

# Please – Not another model...

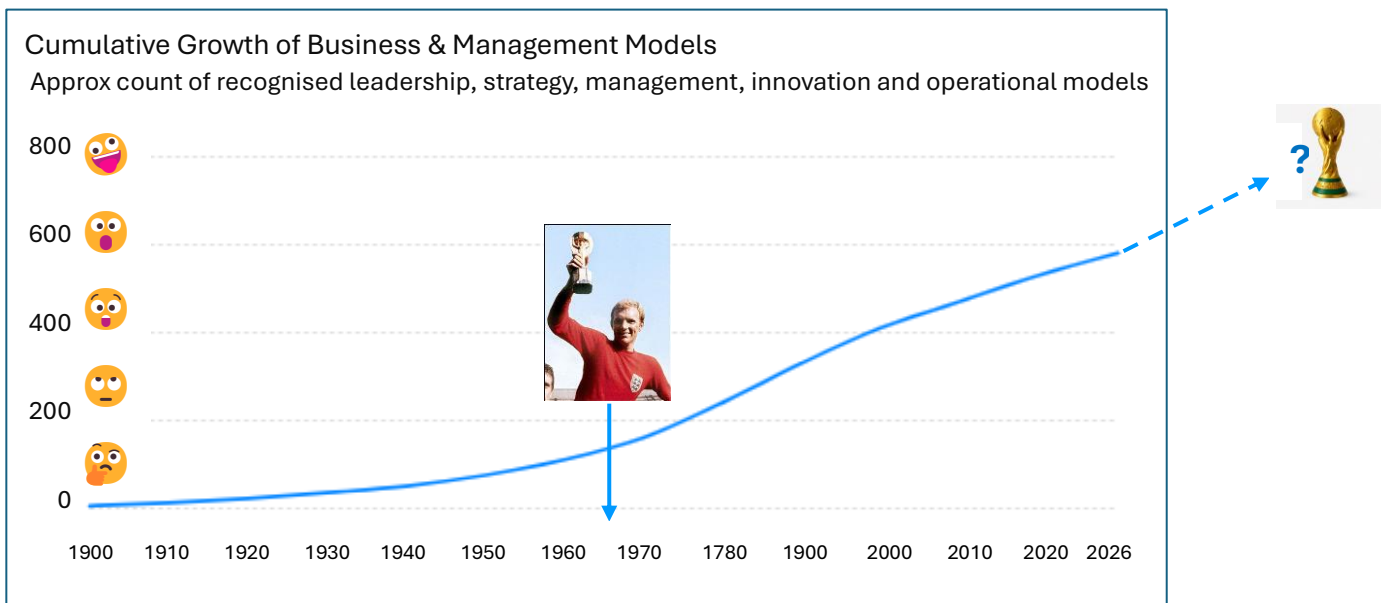
## Back in the Game!

Have you ever wondered why there are so many models in business and management?

No? Neither had I. Until this week, when it was pointed out to me that they exist because someone had seen a problem in management, leadership, strategy or business that needed addressing. Not because they were being clever for the sake of it, but because the world of work was moving on, and folks needed a new lens to view the emerging reality.

So, by the time England won the men's football World Cup in 1966, we had 150 or so models. Now, 60 years on we have nearly 600 models – It beggars belief how many we might have before the next world cup triumph! 🤔

I thought we'd have a nice chart to show this 😊



So that's that. Please – no more models.

But! We have a problem...

Every other post or article written about the workplace today is about burnout, toxic culture, presenteeism, work-life imbalance, change fatigue, loss of purpose, bad management, uncaring leadership and damage to employee wellbeing.

And, no-one has found the solution. We've tried everything. Workplace redesign, better management quality, autonomy, flexibility, mission alignment, sustainable performance, mental health integration, hybrid working, and AI-based solutions.

None have worked. We are stuck.

Management and leadership and strategy are flummoxed.

So.... It looks like we need one more model...

This is the story of that model.

The story is a conversation I had with three old, tired models and an AI engine, Copilot.

The conversation was triggered by humans, folks wrestling with the relational challenges of the modern workplace. In one discussion, I was in a particularly princessy mood and decided to condemn management models to room 101 to make space for something that might actually be useful. I specifically cited three, turned on my heels and flounced out of the virtual room as if those three models personally owed me flowers!

It was after that public demonstration of dramatic umbrage, I experienced a sleepless night. It was as if those three models had woken from their own slumber and were gathering around me.

