

LEADER'S GUIDE

That's Not How We Do It Here!

**A Story about How Organizations
Rise and Fall—and Can Rise Again**

by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber



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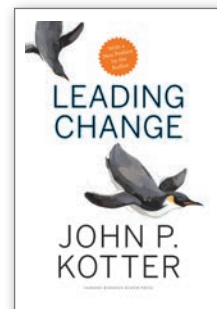
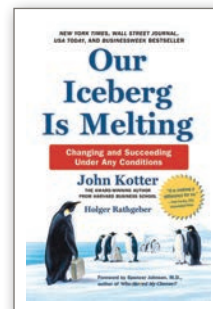
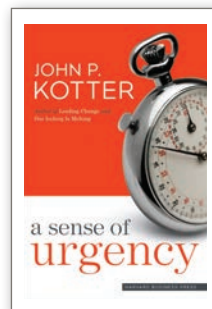
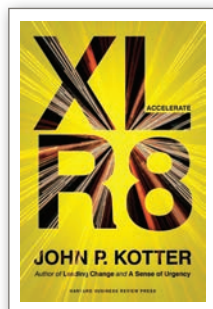
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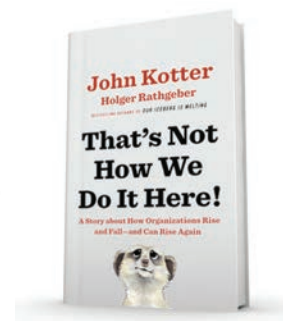


About This Guide

This guide will help teams to engage more deeply with the concepts and practices described in the book, *That's Not How We Do It Here!* by John P. Kotter and Holger Rathgeber.

You'll find this guide covers a lot more than can be discussed in one or two hours. Choose the topics that are most relevant to your organization, and take the time to thoroughly explore those that apply most to your group and your situation.

The questions are not to test the group's understanding of the concepts. You can best use them to help a team recognize and articulate opportunities and barriers that, when addressed, will move your team to action. As a leader, you can help your group be most effective when you can focus the discussion on what we can do, not what we can't.



This Guide Contains:

1. Summary of *That's Not How We Do It Here!*
2. Easy reference list of characters
3. Discussion Questions – Put ideas from the book into action that is relevant to your group
4. Slide Deck – Provides visuals for group discussion
5. Video Links – Hear the ideas straight from Dr. Kotter:
 - a. For an introduction to the fable: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewAAK06JrSQ;>
 - b. For the ideas behind the fable: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc7EVXnF2aI>

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Summary of *That's Not How We Do It Here!*

Once upon a time a clan of meerkats lived in the Kalahari, a region in southern Africa. After years of easy growth, during which the clan establishes a strong hierarchical structure, policies and many best practices and processes for handling life, a drought sharply reduces the clan's resources, and deadly vulture attacks increase.

The Head of Guards for this clan is Nicholas, a senior meerkat with outstanding management skills who is becoming increasingly frustrated. He works harder and harder but as things keep getting worse, the harmony of the clan is shattered. The executive team, led by the Alphas, Mara and Moro, quarrel about possible solutions. Ayo, a lower level guard, comes up with a better way to spot danger but faces a soul-crushing response: "That's not how we do it here!" Others' ideas for coping with the problems are met with a similar response.

So Nadia, a young, bright and adventurous meerkat, hits the road with Ayo, in search of new ways to help her struggling clan.

Along the way, the two friends come across a chaotic clan on the verge of collapse, so they move on.

Then the friends discover a much smaller group that seems to be operating very well although they do things very differently, with much more informality and teamwork than Nadia and Ayo's clan. These meerkats have developed new ways to find food and evade the vultures. Lena, the head of this clan, demonstrates exceptional leadership in guiding her meerkats to achieve their enviable results. She explains how it works to a fascinated Nadia. But not everything in this small clan is as perfect as it seems at first. As the clan experiences success and grows rapidly, the lack of discipline, structure and procedures take a heavy toll.

At last Nadia has the idea to combine the best of both worlds — a large, disciplined, well-managed clan and a small, flexible, innovative clan — and she and Ayo hurry back to their clan to share it. Together with Nicholas they hatch a plan to bring the idea to the senior leaders and others and to elicit permission to experiment. Moro agrees but Mara does not. Still, that is enough for Nicholas, Ayo and Nadia to begin.

