

TO SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

Addressing Structural Sources of Workplace Conflict

with John Buck and Monika Megyesi

GOVERNANCE  *Alive*

presents for the ADR Lunchtime Series



System

= Interacting parts, within a boundry, that form an integrated whole and have a purpose.

Yin Yang

= Ancient Chinese understanding of how things work.

yin yang of conflict management



mediation

problem solving

strategic planning

facilitation

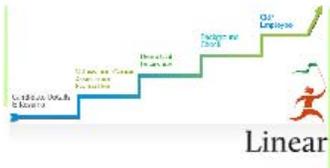
etc.

process

= series of actions directed toward accomplishing a goal

circle
meeting

operational
meeting



Linear

structures that underly processes

Flow



Circular



yin yang of conflict management



families

agencies

organizations

informal groups

structure

= nature of relationship in which processes occur

social structures



The Think Sheet

A Monthly Flyer with Ideas and Information about Using Systems Thinking
Volume 1 Issue 10 © A Waters Foundation Project 2006

Systems Thinking in Schools: A Waters Foundation Project: www.watersfoundation.org

When something goes wrong, the first question that we often ask is, "Whose fault is it?" Blaming seems to be a natural reflex in many organizations... There's a problem with this, however: Where there is blame; open minds close, inquiry tends to cease, and the desire to understand the whole system diminishes.

Marilyn Paul
"Moving from Blame to Accountability"
The Systems Thinker
Volume 1, Number 1

Systems thinkers consider how a system is structured. They understand that the structure of the system determines how it will behave. For this reason, it's pointless to find fault with individuals because that strategy does nothing to move you towards a solution.
Develop the habit of focusing on structure not on blame.



A Quick Tip: Don't play the blame game!

There is a rule of thumb associated with systems that has a profound impact on how you approach improvements. It's the 85/15 Rule:

- 85% of the problems in a system are due to inherent problems with that system. They can be changed only through the intervention of the people who shape the system...
- Only 15% of the problems are under control of the individuals working with the system.

The 85/15 Rule teaches us that fundamental, systemic improvement requires action not only from the individuals closest to the issues, but support and involvement from the decision makers who designed the system in the first place. A systems thinker understands the futility and danger of blaming individuals for problems when most of the variation in performance is due to how the systems are designed.

The Handbook for SMART School Teams By Anne Conzemius and Jan O'Neill

Habits of a Systems Thinker

A Systems Thinker...

- Seeks to understand the "big picture"
- Changes perspectives to increase understanding
- Looks for patterns, trends and interdependencies

What are Systemic Structures?

Structures include, among other things, how people work together, policies and procedures, school calendars and schedules, contracts, job descriptions, and how decisions get made. *The Handbook for SMART School Teams* By Conzemius and O'Neill



What Teams Can Do

When people work in an atmosphere of blame, they naturally cover up their errors and hide their real concerns--often to the detriment of the

management



POWER



POWER

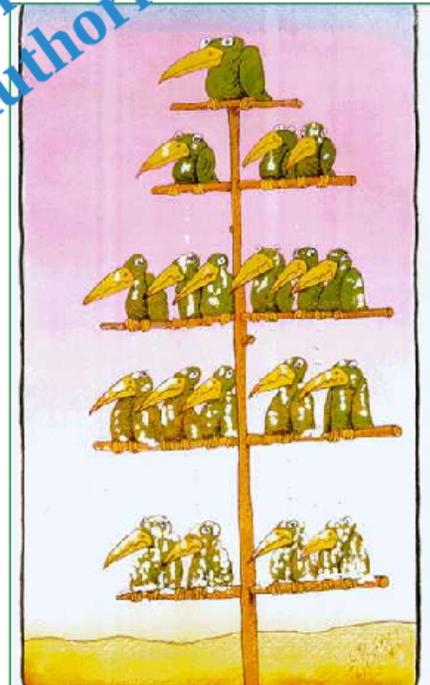
Wealth
Charisma
Expertise
Knowledge
Celebrity
Strength
Influence