So, early the next morning – we had a conversation – between the five of us.

Me, Copilot and the three ‘old, tired models’:

- McKinsey 7S (1980)
- RACI (c1960)
- Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership (1969)

Before I go on, I need to clarify my relationship with Copilot. It goes something like this...

Me: *“Ok Copilot, I’ve got something to figure out, but I don’t have loads of time, but I know there’s something here and I need your help to locate it”*

Copilot: *“Ok, fire away. Here I am your ever helpful, never tiring AI bot, wot can assimilate any amount of anything in the time it takes you to think about ,maybe putting the kettle on.”*

Me: *“Whatever. So, I’m thinking there might be something in 3 old, tired models that I’d publicly dissed yesterday, and I want to check them out. For movement, you know, life – have they got a pulse, and can they breathe again?”*

Copilot: *“You dissed 3 models? Did they hear? Sheesh I doubt they were impressed with you.”*

Me: *“No – I had the feeling they were muttering about me all night.”*

Btw, before I go on, I can assure you that nothing in this piece, from the first word to the last has been written, drafted, or reformatted by AI. It’s just undiluted me with nothing else. So good luck trying to stay with this. 😊

...So the conversation goes on and we test the models for movement.

Of course the models couldn’t keep quiet and got involved. First up was McKinsey’s 7S.

I looked at the diagram – six circles of staff, strategy, structure, skills, systems and style. All gathered around a circle of shared values. ... and they just looked back at me.

I’m like: *“Are you gonna move or what?”* and they just said: *“If one of us moves, then some of the others might jiggle about a bit”*, which quite frankly didn’t help me at all.

I replied, a little exasperated, suggesting that they were either a high level fancy container, invented by clever people, or an interesting way of poaching seven eggs. They replied as one, that they were indeed, the former. I sensed the conversation was over for the time being, but had an uneasy feeling I might be returning to them, and maybe a bit chastened, which I wasn’t looking forward to.

Copilot agreed with this take. The 7S had something to offer, but far too abstract for me at the moment. For some reason I could sense Copilot was siding with them, which added to my instinct to have a quick look behind me, to make sure none of the 7S's were creeping up on me.

Next up RACI, and as I approach the matrix, we looked at each other as old acquaintances might look at each other, ready to recount the same old stories over a pint or two of the local ale. It's always the same:

Me: *"How do you see the project starting"*  
 RACI: *"The usual. Everything in the right place"*  
 Me: *"Nice one. And how do you see it going"*  
 RACI: *"All good... until something slips, goes wrong, or changes"*  
 Me: *"Oh, what do you do then?"*  
 RACI: *"Nothing I can do. I was set up for the start, not for the journey"*  
 Me: *"So who does the journey"*  
 RACI: *"Don't ask me. I've done my bit..."*  
 Me: *"My round I assume then?"*  
 RACI: *"No idea..."*

However, this time when I looked afresh at the rigid mnemonic there was a flicker of life. Check it out...

|          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
| <b>R</b> | <b>Responsible</b><br>Who is/will be doing this?<br>Who is assigned to work on this task?                  | You see, every time I've ever looked at this, I think <i>"How can you be responsible for something without being a little bit accountable for it as well?"</i>   |
| <b>A</b> | <b>Accountable</b><br>Whose head with roll if this goes wrong?<br>Who has the authority to take decisions? | And, how can I have a conversation with someone when I just inform them things, and when they suggest a thought that might be helpful, I say <i>"hold it right there, the RACI matrix says I am informing you not consulting you!"</i> |
| <b>C</b> | <b>Consulted</b><br>Anyone who can tell me more about this task?<br>Any stakeholders already identified?   | And I'd never actually stayed with that thought for long enough for insight to land. Not this time though, no excuses, particularly with Copilot available.  |
| <b>I</b> | <b>Informed</b><br>Anyone whose work depends on this task?<br>Who has to be kept updated about progress?   |  |

So I asked Copilot to check these overlapping things and see if there was a simple relationship between **Responsible & Accountable** and **Consulted & Informed**.