Although they face barriers and resistance, the first experiment that Nadia and Nicholas initiate is successful and gradually more and more meerkats come to believe in this new way of operating. Their success ignites ideas from others and these are quickly developed rather than ignored or punished as in the past. A circle of volunteer leaders is established to encourage, guide and motivate even more action and when an experiment is successful, the clan develops ways to bring it into the hierarchy and further develop policies and best practices around it.

The clan thrives again and Nadia, Nicholas and Ayo are viewed as future leaders of the clan.

List of Characters

In Order of Appearance

Matt is the meerkat in the pre-story, mad that his clan was coping badly with the changes. He was a Head of Burrows in his old clan but becomes a rover who later joins Nadia and Ayo on their journey to Lena's clan.

Nadia, called "the creative one," is bright, adventurous, energetic. We first meet her when she becomes a front-line worker in training to care for meerkat puppies. Nadia is the heroine of the story.

Nicholas, "disciplined and reliable," is Nadia's older brother and Head of Guards. He has excellent skills at measuring, staffing, and problem solving. Nicholas explains their clan's hierarchical structure and way of operating to Nadia.

Moro and Mara are the two "Alphas" or leaders of Nadia's clan. They generally only talk to Betas, the next level down in the hierarchy. Mara is the more demanding (and frightening) of the two, while eventually, Moro's thoughtfulness and willingness to listen pays off for the clan.

Ayo is a low level guard working in Nicholas' troop and he is a close friend of Nadia's. Ayo's idea for improving guarding elicits an angry, "That's not how we do it here!" from Nicholas. Ayo decides to leave the clan and Nadia, hoping to discover a clan with better ideas on how to cope, joins him on his journey.

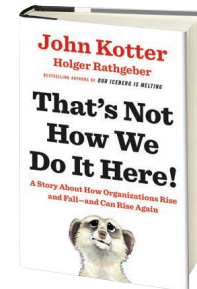
Lena is the leader of the small clan that Nadia, Ayo and Matt discover on their journey. We first encounter Lena as she helps her clan see that the new dangers facing them can also be seen as an opportunity to try new ways of doing things.

Tamu is a shy meerkat in Lena's clan who nonetheless agrees to lead a small group seeking ideas for coping with the new environment. This was the group who successfully implemented the "share the food" and "sustenance in the elephant excrement" ideas.

Pano is a meerkat who had the idea of using stuffed dolls to help sick meerkat pups recover faster and, with the help of other volunteers, makes it happen.



What Are Your Reactions to the Book?



1. In the story, Tamu, in Lena's small clan, offered to lead the discussion about dealing with the consequences of the drought. Is there anyone here in our team who feels passionately about leading us through the rest of this discussion?
2. Reflecting on the story and our own situation, what are the first things that come to mind?

To get your group started, you may prompt them to complete the following sentences:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| a. I am surprised... | e. I feel... |
| b. I like... | f. I think... |
| c. I wonder... | g. I hope... |
| d. I ask myself... | |

Capture key reactions of the group:



What is Our Organization Like?

1. In what ways is our organization like Nadia's clan in the beginning of the book? In what ways is it not like them? (Other than they are meerkats and we are not.)

NOTE TO LEADER: Remind the group that Nadia's clan is the large clan while Lena's is the small clan, despite these depictions.

2. In what ways is our organization like Lena's small clan when Nadia first meets them? In what ways is it not like them?

HINT: It helps to do what Tamu did: "First give me your ideas. Do not debate yet."

	Like Us	Not Like Us
<div>Nadia's Clan</div> 		
<div>Lena's Clan</div> 		

What is Challenging in Our Organization's Environment?

The questions on this page can make for a rich discussion. Make sure to leave time to talk about ideas for coping with problems, not just the problems themselves, so that this does not become just an opportunity for airing complaints!



1. What challenges in our environment might be the equivalent of drought, sandstorms, snakes and vultures?
2. How did Nadia's clan initially respond?

Example: Worked harder at the way they had always done things.

3. How did Lena's clan respond?

Example: Gathered ideas from many members of the group.

4. Which ways of coping with challenges in our environment is more like us? Why?
5. What ideas do we have for coping with the challenges in our environment?

Challenges in environment:

Ideas for coping with challenges:

What is Our Opportunity?

In the story, Lena frames the drought as an opportunity for the clan and invites all to help take advantage of that opportunity.



1. Which do you think has more power to elicit innovation — hazard or opportunity? Why?

Examples of reaction to hazards: Deer-in-the-headlights reaction to threat; people exhausting themselves doing what they have always done only harder; people leaving.

