

Leading & Learning

Creating Organizations of the Future – Now.

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intera**works**

Challenge



Unprecedented Change

Social, economic, environmental, political systems, and advancing technology demand accelerated learning models, resilient leaders, and organizational flexibility.

Shift
1



Let Go

As the world gets more complex, we will have to adapt from our familiar cause and effect “left-brain” thinking to more innovative and creative “whole-brain” thinking.

Shift
2



Lean In

Leaders faced with this complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty must facilitate and coordinate communication to draw on the collective intelligence of the group.

Creating Organizations of the Future

Shift
3



Embrace Change

A leader’s ability to manage ecosystems, human responses, and exercise judgement in decision-making is key to an organization’s success.

Solution



What can you do now?

- Develop an Inclusive Leadership
- Generate open flows of information and flexible hierarchies
- Create a Learning Organization
- Practice a Growth Mindset

Leading and Learning

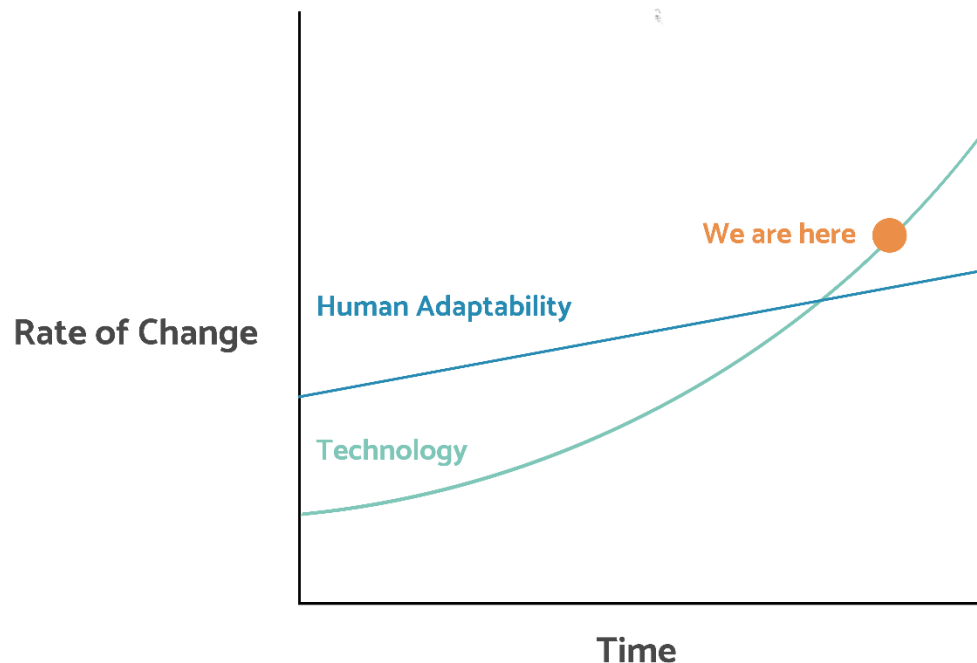
Creating Organizations of the Future – Now.

Introduction

Today we stand on the edge of a new reality—an unknown world rife with complexity, ambiguity, and even chaos. Confronting the future’s uncertainty can leave us feeling frustrated and devoid of resources. As the rate of change continues to soar, scientific trends reveal the need for new organizational approaches—especially in how we lead and learn.

Problem

Worldwide the Learning and Development field is experiencing massive transformation at an unprecedented pace. Social, economic, environmental, and political systems, and the blistering rate at which technology is advancing, add to the complex stew within which the world must navigate.



Google X's Astro Teller's diagram shows human adaptability is unable to keep up with exponential technology.

As technology advances, our environment rapidly changes-often times, exceeding the human ability to adapt. This imbalance creates radical challenges for individuals – making the need for new styles of learning, leading, teaching, and training critical, if not essential, to gaining success in this new world. Not only must we redefine and expand how we connect, but we must reconsider what skills are necessary to lead and operate in this novel age.

Another consideration is to explore how we lift the slope of adaptability to meet the changes in our world. We can adapt our technology to serve us rather than being a servant to it, but to accelerate our learning to catch up to the trajectory of the technology curve, we must first understand what is at stake and be willing to shift 3 critical aspects of our mindset and our approach.

Shift #1 – Let Go

The old model of work is based on a wholly mechanistic paradigm of Newtonian Physics where everything can be taken apart and put back together again. The more we understand the individual parts, the better those individual parts will work and work together. This paradigm served to inform how we organized education, healthcare, governments, and businesses. It is the embodiment of the Industrial Age mentality: everything is predictable, and all processes are linear. Consider the assumptions that are part of this paradigm:

- Change / Chaos / Disruption is to be avoided at all costs.
- Understanding the parts means we understand the whole.
- People need to be motivated by rewards and/or punishments.
- Experts are needed to educate the masses.
- Predictability and stability are the goals.
- Workers are treated as cogs in a machine.
- Power flows from the top down.
- Decision-making is the leader's imperative.

Today's dominant organizational strategies are based on incomplete and archaic premises aiming to maintain stability and avoid uncertainties. Considering the volatility of our changing world, this approach is no longer adequate or advisable. The predictable past is no guide for the unpredictable future.

