Leading through crisis: the politics of change

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Take 2 minutes

What is the nature
of the leadership challenges
that COVID-19 has
created in your city?

We will explore 2 questions

1

What is the critical error that people make when leading in crisis?

2

How do you navigate people through a crisis when you are not able to deliver on their expectations?

The most common leadership failure stems from trying to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges

Ron Heifetz

Technical problems are clearly understood and prone to expertise, whereas adaptive challenges are harder to work: progress is achieved through, learning, experimentation and collaboration

	Technical	Adaptive
Problem	Understood	▪ Unclear and requires learning
Solution	Known	▪ Unknown and requires learning
Locus of responsibility	Authorities and experts	▪ Authorities together with affected stakeholders
Obstacles	Time and money	Hearts, minds, loyalties and deeply held values

Poll

To what extent is dealing with COVID-19 a technical issue?

Not at all   14%

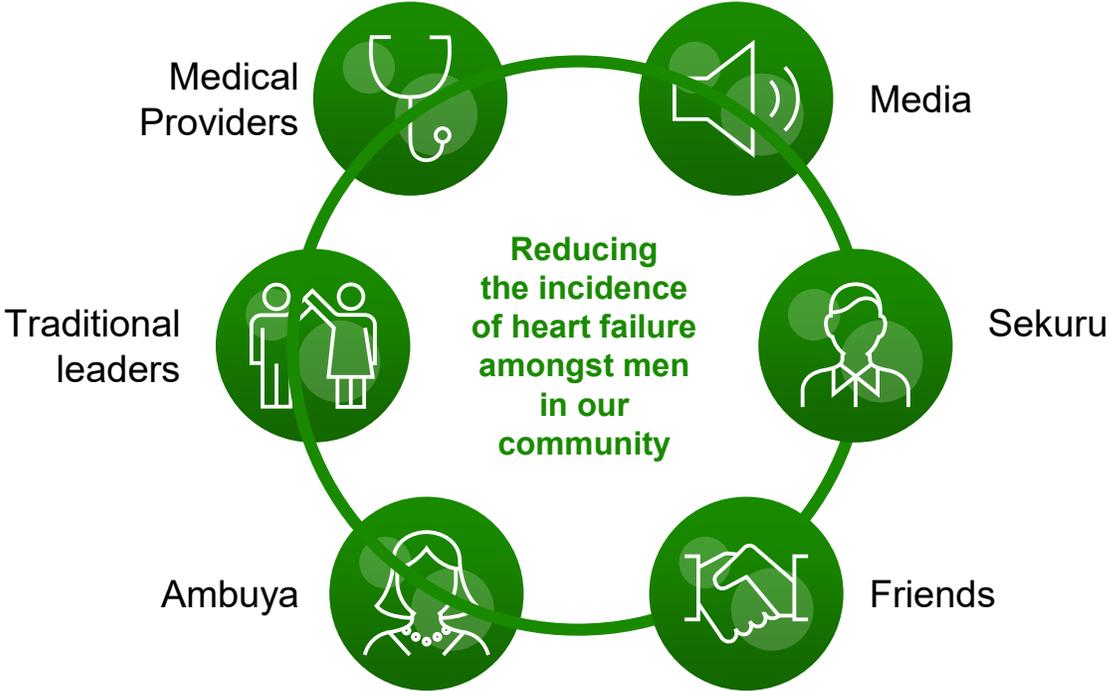Somewhat   75%

Completely   11%

Leadership is an activity and is defined by the work to be done: to mobilize people to solve tough problems and build capacity to thrive in a changing and challenging world


Medical Providers

Media

Traditional leaders

Reducing the incidence of heart failure amongst men in our community

Sekuru

Ambuya

Friends

Critical diagnostic questions

1. **What adaptive challenges are you currently defining in technical terms?**

2. **Where are you locating responsibility?**

3. **How are obstacles being defined?**

4. **What competencies will need to be developed to make progress on the challenge? In whom?**

5. **What resistance are you encountering; what is it trying to protect?**

We will explore 2 questions

1

What critical mistakes do people make when leading in a crisis?
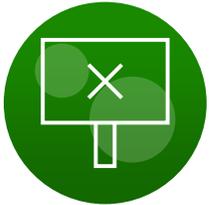
2
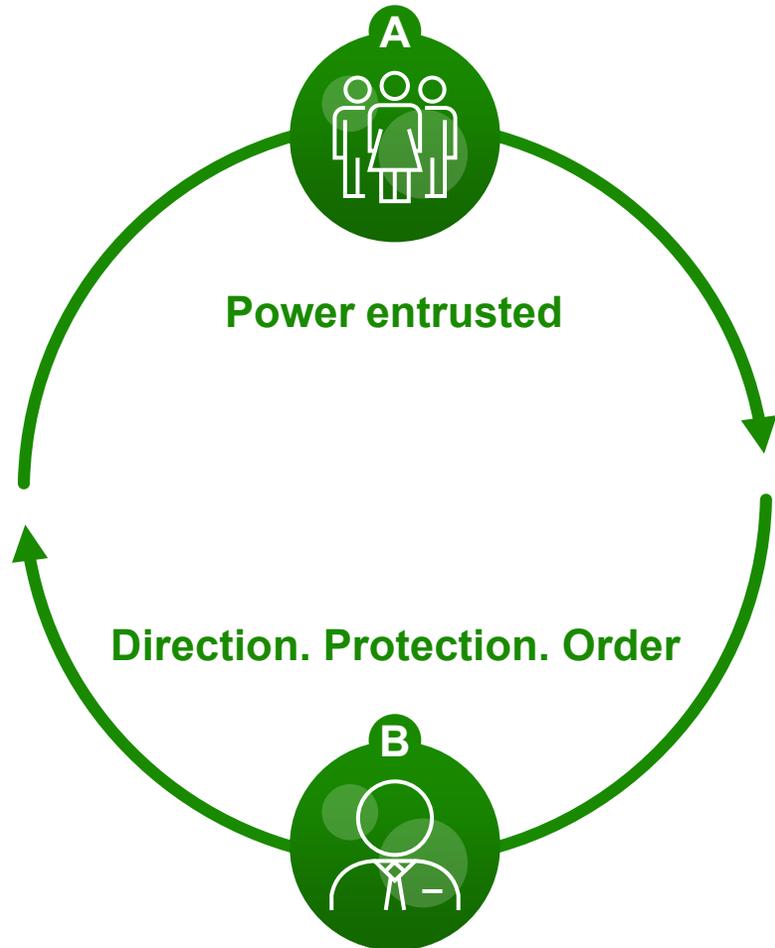
How do you navigate people through a crisis when you are not able to deliver on their expectations?