Examples of reaction to opportunity: Excitement, a want-to-help attitude, heightened sense of urgency.

2. How important was it that Lena invite ideas from members of her clan versus creating a plan and asking them to implement it?

Example: She might not have considered all the possibilities, like the food in the elephant dung idea.

3. How can we frame the challenges facing our team as opportunity?
4. How can we get more voices into the conversation and invite ideas from more people?
5. What would success look like if we are able to take full advantage of this opportunity?

Our opportunity is...

We invite more people in and generate more ideas by...

Our success looks like...

How Do We Respond to New Ideas?

In the fable, Nicholas has a very negative reaction to Ayo's idea of climbing the tree to improve guarding: "That's not how we do it here!" In Lena's clan, Tamu and his friends are encouraged by Lena to experiment, learn and improve.



1. Do you know of any people like Ayo and Tamu who want to improve a service, product or process in our organization? How do we learn of their ideas?
2. How are new ideas and ways of doing things received in our organization?
3. Do we have enough meerkats working on innovative solutions to important challenges and opportunities? Do we have too many initiatives overwhelming the organization?
4. What actions could we take that would increase the likelihood that good new ideas could be heard and implemented in our organization?

Capture how ideas are received and acted upon in our organization:

Actions we could take to gather and implement new ideas:

How Do We Bring the Outside In?

After Nicholas fired Ayo from his guarding duties for climbing the tree, Ayo decides to leave. Nadia joins him hoping that together they can find a clan that is coping with the new dangers better than their own.



1. Have you ever left an organization for reasons similar to the ones Nadia and Ayo expressed about leaving their clan? How did you feel just before you decided to leave? Could there be others in our organization feeling that way now?
2. Do we have enough people as explorers looking outside our organization for better ways of doing things? How are they regarded?
3. What would such a learning expedition look like for our team or organization in practice? What would they be looking for? Where would they be looking?

Our “explorers” and how regarded...

Characteristics of a learning expedition for our team or organization...

What our learning expedition would be looking for and where...

Can We Find Opportunities in Hazards?

In Lena’s clan, Tamu’s idea for a new source of food was to farm worms from elephant dung. Later, Ayo took the idea and helped it work in Nadia’s clan.



- 1. What were some of the barriers Tamu and Ayo faced when introducing the idea?

Examples: The concept was unusual and even distasteful; it was a lot of work.

- 2. What were the key ways they were able to overcome those barriers?

Examples: They started small with a few passionate volunteers; Lena (and later Moro) publically supported the effort.

- 3. What could we do if our primary source of success was threatened?
- 4. Which of the clever ways the meerkats overcame their barriers would work for us?

	Barriers	Ways to Overcome
Tamu’s and Ayo’s teams		
Our team		

What Can Be Some Hazards of Size and Complexity?

As Lena's clan experienced more and more success, the clan quickly grew in size and complexity and then, disaster struck when rain destroyed their burrows.



NOTE TO LEADER: This page is especially applicable for newer organizations. For more established organizations, it addresses why we can't just throw out all of the policies and procedures.

1. What were some of the problems Lena's clan experienced as they grew?

Examples: Some meerkats not doing their part; some taking on roles that were unsuitable for their skill levels, with no one to tell them otherwise; lack of capability at all in the clan for some tasks like building and maintaining burrows.

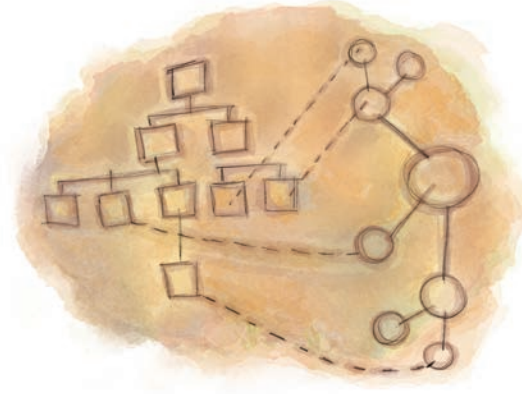
2. Why do you think they were unable to react effectively when the rains came?

Example: They didn't have rules and procedures.

3. Have you seen or experienced examples of organizations struggling for similar reasons?
4. What do you think we need to do to make sure our team or organization functions reliably and efficiently?

Capture key reactions of the group:

Can We Have the Best of Nadia's and Lena's Clans?