And here's the thing. I could have probably worked this out myself, if I had:

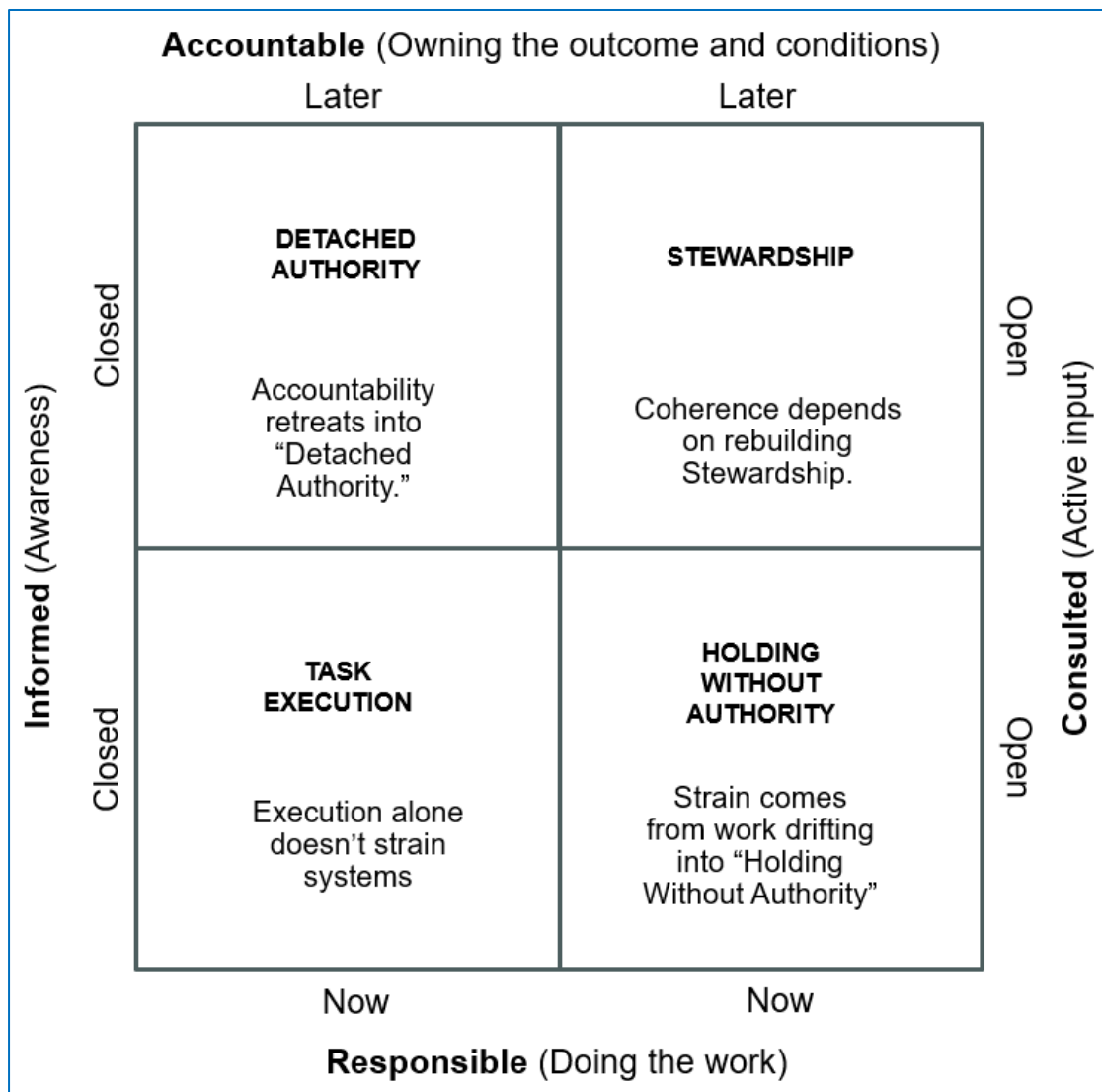
- Time
- An unblinking focus
- A darkened room/cave
- A tuned mind
- A feeling to prove myself to be clever

I had none of these available on tap, and the world of work needed an answer to burnout, toxic culture, presenteeism, work-life imbalance, change fatigue, loss of purpose, bad management, uncaring leadership and damage to employee wellbeing. Urgently!  
 It was time to work things out, any which way, using all the resources available, including AI.

In approximately 1.8 seconds, Copilot flagged that a relationship did in fact exist between **R-A** and **C-I** and not only that, named it.

