

Heifetz RA, Linsky M. A survival guide for leaders. Harvard Business Review 2002; 80 (6): 65-74.

Heifetz and Linsky's proposition comes in two parts.

The first part involves **looking outward**, with the focus on relating to the organisation and the people in it. The focus of this part is on protecting the leader from those wanting to thwart their initiatives.

The second part involves **looking inward**, at an individual leader's personal needs and vulnerabilities. The focus of this part is on protecting the leader from themselves.

With respect to the **outward** focus, Heifetz and Linsky suggest that it is important to:

- **Operate in and above the fray**  
This means changing from being an observer (of the whole, or a significant part) to being a participant; or being able to (and actually) play the game and to observe it as a whole; or being able to (and actually) hover in a helicopter above the situation you are in and be in the situation; or going from the dance floor to the balcony and back. Although Heifetz and Linsky suggest that these two views are simultaneous, it is probably better to think of them as sequential and iterative. Additionally, it is important to think of them as occurring (pro)actively, and at important strategic moments.
- **Court the uncommitted**  
This means 'recruiting' partners who share your vision, but additionally and importantly, you need to identify the people who are ambivalent about the direction you are setting, show them that you are committed to it, and show them that you truly understand the challenges and costs involved in their 'coming on board'. According to Heifetz and Linsky, you need to 'walk the talk', not 'do as I say, not as I do'; and you need to be able to (publicly) acknowledge the role that you play in the problem, as well as its solution.
- **Cook the conflict**  
This means creating a secure and safe place in which differences can be aired; managing stress at a productive level (not too little and not too much), thus creating reason to change; and using humour and 'chunking' of issues to keep the pressure manageable.
- **Place the work where it belongs**  
This means creating the situation where each person brings solutions to the table for the part of the work that they manage (regardless of how 'small' that work responsibility is).

With respect to the **inward** focus, Heifetz and Linsky suggest that it is important to:

- **Manage your hungers**  
This involves understanding that all people have human needs, such as a desire for control and a desire for importance, and understanding that leaders become vulnerable unless they know their hungers and can manage them effectively.
- **Anchor yourself**  
This involves having a safe harbour each day (whether that is physical or psychological), having a confidant who will be a safe judge of your ideas and actions, and being able to distinguish the personal self from the professional self.