1. What was Nadia's idea for avoiding the problems of her original clan as well as those of Lena's clan?

Combine the best of both the hierarchy and the network systems.

2. What are some key characteristics of this way of operating?

Examples: Reliable, efficient, reasonable rules but flexible, able to change quickly.

3. Do you know of any organizations today that look like this?
4. Could we become better and stronger if we operated like this? Why or why not?

Characteristics of organizations like this:

Pros and cons:

How Can Our Initiatives Succeed?

After Nadia returns to her clan and has some success with initiatives around food, a meerkat named Pano brings a toy meerkat to the meeting and explains that it helps injured young meerkats to heal. That prompts others to volunteer for a healing initiative where they successfully tested the effect.



1. How does Pano's initiative differ from a traditional task force or project team?

Examples: Emerged from front-line suggestion vs. top-down directive; staffed by volunteers vs. appointed members; experimental vs. process-driven.

2. What are the main differences between a formal leadership team in a hierarchy and a circle of volunteer leaders?

Examples: Trying an idea requires only enough people willing to try rather than a consensus of top leaders that the idea will work.

Volunteer initiative vs. task force or project team:

Circle of volunteers vs. formal leadership team:

What Barriers Will We Have to Overcome?



Innovation never comes without barriers.

- 1. What barriers did Nadia and Nicholas encounter as they tried to implement Nadia’s vision for a clan that combined the best of two worlds—their original clan that relied on its hierarchy, policies and procedures and Lena’s clan that relied on vision, passion and volunteers experimenting with new ideas?

Examples: Members of the original clan who needed to be convinced had not seen Lena’s clan with their own eyes; Nadia who had direct experience with it was not a senior enough member of the clan to normally speak to the leaders; the need for a senior leader to support the discussion, which Moro eventually did; the question of how to start so vast an undertaking.

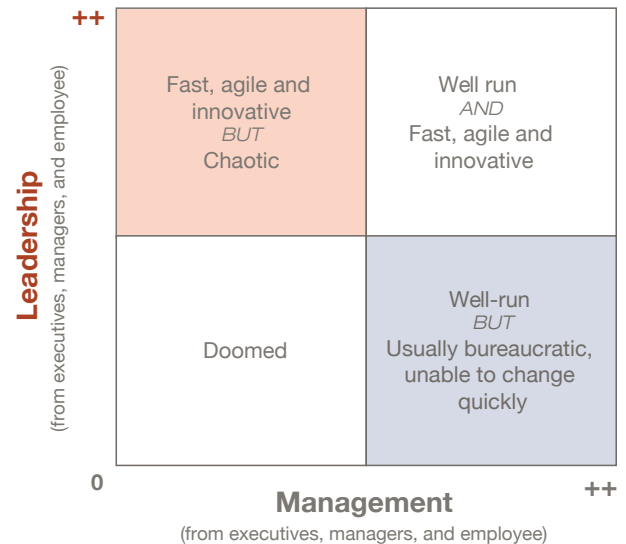
- 2. If we would like our own organization to look and function more like the best of both worlds, what are the key barriers we face and how could we overcome them?
- 3. What would be our equivalent of a bug farm to get us started?

Key Barriers	Ways to Overcome

Our bug farm:

Where Are We Now and Where Do We Want to Be?

After the fable, the authors distinguish between **Leadership** (establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, inspiring, mobilizing people to see opportunities, overcome barriers and leap agilely and innovatively into a prosperous future) and **Management** (planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, measuring, problem-solving, doing what we know how to do exceptionally well in order to produce reliable, efficient results constantly.)



1. Into which quadrant would you put:
 - a. Nadia's clan as we originally encounter it?
 - b. Lena's clan as we originally encounter it?
 - c. The clan Nadia and Ayo met on their journey (that was no longer there on the return)?
 - d. Nadia's clan after they put in place some of the characteristics of Lena's clan?
2. Into which quadrant would you put our organization? Is this where we want to be?
 - a. If yes, what do we need to do to stay here?
 - b. If no, what do we need to do to get where we want to be?
3. Where would you put our competitors?

Capture reactions of the group:

Videos

John Kotter Discusses the Book



For an introduction to the fable, *That's Not How We Do It Here!* Dr. Kotter offers this YouTube video. In this video, Dr. Kotter discusses why he wrote the fable, describes some of the characters and scenes, and discusses why the ideas are important in today's world.



Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewAAK06JrSQ;>

Accelerate! The Evolution of the 21st Century Organization



For a quick introduction to the ideas behind the fable, Dr. Kotter discusses the challenges facing today's organizations due to the limitations of the management-driven hierarchy, and describes the agile, innovation-oriented, network-like structure of nearly all early-stage organizations. He shares how he's observed the power of these two organizational systems working in parallel, to provide the much needed agility and innovation for organizations to not only survive, but to get ahead in the 21st century.



Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc7EVXnF2aI>

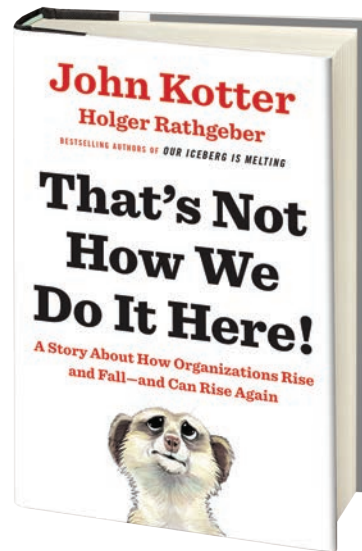
Slide Deck

For Use During Discussions With Your Team

1	<i>That's Not How We Do It Here!</i>
2	List of Characters
3	What Are Your Reactions to the Book?
4	What is Our Organization Like?
5	What is Challenging in Our Organization's Environment?
6	What is Our Opportunity?
7	How Do We Respond to New Ideas?
8	How Do We Bring the Outside In?
9	Can We Find Opportunities in Hazards?
10	What Can Be Some Hazards of Size and Complexity?
11	Can We Have the Best of Nadia's and Lena's Clans?
12	How Can Our Initiatives Succeed?
13	What Barriers Will We Have to Overcome?
14	Where Are We Now and Where Do We Want To Be?
15	Video: John Kotter Discusses the Book
16	Video: Accelerate! The Evolution of the 21st Century Organization

To access an accompanying slide deck please visit: <http://www.kotterinternational.com/bonus-materials-tnhwdih/> and use the password Nadia2016

Slide 1



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THAT'S NOT HOW WE DO IT HERE! | 1

Slide 2

That's Not How We Do It Here!

List of Characters, in Order of Appearance

Who's Who?



Matt – Mad meerkat in the pre-story

Nadia – The heroine of the story

Nicholas – Nadia's brother, Head of Guards

Moro & Mara – “Alphas” of Nadia's clan

Ayo – In trouble for tree climbing

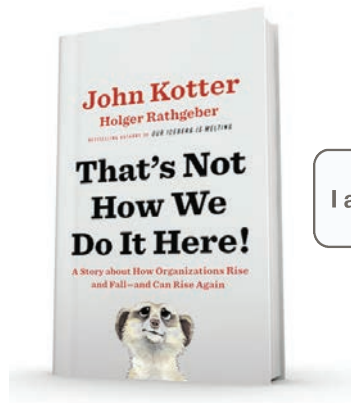
Lena – Leader of the small innovative clan

Tamu – Idea for food in elephant dung

Pano – Stuffed dolls to help sick pups

Slide 3

What Are Your Reactions to the Book?



I am surprised...

I like...

I ask myself...

I wonder...



I think...

I feel...

I hope...

Slide 4

What is Our Organization Like?

	Like Us	Not Like Us
<div><p>Nadia's Clan</p></div>		
<div><p>Lena's Clan</p></div>		

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What is Challenging in Our Organization's Environment?



Vulture

Challenges in our environment...

Ideas for coping with our challenges...

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What is Our Opportunity?



Drought “Opportunity”

Our opportunity is...

We invite more people in and
generate more ideas by...

Our success looks like...

Slide 7

How Do We Respond to New Ideas?



How ideas are received and acted upon in our organization...

Actions we could take...

**“That’s Not How
We Do It Here!”**

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How Do We Bring the Outside In?

The Journey

Our “explorers”...

Our learning expedition...

What we are looking for and where...



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Can We Find Opportunities in Hazards?



Our Ideas

- Barriers to our ideas
- Ways to overcome our barriers

Tamu's and Ayo's Ideas

- Barriers to farming idea
- Ways they overcame

Slide 10

What Can Be Some Hazards of Size and Complexity?

Innovative But...



**Too many processes
and policies**

VS.

