

Press Release:

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In times of organizational chaos, we look to leaders to guide us with focus, clarity, and calmness. From a global pandemic, economic crisis, and deepening socio-political discourse leaders have faced a constant barrage of chaos and uncertainty. How does a leader deal with turbulent issues in today's rapid fast-changing environment? How does a leader apply one's unique leadership composition to the organizational uncertainty and chaos of the day? How do you lead oneself during times of uncertain and complex public and private sector situations? How does a leader lead with little to no authority in a fluid and unpredictable context? Research shows that leading and leadership in today's organizations where events are disruptive, uncertain, and fluid require new approaches and a different mindset. This editorial scholarship explores not only theoretical leadership constructs and experiences of public and private servants in uncertain and complex environments but presents innovative leadership frameworks for future leaders. Given the rapid technological changes and impact of COVID 19 on the operational environment, this research is urgently needed for business and leadership scholar-practitioners to understand how organizational chaos from uncertain and complex situations is a gift.

The fall of the Soviet Union created an international political and security vacuum comprised of wicked challenges in the political and military-strategic arena. Transnational business, academic, military, and peace development leaders face unparalleled challenges such as food insecurity, political unrest, migration, and refugee issues, unemployment, ideological discourse, and global warming. In today's rapid pace of change, leaders struggle with making sense of the constant fluid and turbulent environment. The reason is that as technology reconfigures the operational environment, the ecosystem becomes volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) and what we know about leadership theory and development may no longer be effective. Noteworthy, strategic leaders are no longer needing to implement change management initiatives because they are living under constant organizational change and unpredictability. For that reason, we suggest that leaders in a VUCA setting develop the capacity to lead themselves in times of complexity and uncertainty. The thematic argument was that if one cannot lead

themselves how can one lead others. Campbell (2019) argues that "the key to knowing others' emotional terrain is an intimate familiarity with your own. Personal transformation is at the heart of self-leadership" (p. 61).

In the past, organization leaders controlled the rate of change and rested on certainty and predictability in creating strategic plans and courses of action with specific outcomes. Frequently within organizations, strategic planning documents are composed of defined operations, actions, and activities for tactical, organizational, and strategic leaders. Thus, rapid technological changes have transformed the business and political environment resulting in chaos, unpredictability, uncertainty, and unmanageable situations. In an unpredictable and fluid context, consider the following examples such as the volume and speed financial market are impacted by cryptocurrency, the uncertain effect COVID 19 presented for public and private sector leaders, the complexity of navigating interconnected demands from multiple directions, and how one factor influences another, and lack of clarity from unknown variables as leaders make decisions. Thus, the constant pressure to lead through disruptions while being uncertain about the outcomes is one of the hallmarks of leading an organization in a VUCA world. These examples indicate that leading change in an unpredictable, chaotic, and complex environment is one of the most complicated leadership challenges at the strategic and organizational levels. One could argue the conditions of uncertainty, chaos, and complexity within public, private, and academic sectors will intensify. That said, the VUCA landscape is here to stay. For that reason, leaders in a VUCA environment need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable as information rapidly changes. Developing the capacity to lead oneself in times of organizational chaos and unpredictability is a critical ingredient in solving organizational challenges.

In today's complex and uncertain operational and strategic environment, a leadership challenge frequently overlooked to effectively lead oneself is drawing on one's values and beliefs that guide their decisions and actions as well as developing self-awareness through neuroscience, mindfulness, self-care techniques, and self-analysis as a leadership practice in VUCA environment. Therefore, the contributors proposed an expanded set of competencies in support of new leadership approaches needed to navigate through uncertainty and organizational chaos. Understanding the hardest person to lead is oneself and the need to developing oneself as a leader is a key component to effective leadership in a VUCA environment. The reason is that leading oneself is not easy and no one can work for us. For that reason, self-analysis is such touch work that most leaders avoid it. Leaders rather try to inspire or control the behavior of others than face the rigorous work of self-reflection and inner growth. As a result, fewer than half of leaders feel they are effective as organizations undergo rapid transformation. Even worse, emerging leaders aren't getting development in the skills they need most urgently.