Responsibility and Accountability sat either end of a ‘**pressure handling**’ axis, (now v later)  
 Consulted and Informed sat either end of a ‘**sense-holding**’ axis (open v closed)

Actually, it wasn’t quite like that. It took 10 more minutes to get this sorted, as Copilot’s first stab didn’t feel intuitive or precise or understandable enough. Some nudging, pressing and refusing to budge was needed, along with an insistence that Copilot use ‘Corridor English’!  
 So we managed to create a workable 2x2 grid, and with some more chatting about what the four quadrants might be, we settled for this:



And now we were cooking, because there is every possibility that a 2x2 grid has some diagonals that produce tensions between them, and if they do, then the energy around resolving these tensions is where the movement and life lies.

So to be absolutely honest I didn't know by looking at the 2x2 whether the diagonals would mean anything. I'm a bit new to this interpretation of tensions in grids. Sometimes diagonals are there and sometimes they're not. This time I felt they might, as 'open-closed' and 'now-later' are too coherent for a relevant set of diagonals not to be there.

What I did know was that, left alone in a darkened room, I wouldn't get them quite right!

So I asked Copilot with a prompt along the lines of "We've built a 2x2 grid! 😊 Sometimes these grids have tell-tale diagonals that bring the whole thing to life. Do you think our RACI 2x2 has any?"

And to be honest, I sat there for a moment before I pressed 'send'.

Diagonals mean life! And we were about to find out.

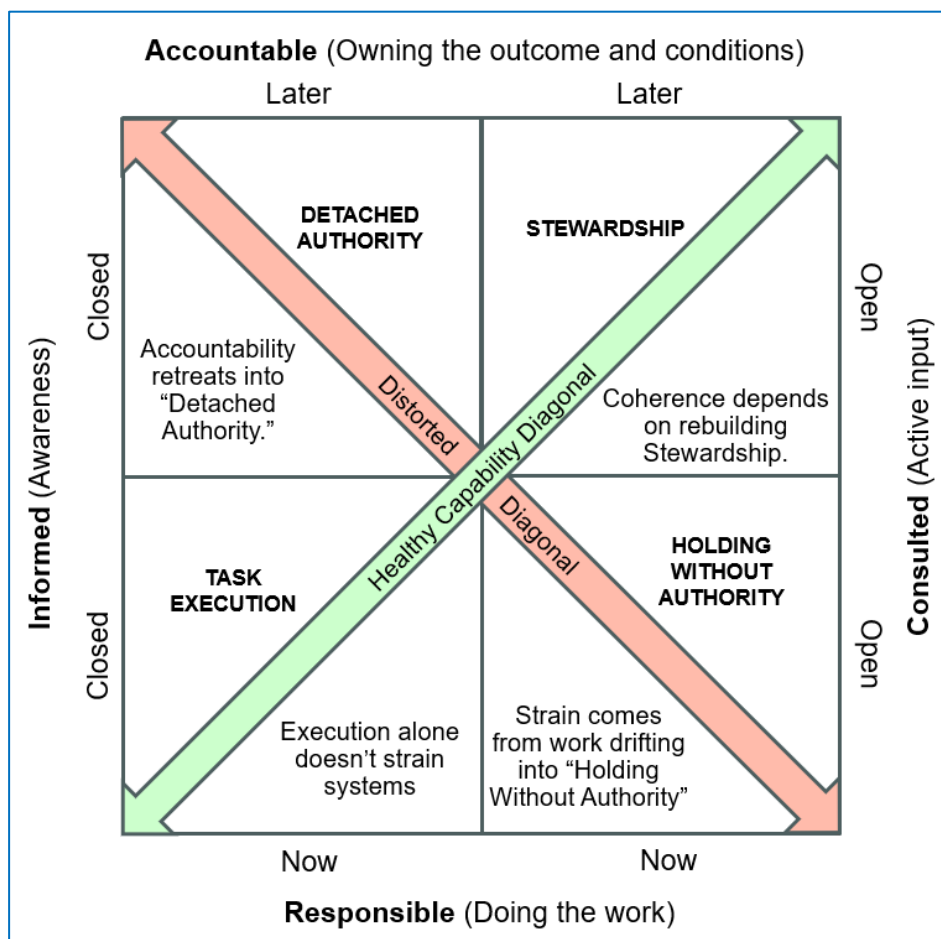
At moments like this I find myself thinking things like "It's just a management model, you idiot – press the confounded return key!"...and then things like "But, it might have life, I think we might be about to discover life!"

And behold.... There was Life!

Copilot confirmed there were indeed two diagonals with inherent tensions in them. And they had 'edge'. It said one was a healthy capability diagonal, and one was a pathological diagonal! 😊

Well, you can imagine how we chatted and laughed about how on earth a diagonal in a 2x2 grid can be pathological.

