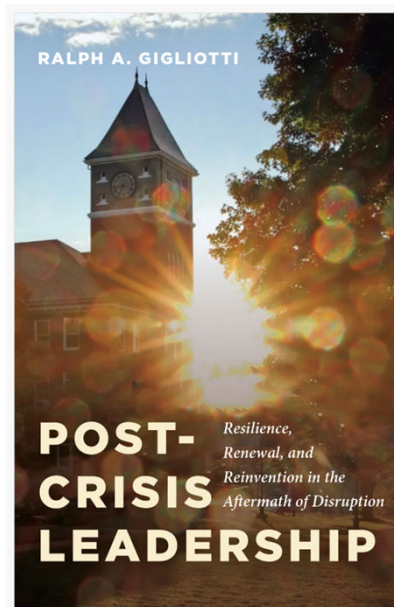




Communication and Change Management

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Facilitator Background

Administrator, educator, author, and
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Areas of expertise:

leadership development, crisis leadership,
organizational development and strategy,
and building high-performing teams



Agenda



Leadership
Communication
Principles



Strategic
Communication
Application



Managing
Change

Challenging Context for Academic Leadership

- Complex and rapidly changing higher education landscape
- Steep learning curve
- Competencies necessary for distinction as a leader have a limited overlap with those needed for personal distinction in one's field
- Limited opportunities for leadership training and development

VUCA

- V** **Volatility**
Rapid, unpredictable change
- U** **Uncertainty**
Lack of predictability
- C** **Complexity**
Many interconnected parts
- A** **Ambiguity**
Multiple interpretations

BANI

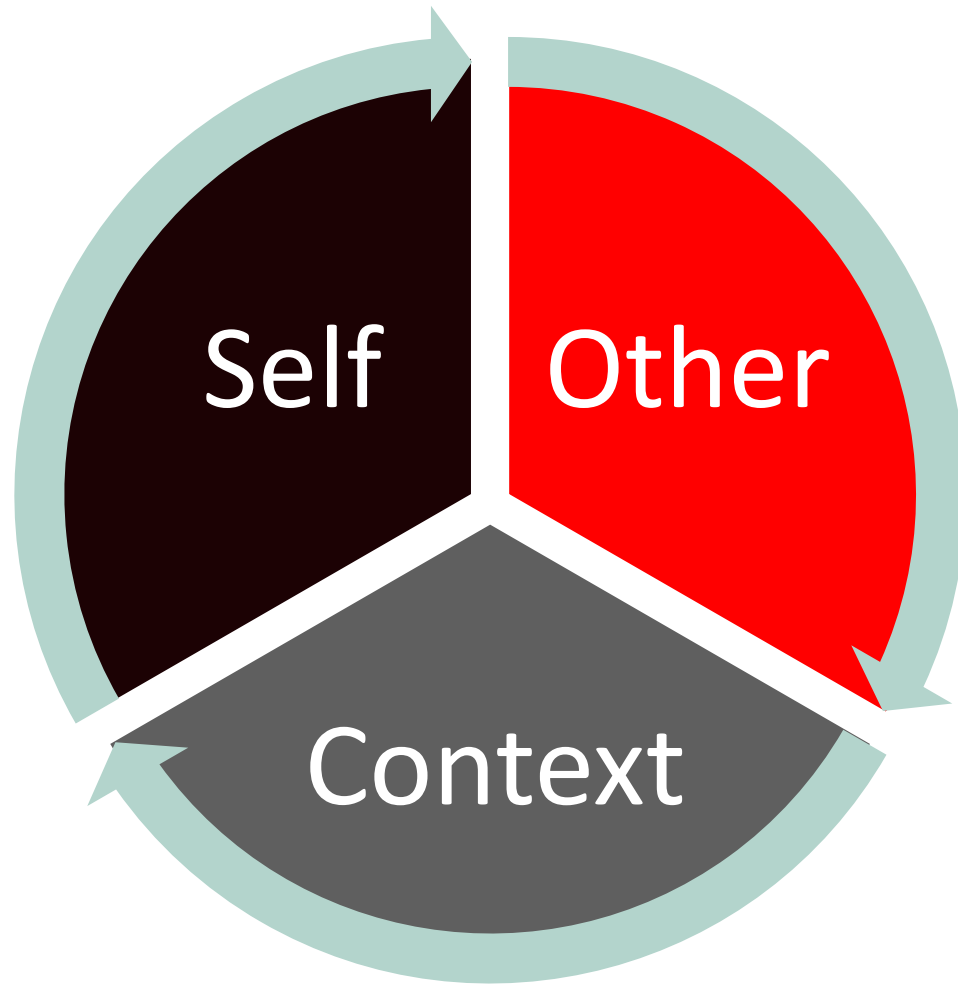
- B** **Brittle**
Hidden fragility that shatters under stress
- A** **Anxious**
Collective fear and indecision
- N** **Non-linear**
Disproportionate cause-and-effect
- I** **Incomprehensible**
Events beyond our understanding