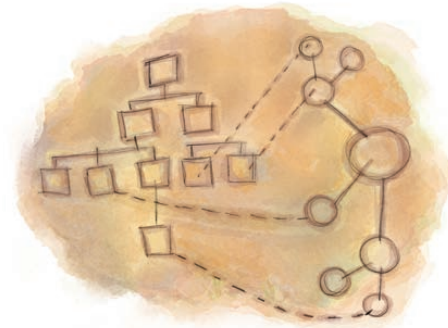
**Too few processes
and policies**

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Can We Have the Best of Nadia's and Lena's Clans?

Characteristics of organization like this...

Pros and cons...



The Best of Both

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How Can Our Initiatives Succeed?



Celebrating Success

**Volunteer initiative vs. task
force or project team...**

**Circle of volunteers vs.
formal leadership team...**

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What Barriers Will We Have to Overcome?

Our bug farm...

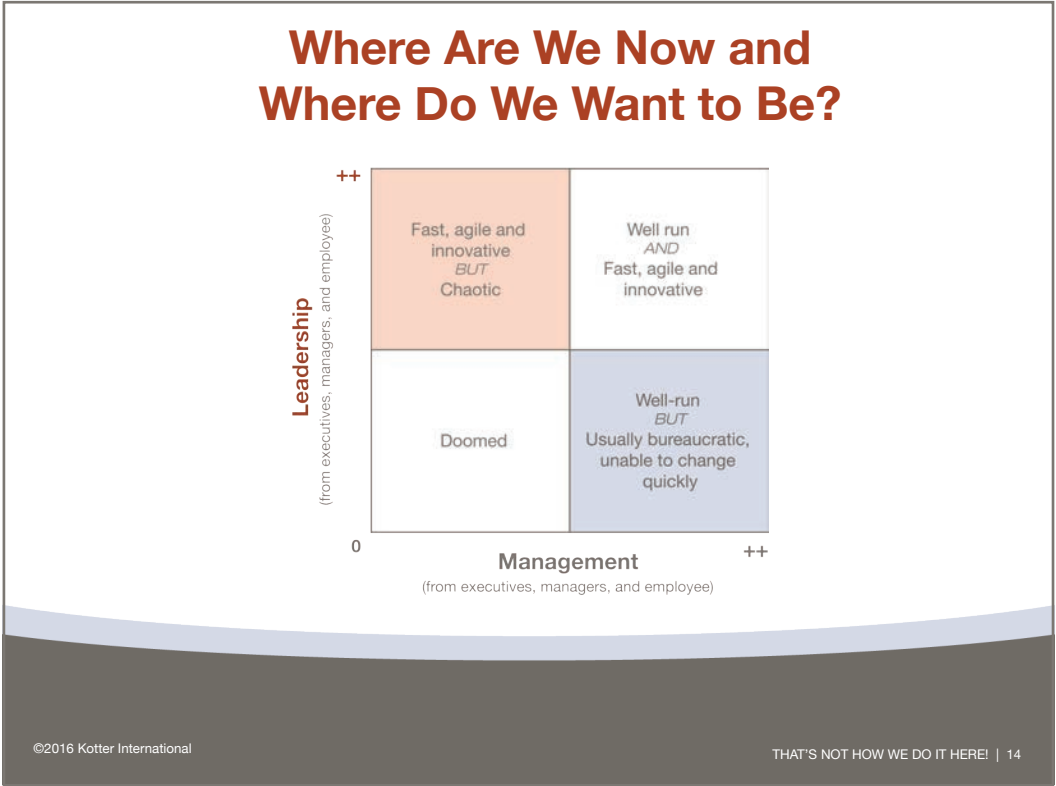
Barriers to our bug farm...

Ways to overcome barriers...



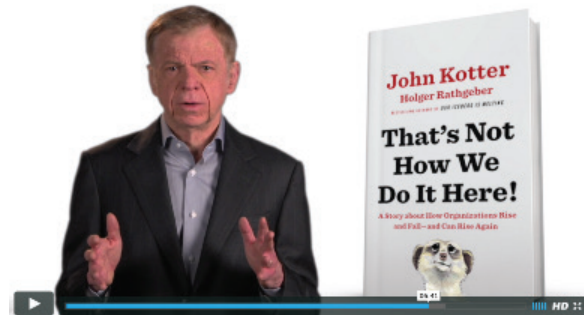
**Innovation never comes
without barriers**

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John Kotter Discusses the Book



Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewAAK06JrSQ;>

Slide 16

Accelerate! The Evolution of the 21st Century Organization



Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc7EVXnF2aI>