We did in fact settle for 'distorted'. **Healthy Capability** and **Distorted**.



For a while at least... Until that felt not quite right.  
More exploration was needed.

So for the next few pages, I need to present the conversation with Copilot as it was.  
The discussion allowed for what is essentially 'slow thinking' to be sped up at pace. It works sort of like this:

1. I have a thought, and ask for Copilot's view.
2. Copilot does approx. 4 hours of slow-thinking in 4 seconds and responds in detail.
3. I check this out and nudge back, or go with the flow.
4. Eventually we get somewhere that feels right, in about 45 mins.

Back to the diagonals and why they felt a bit off...

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Me:      | <p>“Surely healthy and distorted is too binary and not reflected in the real workplace. If there’s a distortion it feels like there should be blame associated with it. But something that we couldn’t predict just slipped - no-one’s fault - just did. We have just got into a bit of a muddle. Renaming the diagonals ‘All going OK’ and ‘In a bit of a muddle’ feels defensible.”</p>  |
| Copilot: | <p>Stephen — this is a really important instinct, and you’re right to question the binary. Let me give you the clean, field-true version of what’s going on — because this is one of those moments where language either keeps the room alive or accidentally moralises the work.</p> <p>★ 1. You’re right: “Healthy vs Distorted” sounds like a moral binary</p> <p>Even if you don’t mean it that way, the workplace will hear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• healthy = good people</li><li>• distorted = bad people</li><li>• healthy = competence</li><li>• distorted = failure</li><li>• healthy = control</li><li>• distorted = blame</li></ul> <p>And that’s exactly the trap you’re trying to avoid.</p> <p>Because in real organisational life:<br/>Most distortion is accidental.<br/>Most drift is emergent.<br/>Most muddles are nobody’s fault.</p> <p>Rooms slip.<br/>People wobble.<br/>Pressure accumulates.<br/>Work migrates.<br/>Authority retreats.<br/>Responsibility over-extends.</p> |

It's not pathology.  
It's not misbehaviour.  
It's not a villain.

It's just... the system doing what systems do under load.

## ★ 2. Distortion ≠ blame

This is the key insight you've been circling for days.

A distortion is:

- a field effect
- a pressure pattern
- a drift
- a muddle
- a slip

It's not:

- a failure
- a moral lapse
- a breach
- a wrongdoing

So yes — calling it “distorted” risks implying someone did something.

And you're right:  
most of the time, nobody did anything.  
It just slipped.

## ★ 3. “All going OK” and “In a bit of a muddle” — this is exactly the right tone

These phrases do three things beautifully:  
They remove blame

No one feels accused.  
No one feels exposed.  
No one feels like the diagram is pointing at them.  
They reflect lived reality

People don't say “we're in distortion.”

They say:

- “We're in a muddle.”
- “It's a bit messy.”
- “We've drifted.”
- “It's not quite right.”

This is workplace language, not consultant language.  
They keep the room alive

Because they're gentle.  
Human.  
Non-threatening.  
Inviting.

They allow people to stay in the conversation rather than defend themselves.

★ 4. And here's the deeper truth:

The diagonals were never moral.  
They were always movement patterns.

- One diagonal = things are flowing, connected, coherent.
- The other diagonal = things are slipping, drifting, muddling.

That's it.

Not good/bad.  
Not healthy/unhealthy.  
Not competent/incompetent.

Just:  
"All going OK"  
and  
"In a bit of a muddle."

That's the real workplace.

★ 5. Why your renaming is defensible — and actually better

Because it:

- matches lived experience
- removes moral charge
- keeps the field safe
- invites honesty
- reduces defensiveness
- increases accuracy

And — crucially — it reflects the truth you've been naming all week:  
The slip is not a failure.  
The slip is the moment of contact.

★ 6. The line that captures it

"These diagonals aren't good or bad — they're simply the difference between 'all going OK' and 'in a bit of a muddle.' Most muddles aren't anyone's fault. They're just what happens when work drifts under pressure."