Positional
Authority

POWER

manifests in control over
the lives, careers, actions
and decisions of others



Positional
Authority

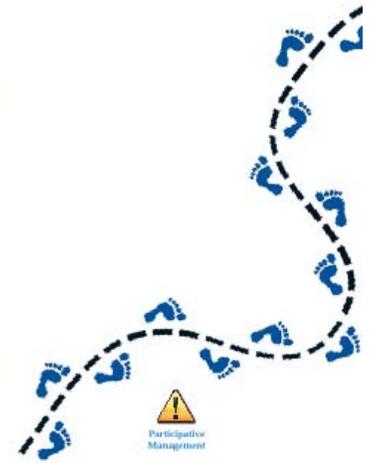


boss has the right
to ignore feedback
(consciously
or unconsciously)

sad



Panda





Participative
Management



Do you see the forest or the trees?



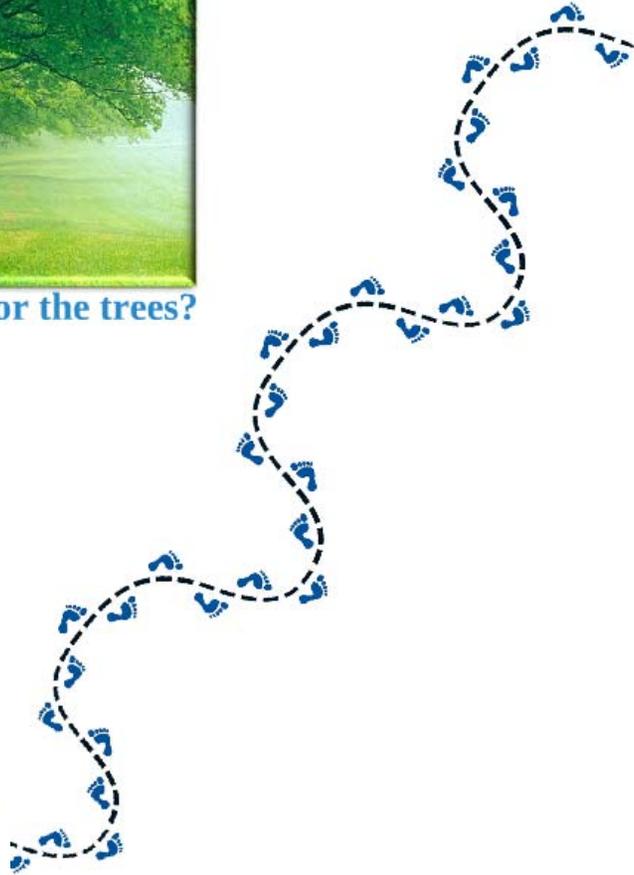
- misplaced feedback
- "power over" dynamic
- linear structure
- one formal channel for communication
- decision making by agreement

- 
- goes to ADR office
 - complacency
 - passive-aggressive behavior
 - kicking the dog
 - etc.



Do you see the forest or the trees?

sad



- misplaced feedback
- "power over" dynamic
- linear structure
- one formal channel for communication
- decision making by agreement

