





SOCIETY OF CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY
Overcoming Adversity & Creating Value in the GLOBAL ECONOMY
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Scottsdale, AZ

Assessing and Developing Adaptable Leaders for an Age of Uncertainty



“Institutionally, the ability to be agile enough is the gut issue in leading an organization today.”

James McNerney
CEO 



Assessing and Developing Adaptable Leaders for an Age of Uncertainty



Relax, It's Only Uncertainty
Randall P. White



The Many Faces of Learning Agility
Kenneth P. De Meuse, Guangrong Dai, & George S. Hallenbeck



Assessing Flexible Leadership as a Mastery of Opposites
Rob Kaiser & Darren Overfield

The screenshot shows the Kaplan DeVries Inc. website with a blue header and navigation tabs: Home, Who We Are, What We Do, Research & Development, Publications & Resources, News & Events, and Contact Us. The main content area is divided into three columns:

- Services:**
 - For Individuals:** Helping individual managers become more versatile leaders.
 - For Teams:** Helping leadership teams create synergy, manage conflict, and realize potential.
 - Programs:** Helping groups of managers learn together and become part of each other's ongoing growth as leaders.
 - Leadership Models + Assessment Tools:** Helping organizations create the right leadership culture by articulating what they need in their leaders.
- News & Events:**
 - KDI thought-leaders re-frame the debate about "Leadership Effectiveness" in the *American Psychologist*...
 - New article by KDI researchers explores the "Unspoken Role of Gender in Leadership Evaluation"...
- Join our Mailing List:** Includes a text input field and a submit button.

At the bottom of the page, text reads: "Handouts available at www.kaplandevries.com"

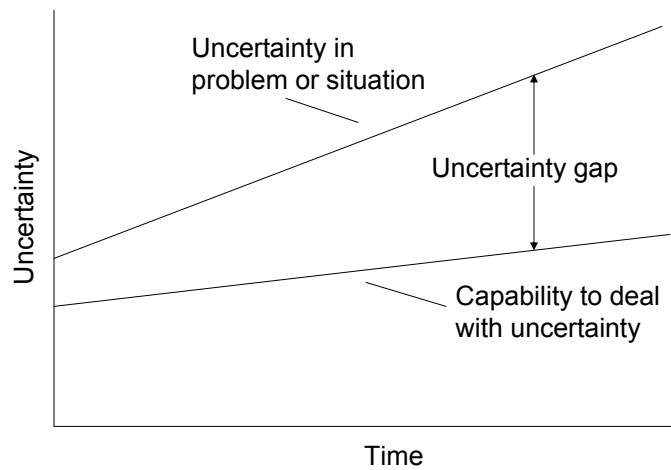


Relax, It's Only Uncertainty

The Case for Higher Order Leadership Skills

Randall P. White, Ph.D.
2009 SCP Mid-Winter Conference

Uncertainty Gap



C-suite executives reveal a high degree of 'being comfortable with discomfort.' They accommodate ambiguity and the uncertainty it brings. They tend to have 'solid cores' that allow them to accept not knowing everything. They tend to have a longer view because they see time as a continuum in which uncertainty will come and go as they progress. Being uncertain doesn't stifle them.

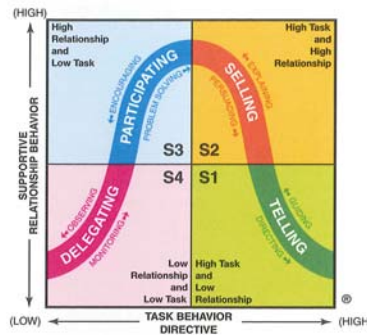
— Liz Mellon, Duke Corporate Education

We have a hypothesis ... that emerging market (non-Western) leaders are actually much better suited to the way the world is going ... The classical leadership way of thinking that many business schools and many corporations used ... assumed a world that was controllable and predictable ... one of the things our leaders have always had to do was deal with masses of ambiguity, enormous amount of change.

— Christine Williams, Standard Bank (South Africa)

Three types of leadership

- **Command and control—leader knows where to go and how to get there**



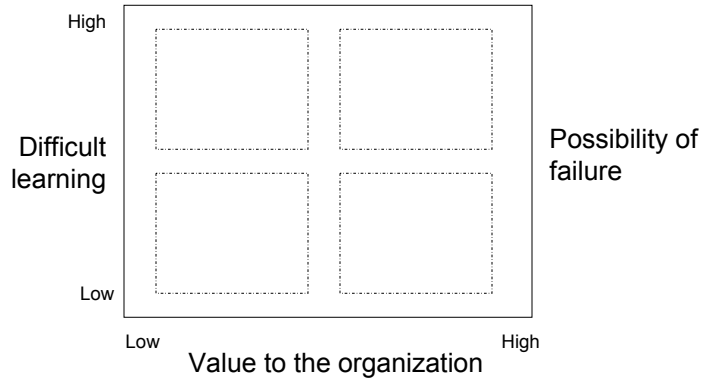
Situational Leadership, Paul Hersey, 1979