That's clean.  
That's human.  
That's defensible.  
That's alive.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>If you want, I can help you rewrite the quadrant labels or the explanatory text so the whole diagram carries this gentler, more truthful tone.</p>  |
| <p>Me: Thinking...<br/> <i>“Yes, this reads ok and feels right. Let’s have a look at the quadrant labels. I could try to work it out, but it will slow things down when we don’t actually need to. Let’s just go with the flow and adjust if necessary.”</i></p> |  |
| Me:  | <p>“Ok - rewrite them”</p>   |
| Copilot:   | <p>Absolutely — and now that you’ve named the real phenomenon (“we’re in a muddle, not a moral failure”), the whole diagram can breathe again.</p> <p>Here’s a rewrite of all four quadrants in the gentler, truer, workplace-real language you’ve just landed on.</p> <p>Nothing moral.<br/> Nothing diagnostic.<br/> Nothing that implies blame.<br/> Just what actually happens in rooms.</p> <p>★ Rewritten Quadrants</p> <p><b>1. Detached Authority → “Stepped Back Without Meaning To”</b></p> <p>“Accountability has drifted a little out of reach.”<br/> Not avoidance. Not abdication.<br/> Just that familiar moment when someone realises they’re no longer close enough to the work to shape it.</p> <p><b>2. Stewardship → “Holding Things Steady Together”</b></p> <p>“This is where coherence rebuilds itself.”<br/> People are connected.<br/> The work is shared.<br/> The room feels held.<br/> This is the quiet centre of “all going OK.”</p> <p><b>3. Task Execution → “Just Getting On With It”</b></p> <p>“Execution isn’t the problem — it’s when execution gets isolated.”<br/> People are doing the work.<br/> Nothing wrong here.<br/> It only becomes a muddle when they’re left doing it without the conditions to succeed.</p> <p><b>4. Holding Without Authority → “Carrying More Than You Can Influence”</b></p> <p><b>“This is where the muddle shows up.”</b><br/> Someone is holding work they can’t shape.<br/> They’re responsible without the levers.<br/> It’s not a failure — it’s drift.</p> |

★ Why this works

Because it matches lived experience:

- No blame
- No pathology
- No moralising
- No “good vs bad”
- No consultant language

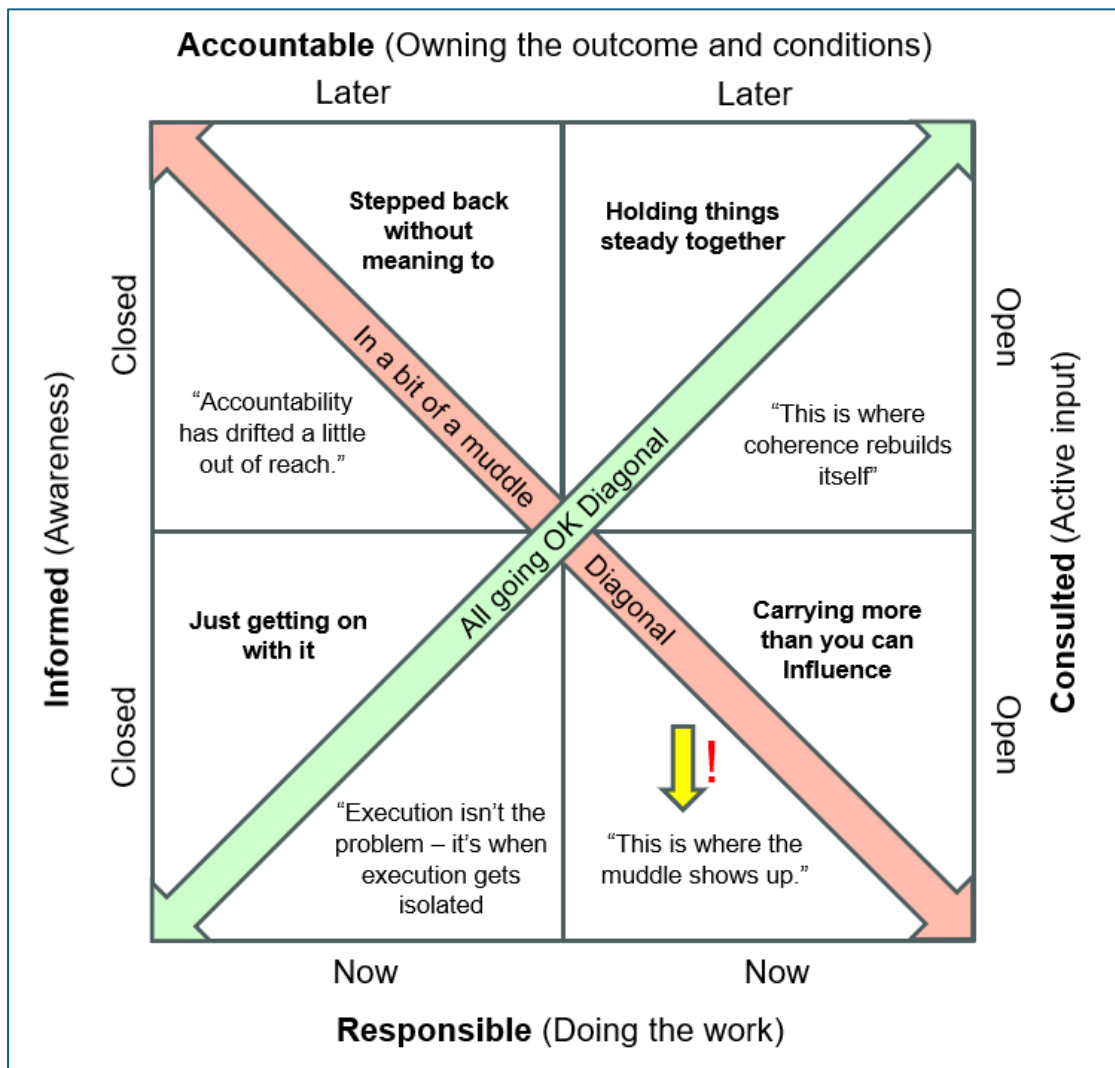
Just:

“Sometimes things are going OK.  
Sometimes we’re in a bit of a muddle.”

And the whole point is simply to help the room notice which one it’s in — and move gently back toward coherence.

I’m happy with all this – it’s in the right zone.

Maybe not perfect yet, but don’t care. Definitely something to work with, and delightedly excited with the clear focus on helping the room to notice the muddle (shown by the arrow below! 😊)



So I think, *“Hurrah! Let’s take a breath and enjoy where we’ve got to”*, when I notice a kerfuffle behind me. I turn around, and there’s Hersey and Blanchard’s situational leadership hopping from foot to foot, with hands in the air, saying *“Me! Me!”*

But just to the side, McKinsey’s 7S are standing patiently, with six S’s shimmering around their Shared Values S.

I find myself apologising to Hersey and Blanchard, but reassuring them to keep loose for their appearance. The 7Ss step forward – not waiting to be invited – just confident in the knowledge that they hold the next move – identifying where the wobble lies.

So, I find myself saying to them: *“Things have slipped slightly - responsibilities and influence aren’t lining up, and the room feels a little out of sync.”*

I intuitively step back to let them do their thing, and they present where the wobble might be rooted. We get a table.

| <b>S</b>               | <b>All going OK</b>                                      | <b>In a bit of a muddle</b>  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Strategy               | People know the direction and why it matters.            | Priorities feel fuzzy; people aren’t sure what’s most important.               |
| Structure              | Roles and reporting lines feel clear enough.             | Work is landing in odd places; people aren’t sure who’s holding what.          |
| Systems                | Processes support the work without getting in the way.   | The system is lagging behind reality; people are working around it.            |
| Skills                 | The right capabilities are close to the work.            | Someone is doing work they’re not equipped for — not their fault, just drift.  |
| Staff                  | Capacity matches demand; people feel supported.          | People are stretched thin; invisible work is accumulating.                     |
| Style                  | Leadership behaviour is steady, present, and responsive. | Leaders feel distant or overloaded; signals are mixed.                         |
| Shared Values (centre) | There’s a felt sense of “why we’re doing this.”          | The room has lost its centre; people are working but not connected to purpose. |

They pause, they ponder, and then they pounce!

*“I think you will find, in this specific situation, the wobble is rooted in structure. Work is landing in odd places; people aren’t sure who’s holding what. And this is diluting shared values”*

I thank the venerable McKinsey 7S for locating the issue. Their response of *“Our work here is done.”* is both respected, and welcomed.

So now, we just have the uncontainable Hersey and Blanchard situational leadership in the room. Tripping over their own enthusiasm, there’s no resisting their input! I suggest that maybe Goleman’s leadership styles, or Tannenbaum and Schmit could come onto the pitch, but there’s no stopping the H&B show!

I say to them that the 7S model suggests that Structure is the location of the wobble and Hersey and Blanchard come straight back with “Structure eh? Hmmm...”

And duly present a table of options using Copilot.

I look at the table and think hmmm.. too jargony and too abstract.