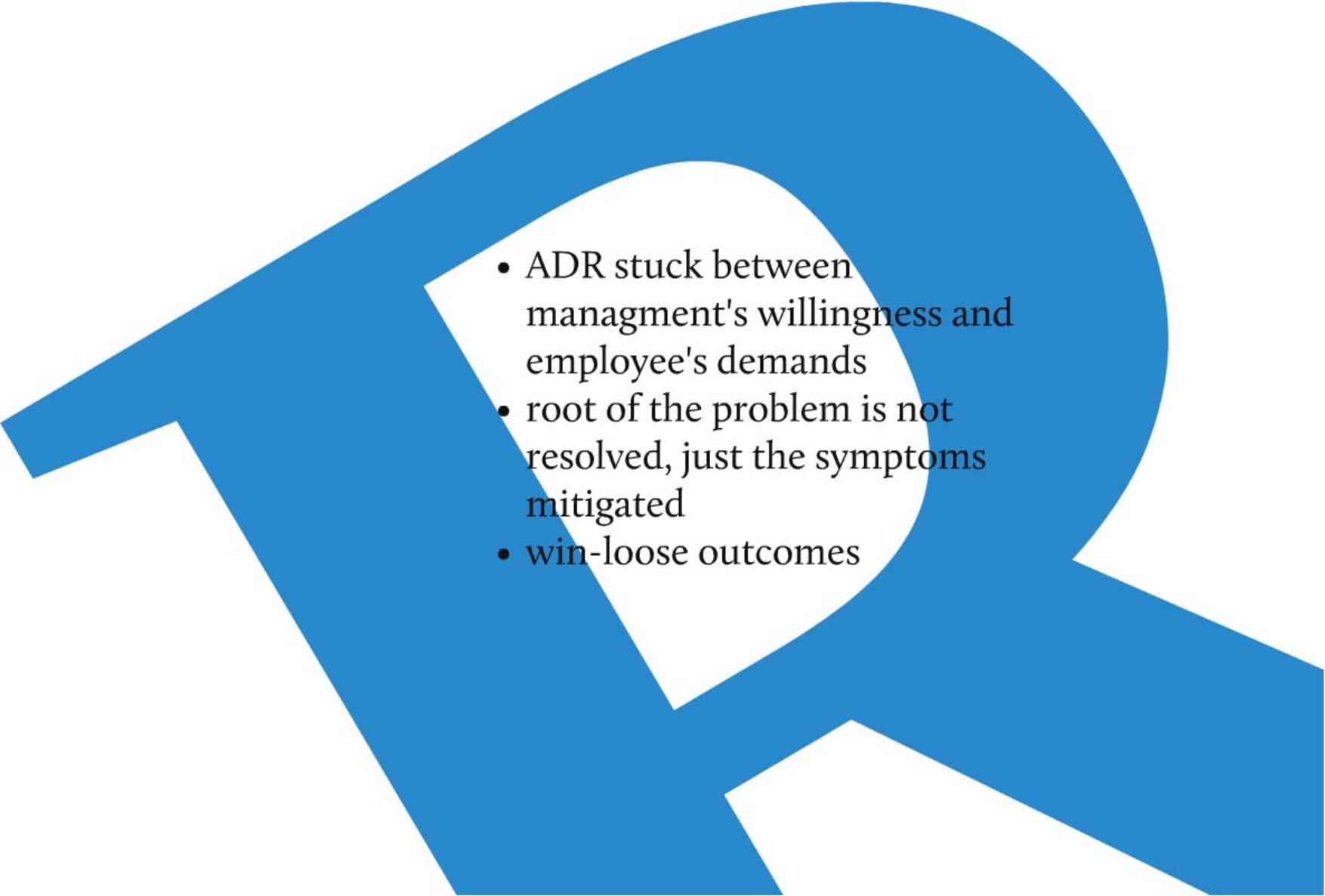
CREATE CONFLICT



Do you see the forest or the trees?



- misplaced feedback
- "power over" dynamic
- linear structure
- one formal channel for communication
- decision making by agreement

- 
- ADR stuck between management's willingness and employee's demands
 - root of the problem is not resolved, just the symptoms mitigated
 - win-loose outcomes



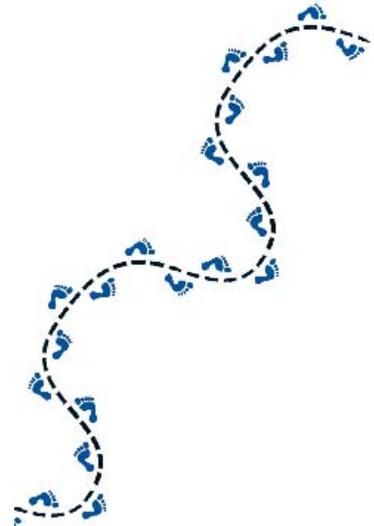
**CREATE
CONFLICT**

**HARNESS
CONFLICT**



- ADR work no longer limited by arrangement of positional authority
- act preventively, not reactively
- adapt faster to changing conditions
- increase productivity and engagement
- creative win-win outcomes

