

# WITHSTANDING THE PRESSURES FOR QUICK FIXES AND EASY ANSWERS

## Distinguishing Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges

Adaptive challenges, unlike technical problems, are...

- Systemic – they do not belong to one person or group.
- Stubborn & Persistent – technical solutions might quiet them down, but they keep percolating.
- Outside our common repertoire and beyond business as usual.

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	Technical Problems	Adaptive Challenges
Problem definition	The problem is understood	The problem is unclear and requires learning
Solution	The solution is known	The solution is unknown. Progress requires learning.
Locus of responsibility	Authorities and experts	Affected stakeholders as well as authorities
Obstacles	Time, money & resources	Hearts, minds, loyalties & deeply held values
Examples	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take medicine to lower blood pressure.</li> <li>2. Build an electronic monitoring system to track progress along the supply chain.</li> <li>3. Provide shelter for and register refugees.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change lifestyle to eat more healthily, exercise more, reduce stress.</li> <li>2. Build a corporate culture in which employees speak up about and challenge unrealistic goals.</li> <li>3. Integrate refugees into society.</li> </ol>