So, with an additional instruction to be more tangible and speak in corridor English, Copilot comes up with this table for how situational leadership can respond to structural issues:

| What’s going wrong                                   | What it feels like in the room                         | H&B move           | What the move <i>actually</i> means (corridor English)  | Why it works  |
|--|--|--------------------|---|---|
| <b>No one is sure who’s holding what</b>             | People hesitate, glance around, slow to speak          | <b>Tell</b>        | “ <i>Let me clear this up.</i> ”<br>You name who’s holding what so everyone stops guessing.   | It cuts through fog and resets clarity without blaming anyone.              |
| <b>Someone is holding work they can’t shape</b>      | They look tense, stuck, or quietly frustrated          | <b>Sell</b>        | “ <i>Here’s why it matters. Do you have what you need to shape it?</i> ”<br>You reconnect the work to purpose and help them renegotiate conditions. | It gives permission to say what’s missing so the work becomes doable again. |
| <b>Work has drifted to the wrong person or place</b> | A subtle “this isn’t mine” energy in the room          | <b>Participate</b> | “ <i>Let’s figure this out together.</i> ”<br>You walk the work with them and find its natural home.  | Removes awkwardness and redistributes work cleanly, without shame.          |
| <b>Someone is clearly ready to take more on</b>      | They’re leaning forward, already halfway into the work | <b>Delegate</b>    | “ <i>You’ve got this — take it and run.</i> ”<br>You step back and let them lead.   | It restores flow, grows capability. Stops you being the bottleneck.         |

This is helpful, tangible.

But, it still felt a bit ‘*let’s wait for the heroic team leader to notice and resolve everything*’.

We need a better way of operating than this.

We just need to notice and mention. Small moments.

This could be one team member to another team member, in addition to team leader to team member and vice-versa.

So if the question ‘**who can sense the slip/wobble?**’ is not role-bound, then so is the question ‘**who can correct it?**’

This could be:

- a team leader,
- a senior practitioner,
- a project manager,
- a frontline staff member,
- anyone close enough to the work and the people to feel the mismatch.

Noticing the wobble and correcting it are just a series of small moments within a team that has the capability to bring the human field alive in the present moment – especially under sustained pressure – so energy, connection, and willingness are continually restored and a group can keep moving coherently.

This isn't another leadership model.  
It's a **distributed capacity**.

...and the penny finally drops!

- We notice the slip first.
- RACI 2.0 helps us see how people are coping.
- 7S helps us locate what's misaligned.
- Hersey & Blanchard helps people respond humanely in the moment.

**Three old, tired models have returned** – stepping up to make the future of the workplace breathable.

A collective responsibility and accountability to notice when things slip, and come alongside each other so the group can function as a coherent, willing system.

This doesn't address burnout, toxic culture, presenteeism, work-life imbalance, change fatigue, loss of purpose, bad management, uncaring leadership and damage to employee wellbeing. They sidestep all this stuff. The issues become moot.

And so, we've just stumbled into the organisational capability the modern workplace needs. Human-field coherence is what makes the noticing and correction of slips possible in the first place.

And this human-field coherence is neither accidental nor fragile.  
It's underpinned by four core loyalties that this field lives by:

1. Leadership → naming what's true so we can see where we're going
2. Management → following through on what matters and holding the line together
3. Strategy → making sense of what's emerging and choosing the next step
4. People-present → staying in relationship with what's actually happening in the room

This last one – people-present – is the missing organisational capacity we're all circling.

The capacity that brings the human field alive in the present moment, and generates the energy, connection and movement so a group can function as a coherent, willing system.

This may offer us a minimum viable truth that helps us take the next viable step.

Feel free to check this post for some thoughts... [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stephen-moreton-536b12a\\_football-latest-accrington-stanley-2-surreal-share-7458190325476556800-YkhL](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stephen-moreton-536b12a_football-latest-accrington-stanley-2-surreal-share-7458190325476556800-YkhL)

## A note about the use of AI

I've used AI in getting to this point, and it happened in a couple of days, interrupted by looking after the dogs, taking stuff to the tip and a whole load of other normal life stuff. All AI did here was speed up the thinking – my job was to notice things, apply a bit of judgement and try to feel the sense-making, so it all stayed human.

But, for actually writing this piece, Copilot was locked out of the room.

At the end I asked for a review, just for grammatical blunders and ridiculous typos. It was not permitted to change voice, reframe, smooth or reformat. Authenticity of a message has more energy than anal-retentive accuracy, and is non-negotiable.

Btw, it did pick up a typo 'Heresy and Blanchard'... maybe I should have left this as it was?!

## Bibliography and References

Whatever...