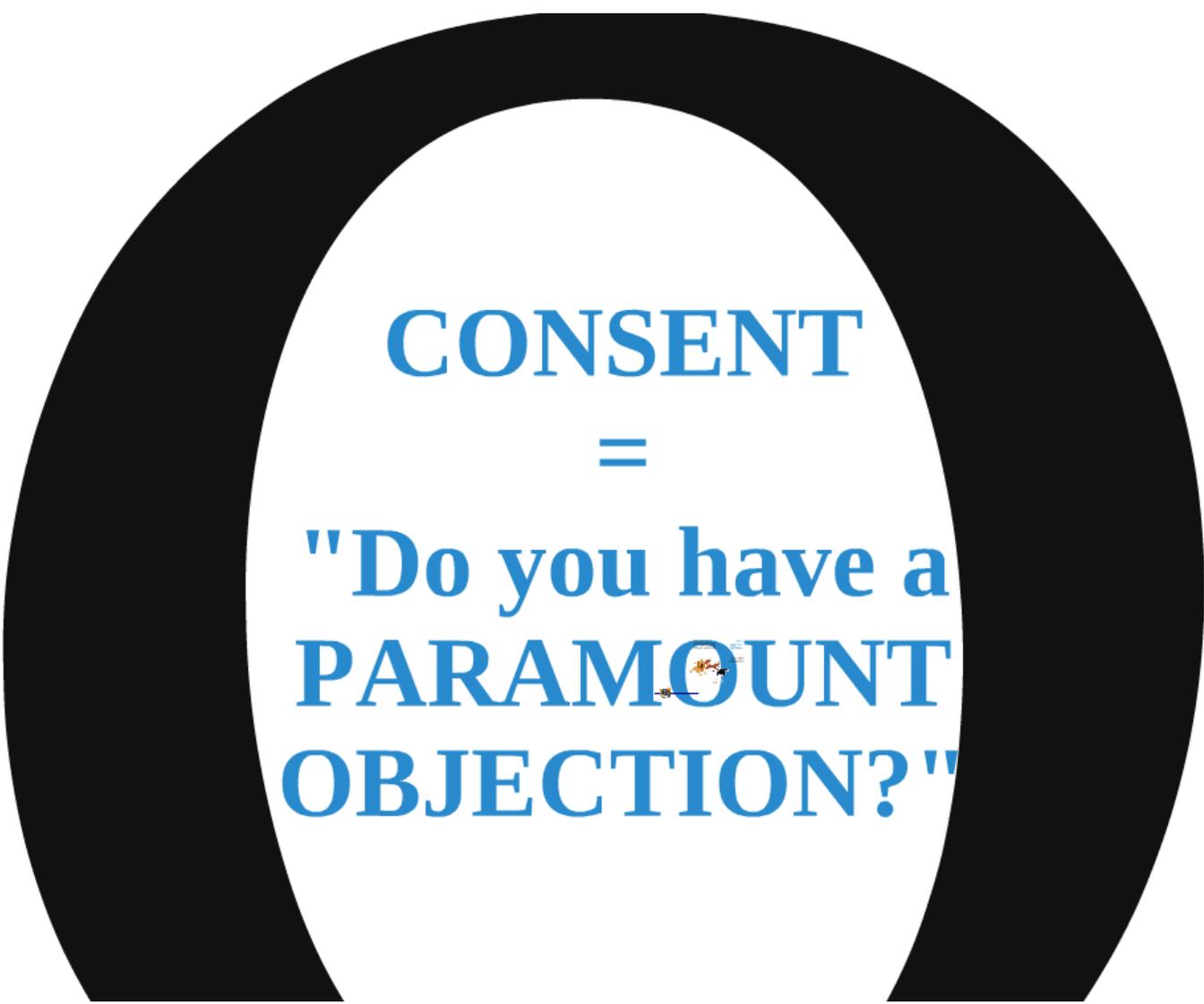
CREATE CONFLICT



- misplaced feedback
- "power over" dynamic
- linear structure
- one formal channel for communication
- decision making by agreement