During times of organizational uncertainty and chaos an organizational leader's self-awareness, self-regulation, and courage are foundational ingredients of leading oneself through periods of chaos. One of the common themes the contributors noted is the best way to increase one's self-awareness is through daily reflection through personal journaling, introspection of one's emotions and feelings, solitude, and self-appraisal during times of personal challenges. The second common theme identified is self-regulating and impulse control of one's emotional state as particularly important in leading oneself under stressful, chaotic, complex, and uncontrollable events. The reason is that understanding and identifying one's emotional trigger points through

self-awareness and self-regulation enables tactical and operational leadership to develop the sensemaking, authenticity, and mindset capabilities that are needed to lead oneself during times of chaos. (Campbell, 2019; Goleman et al., 2019). The third common theme identified is that traditional leadership models do not adequately address the leadership challenges in an environment that is fluid, uncertain, and chaotic. As the theoretical leadership approaches of the past are ineffective, an emerging paradigm shift with new ways of thinking about leadership beginning with leading oneself is required particularly within a VUCA context (Van Zyl & Campbell, 2019). The last thematic point noted is when leaders persevere despite overwhelming opposition or discouragement; when leaders manage to not only hold their ego at bay and emotional control during times of unpredictability and uncertainty but stay focused on the mission rather than being distracted by other people's agendas. In essence, leading oneself requires continuous and intentional self-reflection and self-introspection to bridge the gap between who you are as a leader with who you want to be as a leader.

Each section interlinks not only the leadership challenges with theory but leadership competency framework and applicational approaches that prominent public, private, academic, and national leaders experienced from leading in an uncertain and complex environment. Six sections address the most prominent skills and behaviors along with recommendations of leading oneself in uncertain, chaotic, and complex environments.

Section one provides a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the challenges landscape leaders face in leading organizations in times of chaos. Here, several theoretical leadership methodologies examine human-oriented leadership approaches to leading self and leading others in a VUCA environment.

Section two focus on emerging leadership challenges within the private sector as well as innovative leadership frameworks of leading oneself in a VUCA operational environment. This section discusses the critical nature of disentangling the communication pathways in a VUCA context to decentralize executive power, authority, and decision-making authority down throughout the organization.

Section three center on an in-depth discussion on the leadership challenges academic institutions to encounter and mitigation strategies within a VUCA context. The demands of building future interdisciplinary leaders within a fiscally constrained setting are one of the most significant leadership challenges academic institutions face. Therefore, the capability of academic leaders to lead themselves play a critical role in developing the skills for future generations of leaders to cope during turbulent times.

Section four addresses the conceptual and experiential challenges of leading oneself in the public sector environment. Here, an in-depth discussion on the complexity that governmental institutions face as political leaders navigate the socio-ethnic uncertainty and unpredictability. That said, linking leadership theory with the leadership practices of Gandhi, Mandela, Gupta, and Mbeki provides a model for public servants to build one's character toward developing the skills necessary to lead oneself in navigating through a VUCA environment.

The fifth section converges conflict resolution and peace development with the impact of leading oneself in the politically unpredictable, volatile, and complex environment. Several case studies from President Mandela to Iraqi military commanders illustrated the need for and challenges of developing oneself as a leader no matter what the circumstances. Thus, an in-depth examination revealed that leading oneself encompasses the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions as well as techniques these leaders develop to build the skills toward leading oneself. Essentially, these techniques provided leaders the introspective courage to develop emotional control toward mediating discourse between parties.

Section six address the outcomes as well as proposes several innovative leading oneself framework with recommended competencies to assist scholar-practitioners of leading in this new reality leaders to face in an uncertain, chaotic and complex environment. The innovative leadership frameworks such as a three-layered strategic leadership framework as well as new knowledge, skills, and competencies recommendations to lead oneself in a VUCA world. Essentially, the leadership frameworks with recommended knowledge, skills, and competencies are designed to reveal the gift of chaos within an uncertain, chaotic and complex environment.

Conclusion

This book affords the reader an excellent accumulation of the themes throughout previous sections and presents several innovative leadership frameworks and recommendations for leadership scholar-practitioners navigating through the socio-economic, political, and academic chaos. I was most impressed with the presentation of an innovative three-layer strategic leadership framework with competencies to assist leaders in this new reality of leading under chaos and unpredictability.

This is a must-read for anyone that is not only involved in leadership but desires to understand how to lead oneself to better lead others in times of chaos, uncertainty, and complexity. What makes this book so unique is that it contributes not only to the scientific body of knowledge in leadership in a systematic way but also to tactical, organizational, and strategic leadership and talent development practitioners.