One View of Leadership

- Leadership is a process of social influence
- Planned and unplanned
- Formal and informal
- For “good” and “evil”
- Defined by followers as much as leaders
- About sense-making and sense-giving
- Communication—verbal and nonverbal—is fundamental to leadership-followership dynamics
- Importance of context, situation, and history

Gigliotti, Ruben, & Goldthwaite, 2017;
Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti, 2021



Faculty Member as Pilot

As a member of the faculty, you are the *pilot* of your own plane.

- Planning your trips
- Establishing your own flight plans
- Taking off and landing when and where you want

Source: Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti (2021)

Becoming an Air Traffic Controller

- When you assume a leadership role, a major transition is required.
- As a leader, you become an *air traffic controller*, concerned not only—or even primarily—with your own plane, but rather with all the planes and pilots for whom you have responsibility.
 - Helping to establish flight plans
 - Tracking weather conditions
 - Overseeing runway movement and gate departures/arrivals
 - Establishing takeoff/landing sequences
 - Coordinating departures and arrivals
 - Monitoring flight trajectories
 - Assuring the safety and well-being of all

Getting Off Auto-Pilot

- Seeing things as an air traffic controller rather than a pilot
- Considering the precedent-setting nature of one's actions
- Setting leadership goals/thinking about legacy
- Focusing on the totality of the “friendly skies” rather than one's own flight trajectory
- Thinking and acting strategically

Requires...

- Expanding ideas about what one needs to know when transitioning into an academic leadership role or even after holding a role for years
- Remaining open to new concepts, new language, new metaphors, new insights, and new behaviors
- Committing to reflective practice



“Effective communication is important for many reasons. Shared governance requires trust. It also requires solid information on which to make decisions or to defer responsibility for decision making to others. Good communication gives faculty and administration confidence in the work that they are doing together.”

Don Chu, The Department Chair Primer

Centrality of Communication

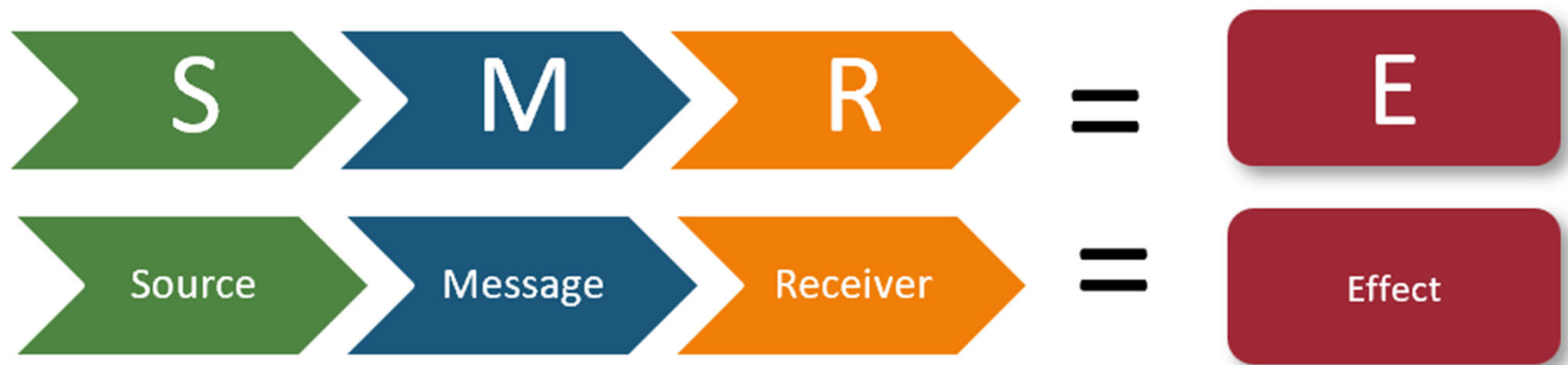
- The behavior and experience of people actively engaged in the process of creating meaning.
- Intent does not equal impact.
- One cannot not communicate.
- Every communication has a content and relationship aspect.