HARNESS CONFLICT

- structure that always incorporates feedback in thinking of decision maker
- "power with" dynamic
- circle structure
- two formal communication channels
- decision making by consent



CONSENT

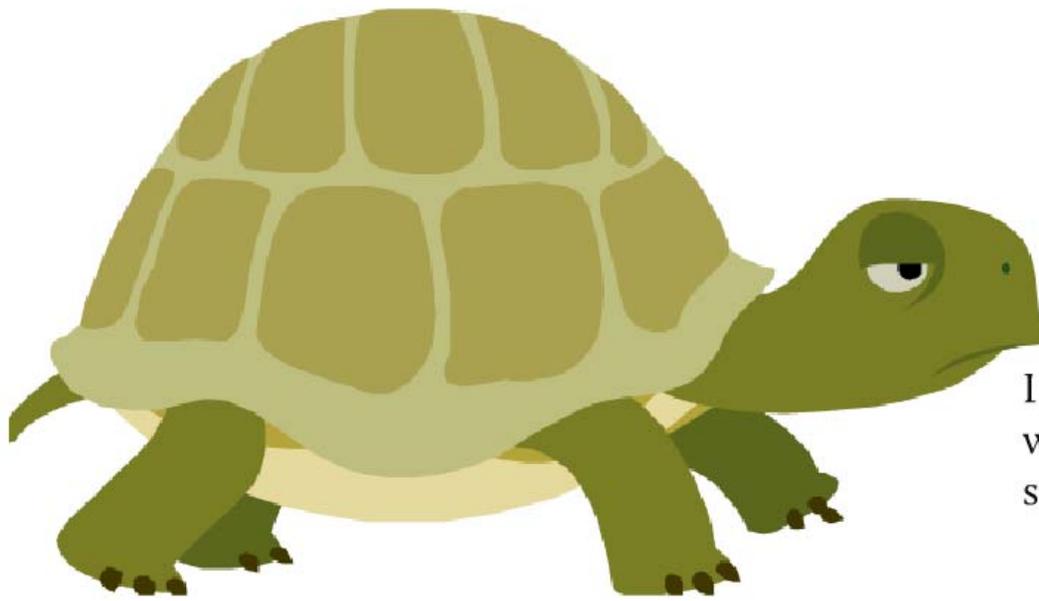
=

**"Do you have a
PARAMOUNT
OBJECTION?"**

AIM

Drive to Mexico for
Tequila and a night of
passionate Salsa dancing.





I object, and
will not go a
step further!



