Both are necessary to achieve and maintain anything of substance
- Both are necessary for effective change
- Without strategy we go in circles
- Without operating well nothing gets done



- Is changing the nature of challenges
- Changing the nature of mistakes
- Requires the ability to adapt constantly

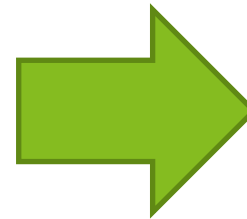


# VUCA is changing the nature of our problems & challenges

Historically Leaders have solved mainly technical challenges

## Technical challenges are:

- Easy to identify
- Can be solved by the knowledge of experts
- The link between problem, solution and implementation are clear
- Resolution is easily identifiable



## Adaptive Challenges

Source: Dr Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky. Leadership on the line Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Change. 2017

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# Adaptive Challenges

- The problem is hard to define
- There is often no one clear solution
- Is easy to resist or ignore – generate disequilibrium and avoidance
- Have a longer timeframe than technical challenges
- People need to solve adaptive changes through a process of experimentation
- Leaders need to be able to generate and sustain productive discomfort

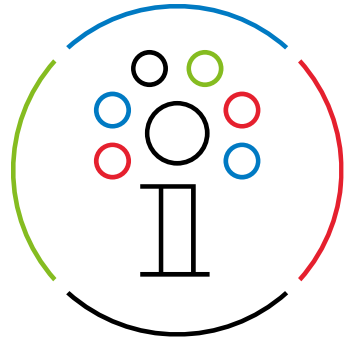
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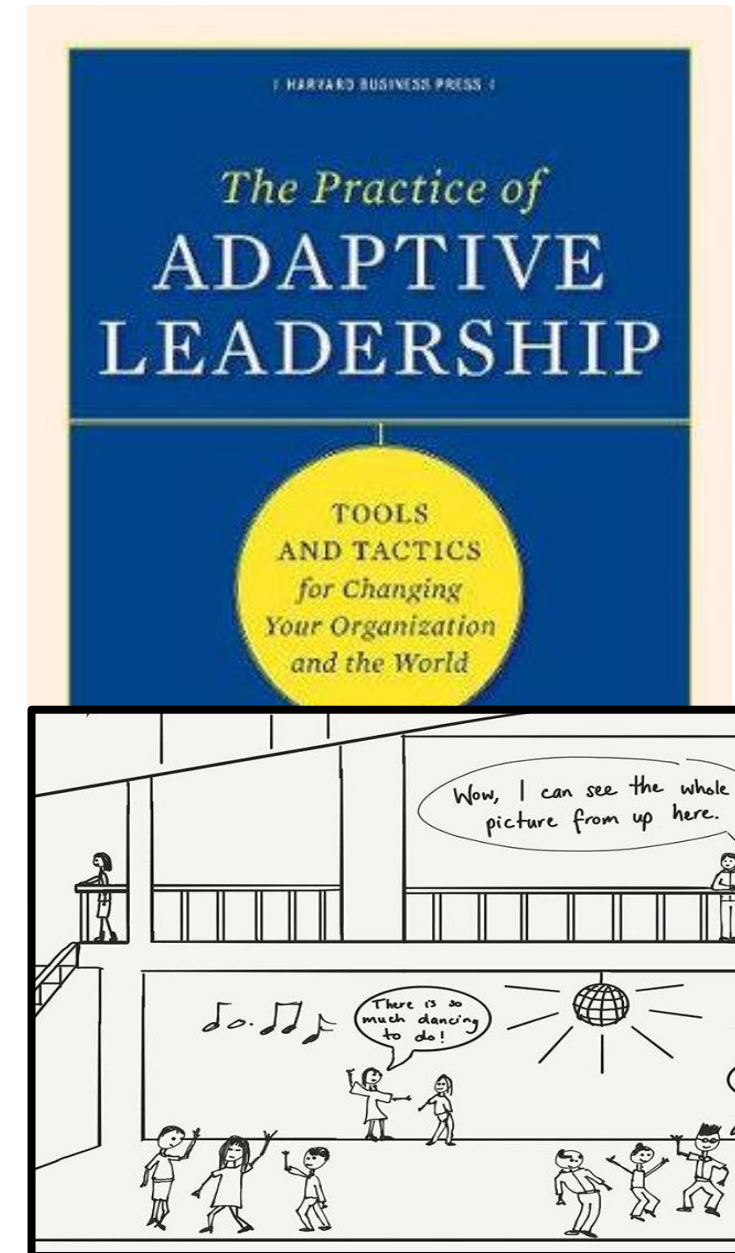
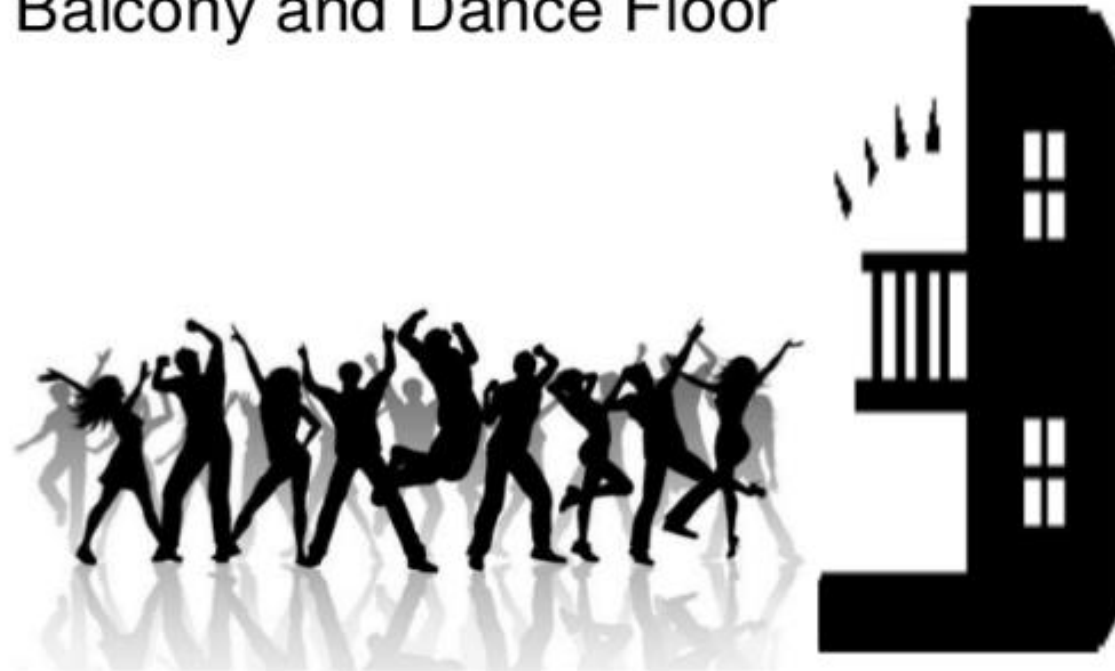
# What 'types of challenges is your workplace or team facing?