Adapted from Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967)

Leadership Communication Style

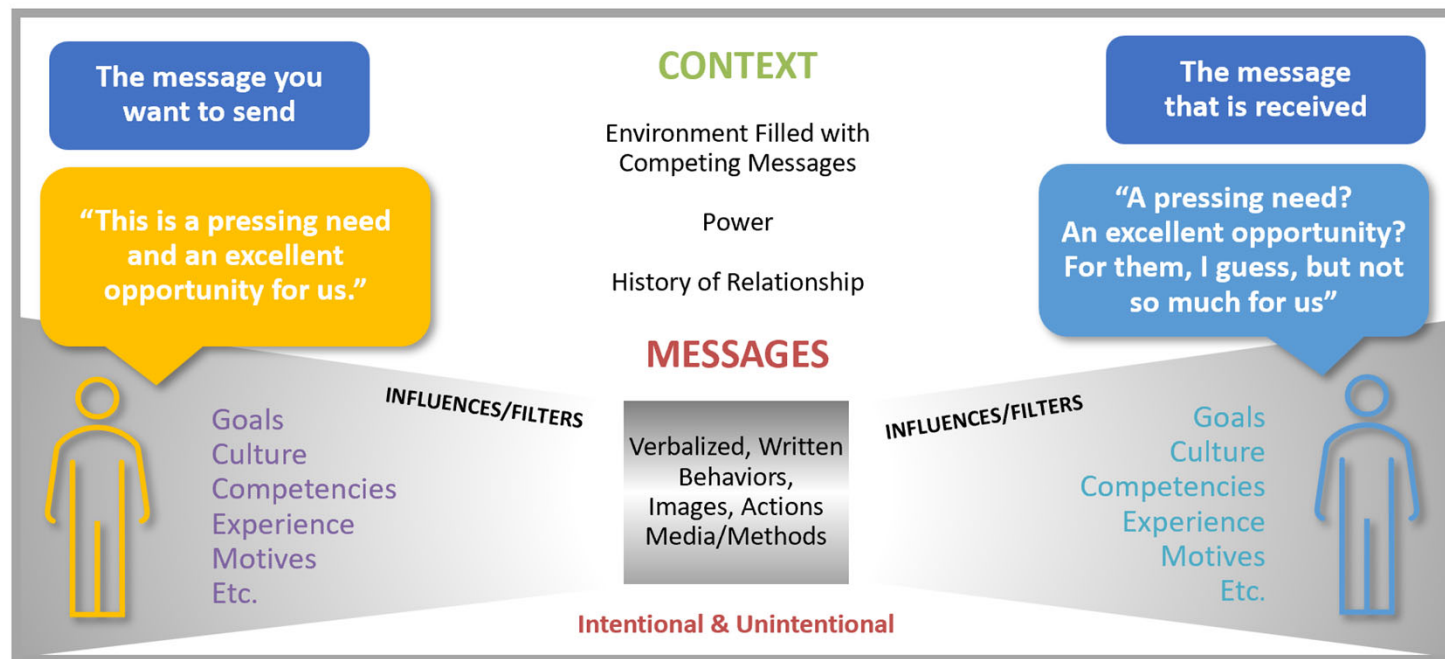
1. How would you characterize your dominant leadership communication style?
2. How might this style serve you well in your academic leadership pursuits?
3. How might this style potentially limit your leadership effectiveness?