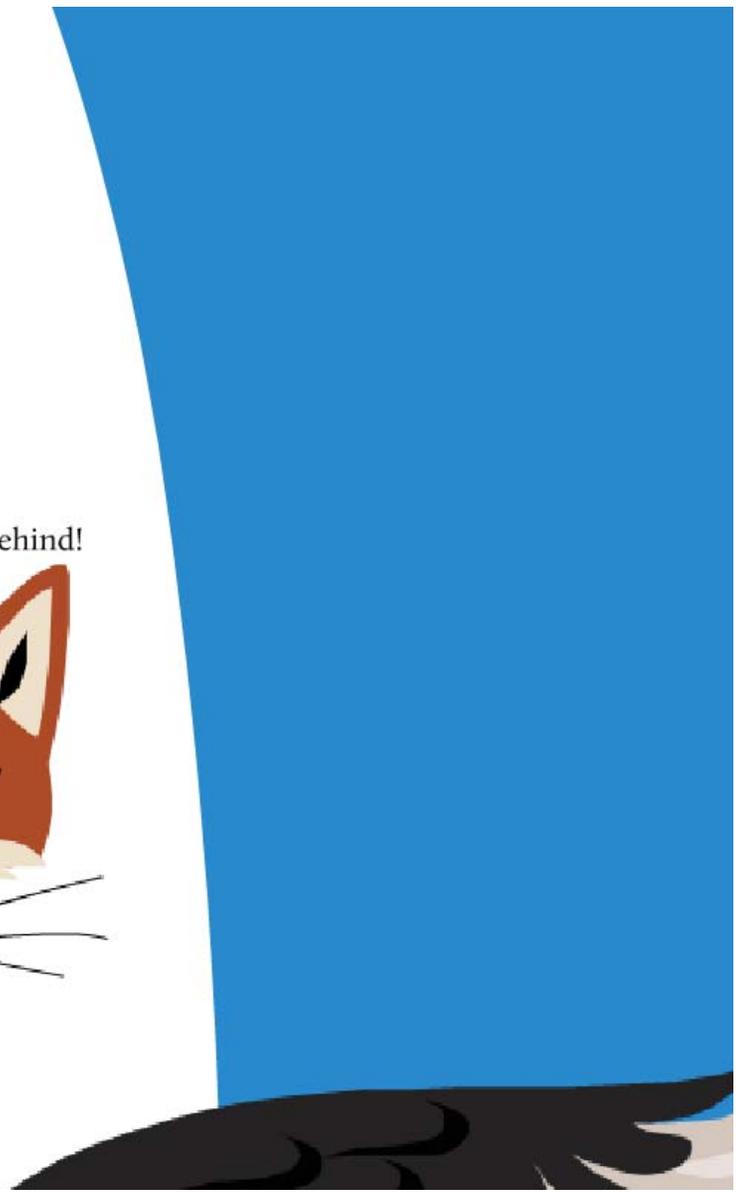


Move, or I'll chew you up!





Let's just leave Turtle behind!









AIM

Drive to Mexico for Tequila and a night of passionate Salsa dancing.

PARAMOUNT OBJECTION

- Identify the reason for objecting.
- Relate the reason to ability of achieving aim.

AIM

Drive to Mexico for
Tequila and a night of
passionate Salsa dancing.

I object to making another step
BECAUSE we have a flat tire! The axel
damage will result in costly repairs and
hazardous driving conditions. We will
NOT make it to Mexico in this vehicle!

PARAMOUNT OBJECTION

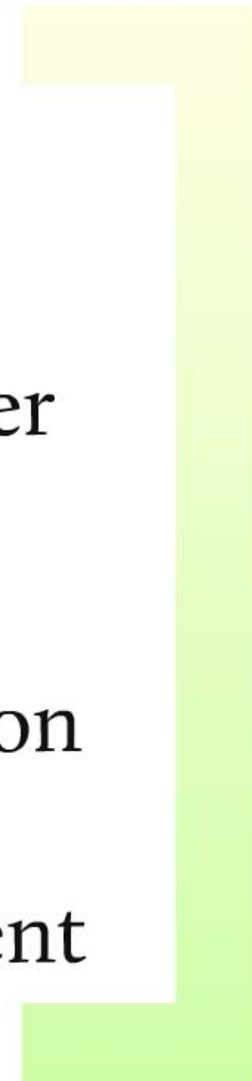
- Identify the reason for objecting.
- Relate the reason to ability of achieving aim.