- Mainly technical
- Mainly adaptive
- A mixture of both



# The Balcony and the Dance Floor

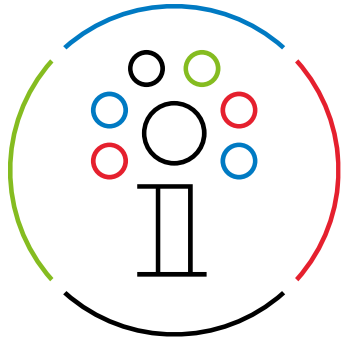
Balcony and Dance Floor



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# I spend most of my time on...

- The Dance Floor
- The Balcony
- A mixture of both





# Balcony and Dance floor perspectives

	The Benefits	The Skill	One perspective only	Final outcome of one view
<b>The Balcony (leading)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad view</li> <li>• Greater timeframe</li> <li>• Objective perspective</li> <li>• Systemic explanations</li> <li>• Situation dynamics</li> </ul>	Capacity to respond and initiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased levels of actual participation</li> <li>• Decreased capacity to manage day to day</li> <li>• Pontification and ineffectual</li> </ul>	Contribution becomes irrelevant
<b>The Dance Floor (managing)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting and doing</li> <li>• Narrow view</li> <li>• Next challenge/deadline view</li> <li>• Task focus</li> <li>• Hurdles, challenges, problems perspective</li> <li>• Balancing resources</li> </ul>	Capacity to react	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to see what is coming</li> <li>• Decreased understanding of your own role</li> <li>• Decreased leadership capacity</li> <li>• Repetitive levels of performance</li> </ul>	Can only react

# The Balcony and the Dance Floor

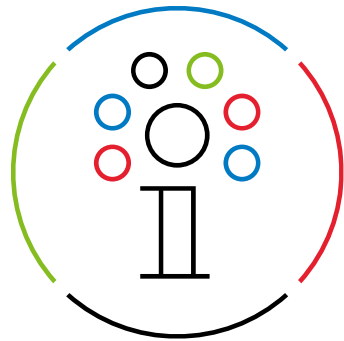
## Reflection ...