How We Think Communication Works



Source: Ruben & Gigliotti (2016)

How Communication Works



Sources: Ruben & Gigliotti (2016)

A Framework for Strategic Communication and Action

- 1** Analyze the Situation – What’s at Stake?
- 2** Define the Audience(s) – Who do you communicate with?
- 3** Clarify Goal(s) – What exactly do you want to accomplish?
- 4** Select and Implement a Plan of Action – Consider options
 - Actions? - Timing/Sequence? - Message talking points? - Venue/setting?
- 5** Debrief – “Lessons learned”?

Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti (2021)



Analyze the Situation

What's at stake?

For You Personally

- Establishing your “voice”
 - Upholding personal values or principles
 - Setting or maintaining a precedent
 - Your credibility
 - Defining your personal/leadership style
 - Demonstrating consistency in how you treat colleagues, students, patients, or problems
-

For Other Individuals Involved

- Status
 - Pride
 - Recognition
-

For the Institution or Department

- Core purposes or aspirations
 - Critical values or principles
 - A problem to be addressed
 - Consistent practices
 - Organizational climate, culture, morale
 - Critical regulations or policies
 - Fair and equitable treatment
 - Personal and professional standards/practices
-



Define the Audience(s)

Who needs to hear from you on this, and why?

- ☐ A specific individual or individuals?
 - ☐ Who else would you inform (e.g., cc, bcc, report the situation)?
-
- The individual involved?
 - All those present in a particular situation?
 - The entire department?
 - The individual to whom you report?
 - Select groups?
 - Senior colleague(s)
 - A friend, spouse, or confidant?
 - Others?



Clarify Goals

What exactly do you hope to accomplish?

❑ (Note: Recognize that it is impossible to determine what would be an effective or ineffective strategy without knowing the goal)

- Gather information?
- Provide input?
- Clarify facts?
- Solidify relationships?
- Persuade or influence?
- Assure that your position, reaction, perspective is clear?
- Be on the record?
- Solicit input?
- Demonstrate interest/concern?
- Demonstrate your expertise?

4

Select and Implement a Plan of Action

(Note: People often mistakenly begin with this step)

What action do you take, what is your timing, and why?

- Do nothing special (e.g., not much at stake, benefits vs. costs of response not clear, the problem will likely take care of itself)
- Respond immediately, addressing the most pressing issue(s)
- Think further about the situation (e.g., give the matter further thought, then revisit options above)

What is your message, and why?

- Informative (e.g., historical, factual, defining/clarifying problem, citing other sources)
- Persuasive (e.g., evidence-based, values-based, vision-based)

What channel/venue(s) do you use, and why?

- One-on-one (e.g., “spontaneous” informal, scheduled appointment)
- Group (e.g., meeting, town hall gathering, focus group)
- Mediated (e.g., telephone, email, text)



Debrief

How did it go? “Lessons Learned”

- Did your strategy achieve the outcome you intended?
 - Were there unintended outcomes?
- How would those involved in the process describe how things went?
- Is further follow-up needed? (Repeat previous four steps iteratively)
- What might you do differently in the future to address this kind of problem if it were to occur again?
- How could you prevent this kind of situation from developing? (e.g., set clearer expectations, stay closer to the process, request periodic progress reports, assign several people to collaborate on the task)
- What personal and/or professional leadership lessons can you take away from the situation?

Application

Working in your small group, identify a realistic communication challenge you are currently facing—or one that could realistically arise within—your department, school, or campus.

Using the framework, discuss: (1) what is at stake, (2) who the key audiences are and what they need, (3) your primary communication goals, and (4) the communication strategy you would use, including the messenger, timing, channels, tone, and opportunities for dialogue.

Break: 10:30-10:45 am



Looking Inward

1. An example of a successful change you made in your personal life
2. An example of a change you would like to make in your personal life, but one you're finding difficult to make

Change of any kind is difficult because people are reluctant to accept new ideas, plans, technologies...

Past and present behavior is generally the single best predictor of future behavior—far better than what one says they resolve, intend, hope, or plan to do.