The nature of the authority contract

Power entrusted

Direction. Protection. Order

Direction	Define the problem & solution	Frame challenge, questions
Protection	Shield people from external threats	Identify and use conflict productively
Order	Clarify roles and responsibilities	Redefine roles as needed & challenge unproductive norms
	Technical problems (Authority)	Adaptative challenges (Leadership)

The work of leadership involves creating an environment to focus people on the work that only they can do

1 Identify & frame the adaptive challenge
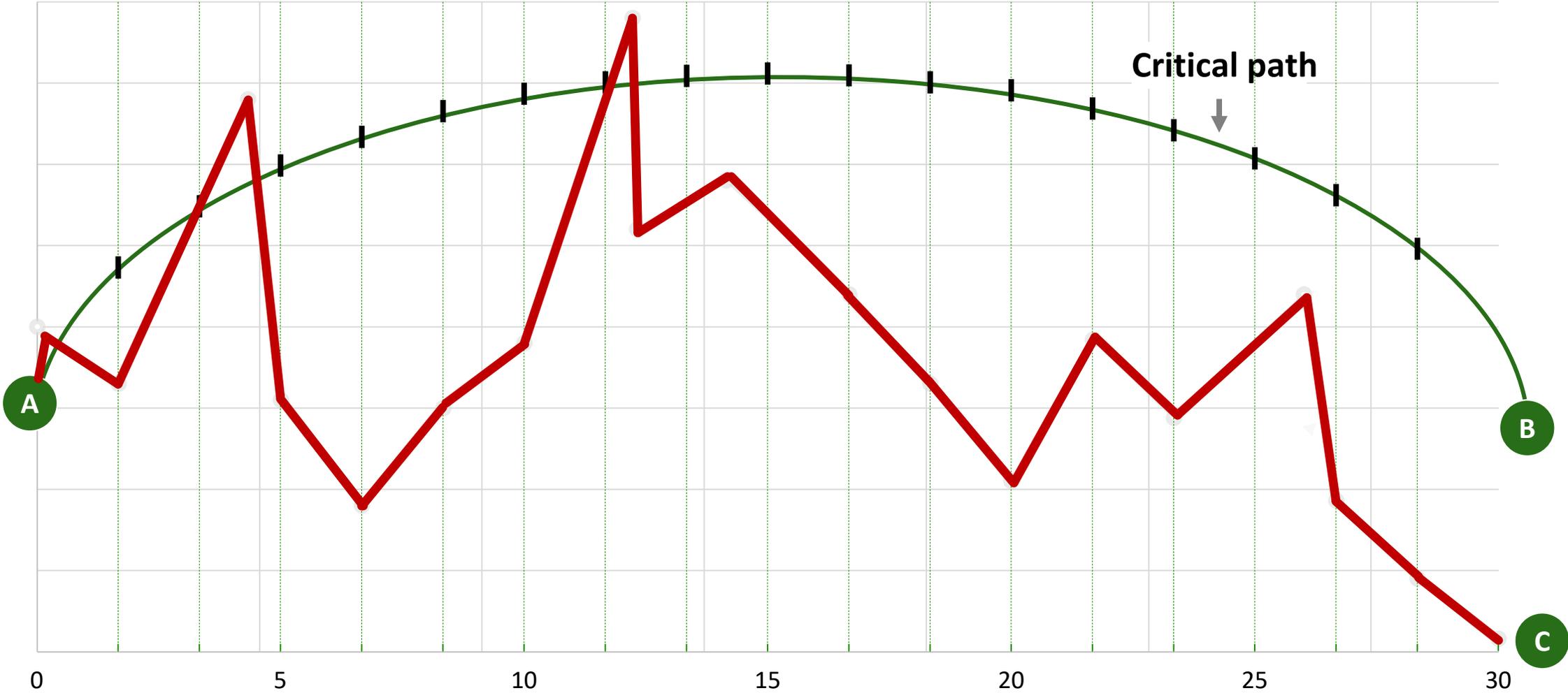
2 Orchestrate conflict

3 Infuse the work with meaning

4 Place yourself in the system

Adaptive Processes take time

Critical path

A

B

C

0   5   10   15   20   25   30

Time -- Where are we now?

Key Takeaways

Diagnosis is key: distinguish between technical problems and adaptive challenges and 'plan' accordingly

Be prepared to disappoint: authority requires you to take the work off people's shoulders (power granted in exchange for services); leadership is about building new capacity in people and placing the adaptive work where it belongs

Work both the people and the problem: generate capacity, infuse the work with meaning, disappoint people at a rate that they can absorb, create a holding environment

Pace yourself and your teams – this is a marathon, not a sprint!