- How much time do you spend on the balcony considering strategic themes of your role/organisation?
- In meetings do you typically present a dance floor or a balcony perspective about the topic being discussed?
- Do you typically notice Balcony 'problems/issues' or Dance Floor 'problems/issues'?
- Do you typically notice Balcony opportunities or Dance Floor opportunities?
- Do you typically have Balcony insights or Dance Floor insights?
- Do you typically provide Balcony feedback or Dance Floor feedback?
- Can you think of a time where you have successfully combined both perspectives while on the dance floor or while on the balcony?
- What do you need to do differently to better position your perspective/time/energy and insight?

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I spend the right  
amount of my time  
(for my role) on the  
Balcony and the Dance  
Floor

- Yes, I have the balance about right
- No, I spend too much time on one or the other
- I don't know



# Adversity and distractions

## Adversity

Obstacles

Setbacks

Long plateaus of no obvious progress



## Distractions

Impulsivity and reactivity

Poor clarity

Personal Judgement

Short –term deviations

Indecision



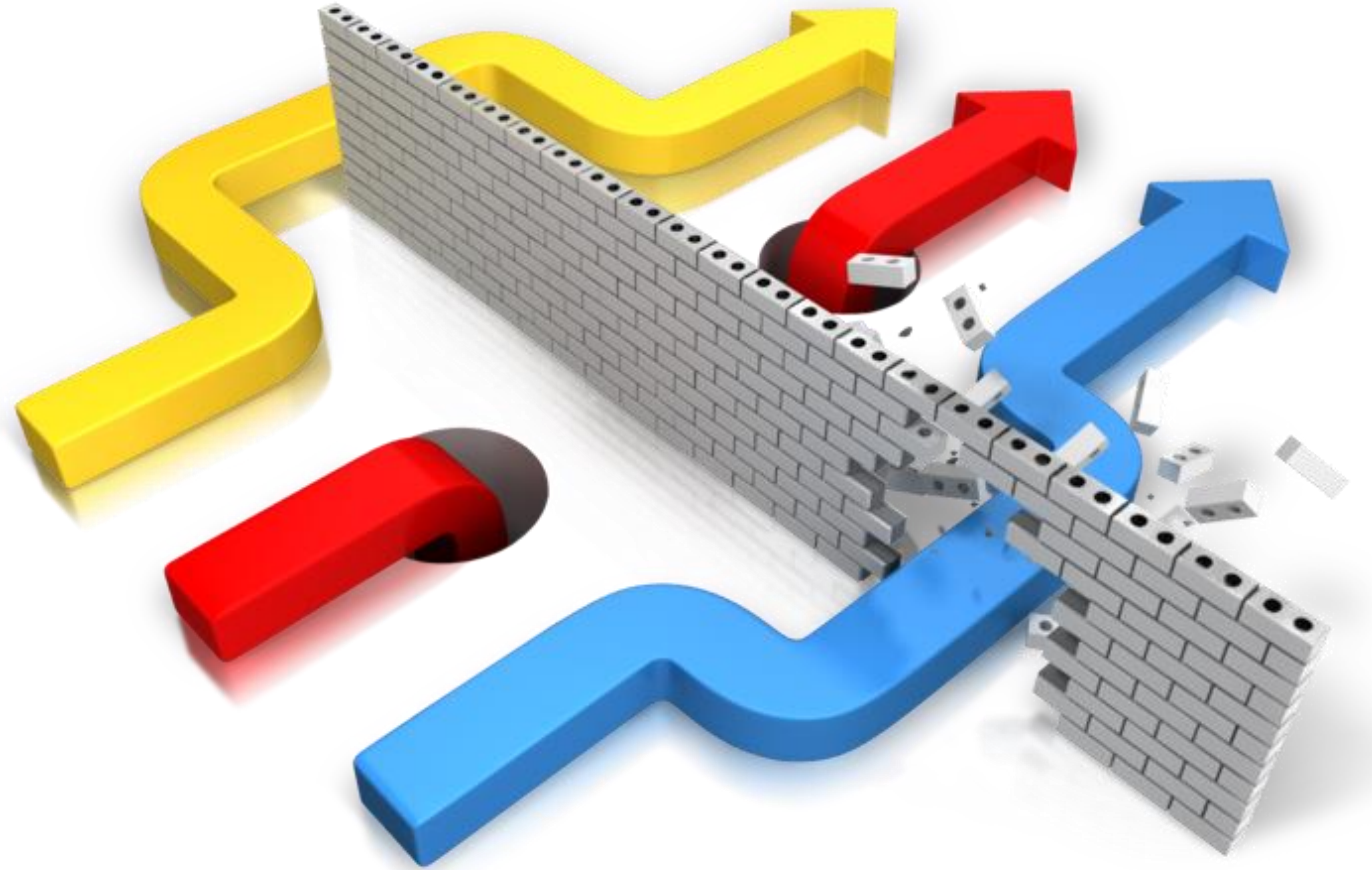
Source: Duckworth (2016) GRIT. Goldsmith (2016) Triggers.