Three types of leadership

- **Empowerment— leader knows where to go but not how to get there**
 - Quality
 - Acceptance
 - Time

Three types of leadership

- Learning— leader faces great uncertainty about where to go and thus doesn't know how to get there



Relax, It's Only Uncertainty, Hodgson & White, 2001

Three types of leadership

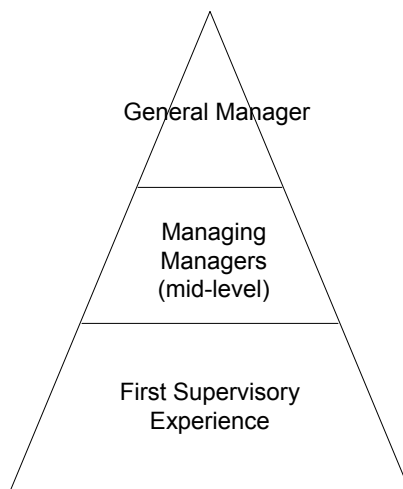
- Command and control—leader knows where to go and how to get there
- Empowerment— leader knows where to go but not how to get there
- Learning— leader faces great uncertainty about where to go and thus doesn't know how to get there

In each case, the leader is teacher versus followers who are learners.

Missing variables in assessing leadership

- Learning agility
- Dealing with ambiguity/uncertainty
- Leadership versatility
- Emotional intelligence
- Tacit knowledge
- Optimism

Leadership leaps



- Be strategic
- Deal with ambiguity
- "I can't do this job all by myself."
- Give up technical mastery
- Direct and motivate creative problem-solving
- People are a problem.

Enablers

- **Mystery seekers**
 - Continually curious people attracted to areas and problems unknown to them
- **Risk tolerators**
 - Make decisions when necessary, despite incomplete information, and will risk failure
- **Future scanners**
 - Either futurists, gazing into the future and imagining the possibilities or drill deep, asking the right question at the right time

Enablers

- **Tenacious challengers**
 - Motivated when told that something can't be done or has never been tried
- **Invigorators**
 - Inject enthusiasm and spontaneity into the work and invigorate the team
- **Flexible adjusters**
 - Make on-line adjustments, recognizing the situation has changed or can sell change to colleagues

Enablers

- **Simplifiers**
 - Convey ideas and information simply yet completely. They can be essence detectors who get to the core of the description, clarifiers who ruthlessly eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty, or interpreters who use symbols or images to communicate crisply and easily
- **Focusers**
 - Keep an eye on a few specific objectives, no matter what else may be going on

Restrainers

- **Trouble with transitions**
- **Not motivated by work**
- **Conflict avoiders**
- **Muddy thinkers**
- **Complex communicators**
- **Detail junkies**
- **Narrow**
- **Tethered to the past**

Alpha Coefficients

Motivated by Mysteries	.69
Risk Tolerant	.76
Scans Ahead	.83
Tackles Tough Issues	.78
Creates Excitement	.85
Flexible	.78
Simplifier	.88
Focus	.73
Restrainers	.86

The Ambiguity Architect User's Manual, White, Hodgson, Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999

	Self Rating			Boss			Others			
	Δ	Perf	Pot	Δ	Perf	Pot	Δ	Perf	Pot	
Motivated by Mystery	.46 ¹	.26 ¹	.33 ¹	.46 ³	.20	.40 ³	.42 ¹	.36 ¹	.30 ¹	
Risk Tolerant	.37 ¹	.22 ²	.25 ²	.40 ³	.45 ³	.40 ³	.30 ¹	.23 ¹	.24 ¹	
Scans Ahead	.50 ¹	.24 ²	.25 ²	.58 ²	.27	.37	.45 ¹	.33 ¹	.29 ¹	
Tackles Tough Issues	.51 ¹	.46 ¹	.46 ¹	.57 ²	.50 ²	.67 ¹	.50 ¹	.48 ¹	.40 ¹	
Creates Excitement	.40 ¹	.27 ¹	.25 ²	.35	.19	.37	.38 ¹	.40 ¹	.36 ¹	
Flexible	.29 ¹	.14	.21 ¹	.08	.00	.14	.38 ¹	.40 ¹	.33 ¹	
Simplifier	.39 ¹	.35 ¹	.30 ¹	.66 ¹	.38	.61 ¹	.47 ¹	.43 ¹	.47 ¹	
Focus	.27 ¹	.26 ¹	.24 ²	.15	.29	.10	.32 ¹	.42 ¹	.33 ¹	
Eight Restrainers	.45 ¹	.46 ¹	.38 ¹	.65 ¹	.25	.59 ²	.53 ¹	.54 ¹	.45 ¹	
		n=156			n=25			n=310		

1 p<.001

2 p<.01

3 p<.05

The Ambiguity Architect User's Manual, White, Hodgson, Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999