**Habit, history, tradition—
all powerful forces
inhibiting our intentions to change**



Personal change is a challenge; and significant planned organizational change is exponentially more difficult.

- Like individuals, organizations have habits, traditions, and histories—and all are powerful influences that mitigate against change.



Not Surprisingly, Many Planned Change Initiatives Fail to Achieve Leaders' Expectations

- Estimates place the failure rate of organizational change initiatives at 50%–75%

Why?

- Sometimes because of technical factors—inadequate resources or problems with organizational structure
- More often because of human factors

There is a Natural Resistance to Organizational Change (Often Regardless of the Specifics of the Change)

Not viewed as
necessary

Requires a major
investment of time,
and there's already
too much to do

Too much change
at one time

Calls for new
approaches and
routines

Requires new
knowledge and
skills

Threatens our
present status,
stature, roles

Requires resources
that may not be
available

Mistrust and lack of
confidence in those
advocating change

Implies a criticism
of the present
systems, processes,
or structures

Threatens personal
or professional
identities and/or
legacies

Creates sense of
losing control and
predictability

Culture and
traditions

Other sources of
resistance?

The SCARF model

This memorable framework from Dr. David Rock helps communicators recall the five key domains of psychological safety. When these pillars may be threatened, we should anticipate an instinctively avoidant response – and look for ways to soften the impact.



Status

Threatened by...

Embarrassment, feeling singled out, pointed or surprising feedback, competence being questioned

Replenished by...

Mutual respect, separating the work from the person, public acknowledgement, job security

Certainty

Constantly shifting plans, unseen forces at work, unclear goals, major 'known unknowns', fuzzy strategy

Clear strategies, timelines and deliverables, steady expectations, sense of the bigger picture

Autonomy

Micromanaging, process over outcome, 'only one right way to do it', questions & challenge unwelcome

Empowered teams, collaborative decision-making, flexibility in acceptable approaches, playing to unique strengths

Relatedness

Impersonal demands, faceless bureaucracy, 'computer says no', disconnected leadership

Genuine human connections, putting a face to the ask, doing things for and with others, team culture

Fairness

Arbitrary application of standards, capricious rule changes, renegeing on agreement, unjust rewards