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We need both strategic and operational capability to help our teams to *FIND A WAY*

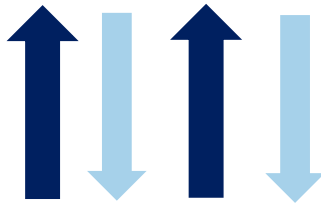
We are always leading the process of *finding a way*







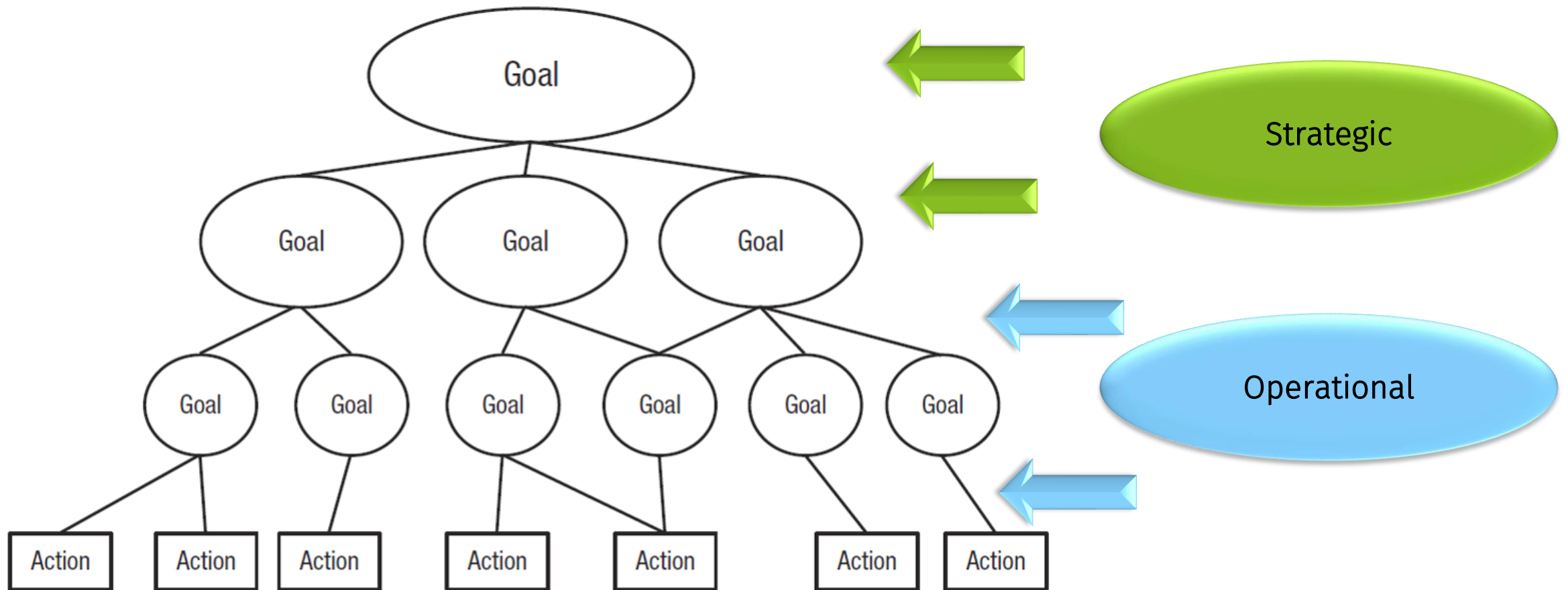
## Higher order Goals



## Lower order Goals

Source: Angela Duckworth. GRIT, 2017

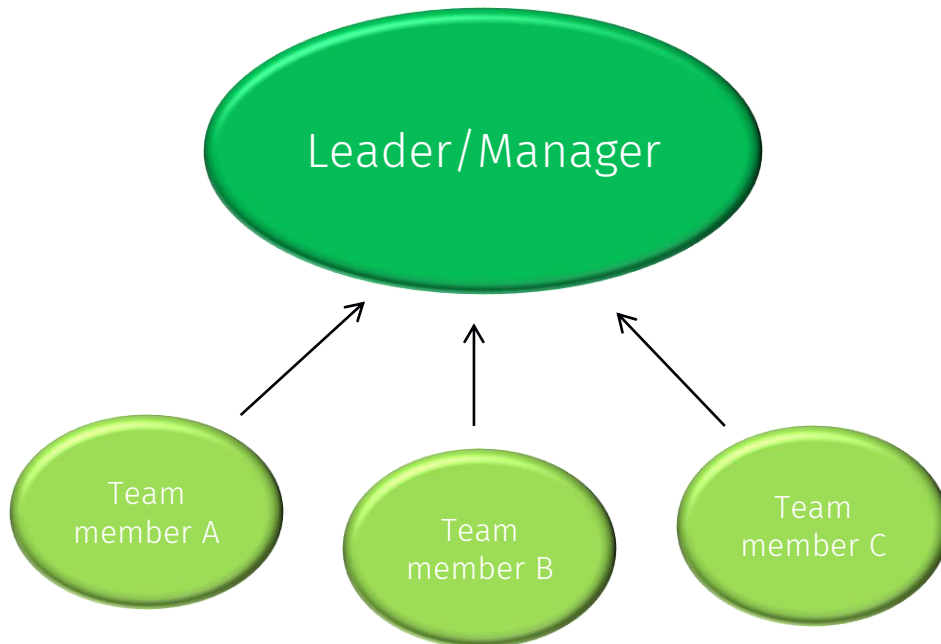
# Goal Hierarchies



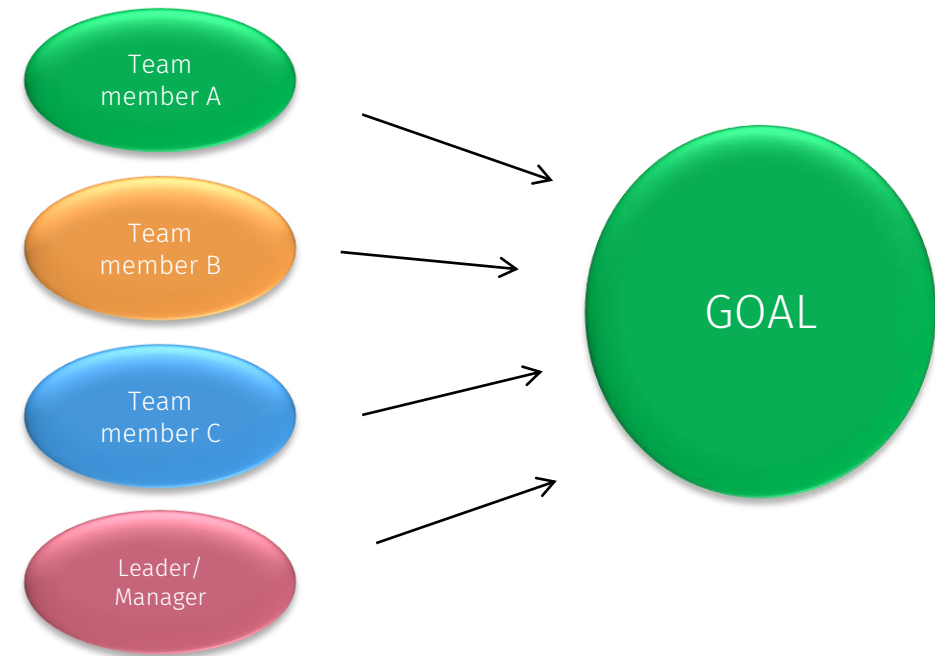
Source: Angela Duckworth. GRIT, 2017

# Goal orientation in teams

Typical Team Orientation



High-performance Orientation



Source: Locke and Latham 1990, 2002, 2011, 2013

# What are the skills?

## Strategic Skills

- Creating the vision
- Sharing the vision
- Resolving conflict
- Inspiring and expanding
- Generating shared understanding and ownership
- Raising expectations
- Articulating and making explicit what we are aiming at and what we are not
- Challenging us/I/you
- Maintaining productive discomfort