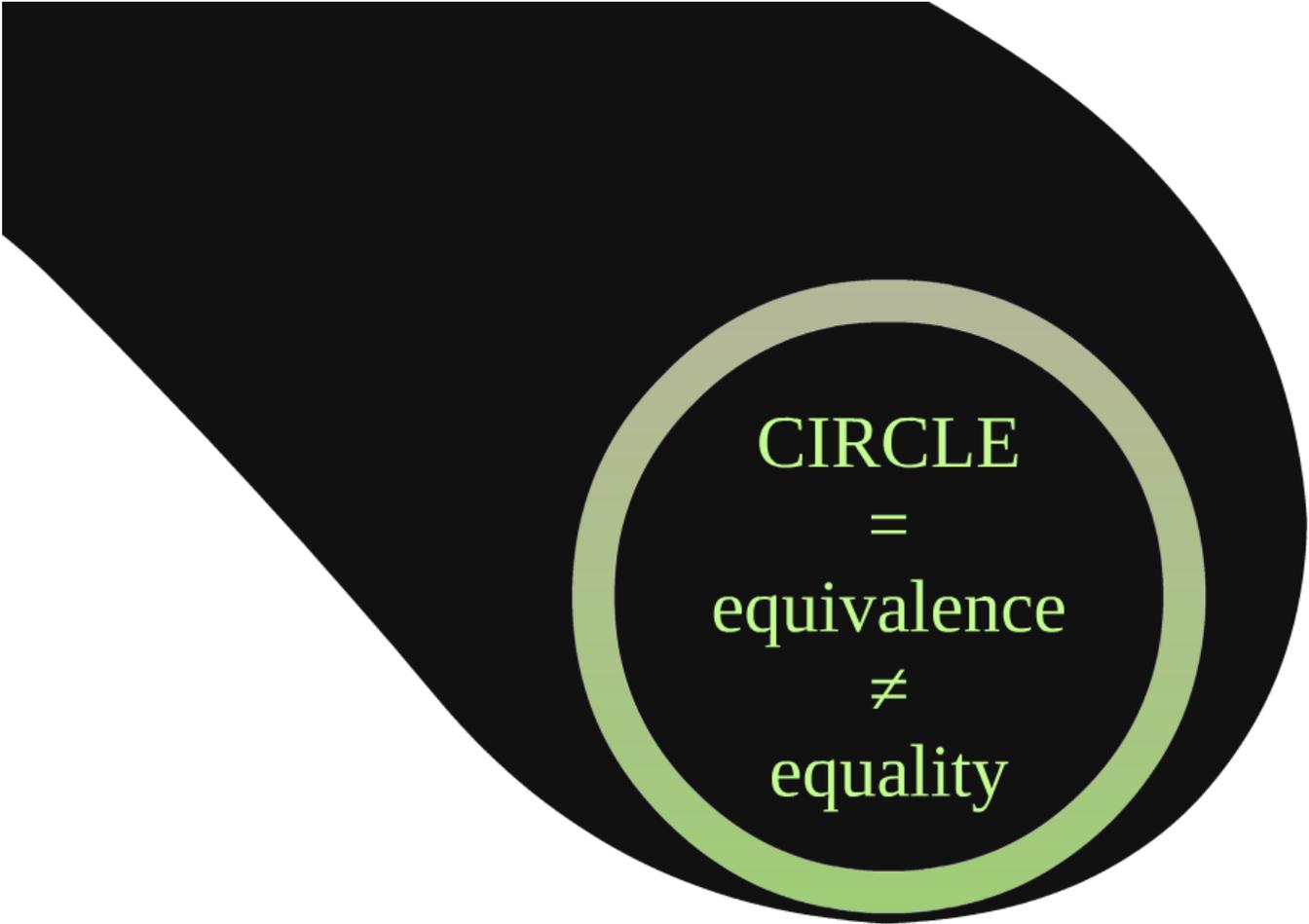
AIM

Drive to Mexico for
Tequilla and a night of
passionate Salsa dancing.



- structure that always incorporates feedback in thinking of decision maker
- "power with" dynamic
- circle structure
- two formal communication channels
- decision making by consent





CIRCLE
=
equivalence
≠
equality

CIRCLE MEETING

- common aim
- every voice is equivalent
- decisions by consent
- focus on policy

CIRCLE
=
equivalence
≠
equality



OPERATIONAL MEETING

- coordinate execution of aims
- decisions by boss
- focus on day-to-day business

**linear structure
is efficient and
maintains
positional
authority**

**circle
structure
is inclusive
and engages
collective
intelligence**

CIRCLE MEETING

- common aim
- every voice is equivalent
- decisions by consent
- focus on policy



circle
structure
is inclusive
and engages
collective
intelligence

CIRCLE MEETING

- common aim
- every voice is equivalent
- decisions by consent
- focus on policy

CIRCLE
=
equivalence
≠
equality





HARNESS CONFLICT

- structure that always incorporates feedback in thinking of decision maker
- "power with" dynamic
- circle structure
- two formal communication channels
- decision making by consent



Dynamic Governance sees the forest AND the tree!



AUDIENCE CUES

enthusiastic
applause

...then...

skeptical
questions