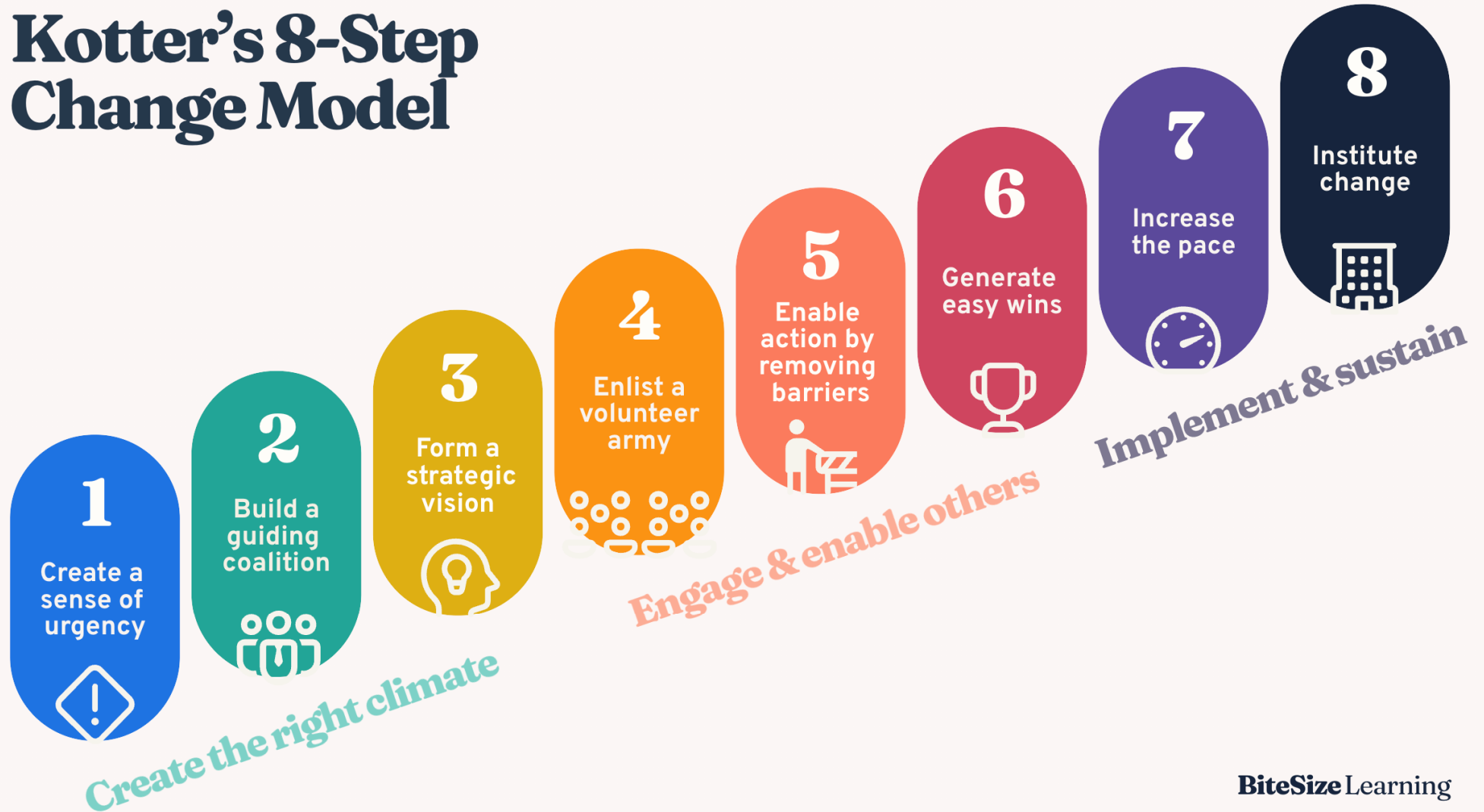
Rules that make sense, giving and taking, transparency, and consistent treatment for everyone

Making Resistance a Leadership Opportunity

- Try to understand the perspectives of affected parties
- Listen carefully
- Avoid defensiveness; be open to feedback
- Document points being made by critics and resisters; identify and analyze themes and noteworthy concerns
- Search for ways to better explain, address, or reframe the source of criticism or complaint
- Don't assume vocal critics are the only critics. Remember the broader audience
- The way you react may be a significant "spectator takeaway"
- Don't assume resisters are intending to be troublemakers; they may be your most loyal and dedicated colleagues, willing to risk negative consequences in order to articulate points they think are critical for you or the organization

View resistance, complaints, and critique as a natural and potentially beneficial part of the change process.
As a leader, you are being watched and judged by your colleagues.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model



Application

Reflect on a significant change initiative that you have led, participated in, or observed within higher education. **What contributed to its success—or made it more challenging?**

As an academic leader, **how can you meaningfully engage faculty and staff throughout the change process?**

Consider strategies for building trust, fostering participation, addressing concerns, communicating with transparency, and sustaining momentum over time. Be prepared to share **one principle or practice** that you believe is essential for leading change effectively in your own department, school, or campus.

Final Considerations

- Focus on items within your immediate control and influence.
- Develop a clear understanding of your leadership goals.
- Recognize that leadership decision or action is precedent-setting.
- Focus on the strengths of your team and strategies for best engaging the members of your team.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives, values, needs, and expectations of stakeholders, cultures, colleagues, and campus leaders who will be critical to your role and your success in that role.
- Design strategies for meaningfully engaging others in change.
- Continuously monitor and reflect on your leadership development and performance.
- Prioritize wellness and well-being.
- Remember your why.

Thank you!

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References

For more information regarding the framework and concepts introduced in this presentation, please see the following:

Ruben, B. D., De Lisi, R., & Gigliotti, R. A. (2021). *A guide for leaders in higher education: Core concepts, competencies, and tools*. (2nd ed). Stylus.

Ruben, B. D. & Gigliotti, R. A. (2016). Leadership as social influence: An expanded view of leadership communication theory and practice. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 23(4), 467-479.