## Operational Skills

- Planning for execution
- Allocating resources
- Creating teams and work streams
- Assigning tasks
- Giving direction
- Holding people accountable
- An action orientation
- Counting, monitoring and measuring execution and progress
- Course correcting
- Iterating and responding (including to failure)
- Systematising learning

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# The work for Leaders...

## Strategic

1. Seek opportunities for sustainable revenue growth
2. Focus on the vision – make it specific and clear
3. Identify and lead your organisation/ team through adaptive (and technical) challenges
4. Engage your team and customers
5. Demonstrate passion - commitment, openness, decisiveness, empathy and confidence

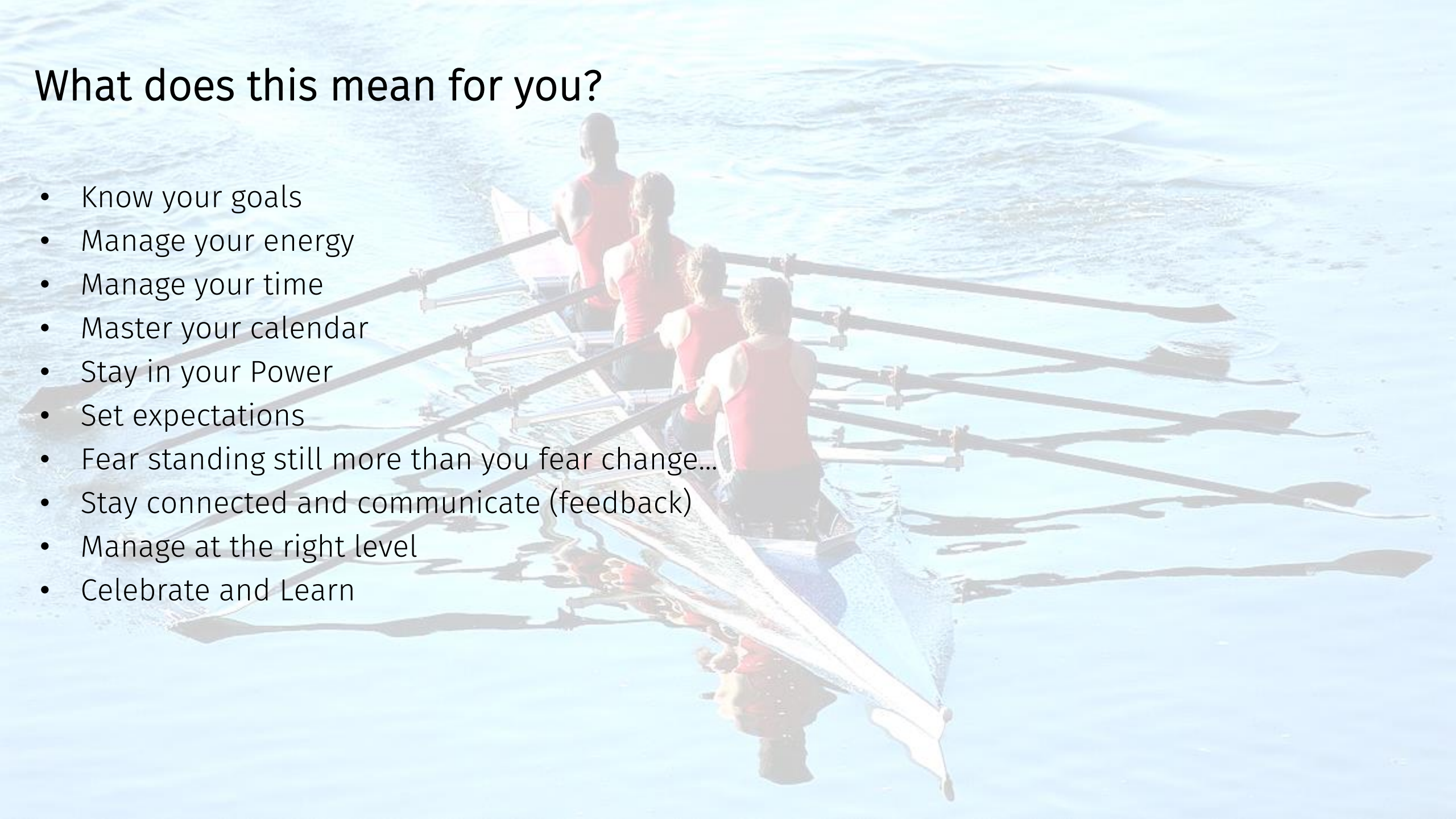
## Operational

1. Create line of sight (goal clarity)
2. Prioritise (be ruthless)
3. Pace the progress (marathon, not sprint)
4. Utilise conflict constructively
5. Create a performance focus
6. Call the problems and challenges (zero avoidance)
7. Utilise diversity of thought
8. Measure and communicate progress



# What does this mean for you?

- Know your goals
- Manage your energy
- Manage your time
- Master your calendar
- Stay in your Power
- Set expectations
- Fear standing still more than you fear change...
- Stay connected and communicate (feedback)
- Manage at the right level
- Celebrate and Learn



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## Further Resources

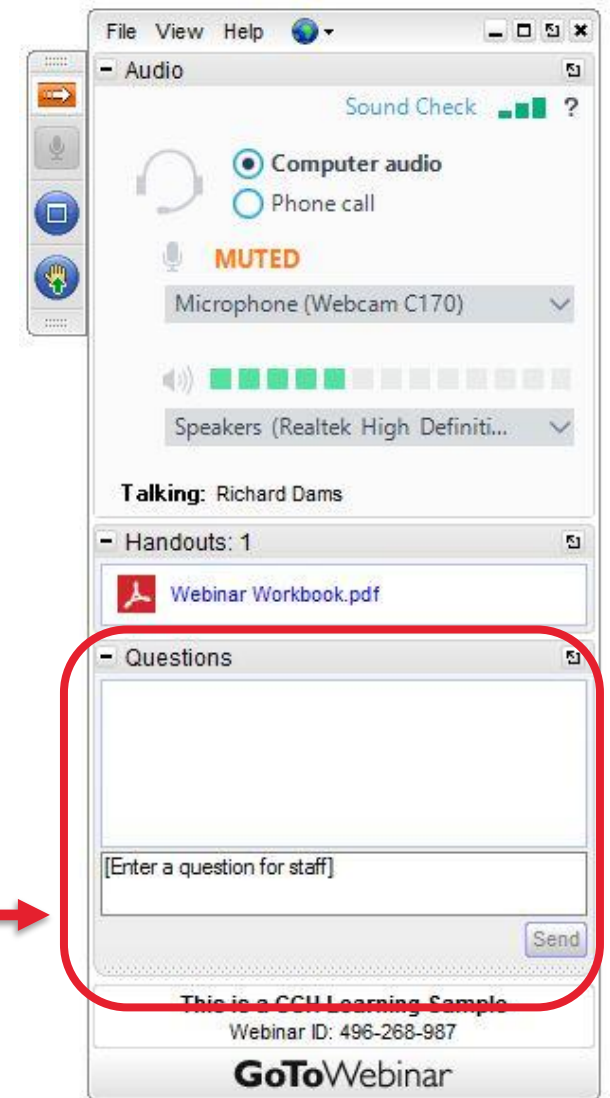
- The Practice of Adaptive Leadership – Ronald Heifetz & Martin Linsky
- Read [this](#) article on leadership from the Atlassian blog
- Any of the TED talks by Ronald Heifetz

# Questions?

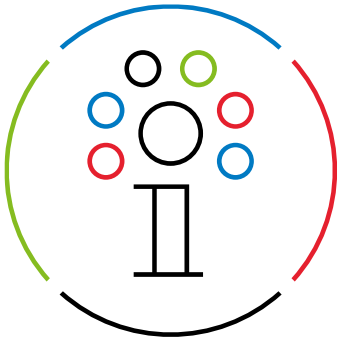


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- 30 April – Understanding the Downsizing Decisions your older clients need to make

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# Questions



- Deborah Assheton
- Director
- The Amplify Group
- 0425 214 215
- [deb@theamplifygroup.com.au](mailto:deb@theamplifygroup.com.au)



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# Next Steps

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# Thank you for attending