In short, to thrive in this increasingly complex world, we will have to leave our familiar cause-and-effect “left-brain” thinking behind and walk toward a more innovative and creative “whole brain” frontier.

Leaders of the 21st century need the training to help them work effectively and lead powerfully. We must expand their paradigms and mindsets so they can better adapt to the demands of this complex, multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce. Our current and future environments require that leaders lean into creativity and flexibility. The ability for leaders to create meaningful work has never been more necessary than it is right now. This is the key to keeping teams engaged and serving clients with excellence.

Shift #2 – Lean In

Human beings are uniquely equipped to unravel complexity and ambiguity. Many of our business models are based on an outdated mechanistic model, but what we now know is that businesses are living ecosystems and living systems operate differently than mechanical systems. We need an evolved organizational framework to accommodate this reality and at the same time evolve our capacities for high-order learning and thinking. To do so, we must now be willing to draw on a multi-disciplinary approach informed by the sciences of our time to be able to adequately address the issues that confront us.

While the situations and scenarios may be complex and unpredictable, thankfully, the solutions are not. Learning and development curriculums can and will evolve to elevate and accelerate **the way we learn**. They must include the essential tools and training necessary to cope with the high demand for critical thinking. They must also harness the ability to focus one's mind on desired outcomes in the face of ever-evolving and complex scenarios.

But what we do know is that we will not be able to resolve complex issues using the same decision-making and problem-solving processes we've used in the past.

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

- Albert Einstein

Often what learners are looking for today are a recipe and a look-up table. *Here is the situation, let me look it up on my cheat sheet. In this circumstance, do this. In that circumstance, do that.* This is a carryover from a mechanistic, left-brained, cause-and-effect, predictable construct. The mindset is

incomplete and out of date. As author Ralph Kilmann says in *Creating a Quantum Organization*, “It is time to stop perpetuating the myth of simplicity. The system of organization established by humankind generates complex problems that cannot be solved by simplistic quick-fix solutions.”

Information technology and worldwide connectivity have created an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world while political deregulation and economic interdependence have created an increasingly complex world.

Amidst an evolutionary age requiring us to change our mental models and even our entire worldview, what is needed most are organizations that are motivated to learn how to learn; organizations that embed distributed decision-making at all levels. Leaders must listen to a wide variety of insights and draw upon the learning of the people inside the organization. In this complex, ambiguous and uncertain world, the ideal role of leaders is to facilitate and coordinate communication channels spontaneously to promote and/or organize solutions utilizing the collective intelligence of the group.

Shift #3 – Embrace Change

Comparing the world to a machine argues for simple efforts at change and improvement, like replacing one defective part in some mechanistic device and expecting that to improve the overall function of the system. This model may have been appropriate in the industrial age where there were a few educated people whose responsibilities included managing and directing a host of mostly under-educated assembly line workers. Today, everyone is educated and has access to information, data, and learning from billions of sources. In this new era where technology, complexity, and ambiguity reign, a leader’s ability to manage ecosystems, human responses, and exercise judgment in decision-making is key to an organization’s success.

The last several years served as a real-life demonstration of how decision-making is optimized when leaders are willing to consider what is happening below the surface of the chaos. The impact of human emotion on the decision-making process is immense. There is no way to disentangle emotions from decision-making. Timing and context also influence our decision-making efforts. Effective decision-making requires us to tap into traits such as empathy, wisdom, compassion, kindness, and care. This helps us holistically view our systems. When we do this, we are more likely to make decisions collectively, rationally, and effectively.

This leads us to believe that the solutions to learning and leading are heavily impacted by developing learning cultures where individuals are more interconnected, interdependent, integrated, holistic, and relational; organizations where not only the individual components are taken into consideration, but the most important focus must be on the **RELATIONSHIP** between those components.



Today's setting offers us an exciting opportunity to broaden this perspective by creating learning environments to develop and refine deeply human traits and relationships. These innovative environments draw upon the collective intelligence and wisdom of the assembled learners. The prospect for truly diverse groups to come together when engaging in **rapid learning** (and un-learning), making connections, and discovering emergent solutions is the opportunity before us.

This is an entirely new paradigm for leading and learning; one that fundamentally shifts our worldview. Leaders in organizations, educational institutions, governments, and healthcare systems, all must now shift our approach to how we might lead and learn to create the organizations of the future – now.

What can leaders do now and what is the benefit to the organization?

As Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence states in a recent Harvard Business Review article: “Recognize that now more than ever, your state of “being” as a leader will impact others. When we consciously or unconsciously detect someone else’s emotions through their actions, we [unconsciously] reproduce those emotions. Collectively, we create an instant sense of shared experience. [These connections] have particular importance in crisis because leaders’ emotions and actions prompt others to mirror those feelings and deeds. “Leading effectively is, in other words, less about mastering situations—or even mastering social skill sets—than about developing a genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need.” (Daniel Goleman HBR)

The exciting opportunity this presents is that leading and learning become focused on building more symbiotic relationships between organizations and people. Relationships where organizations thrive because of the people in them, and people thrive because of the environment organizations have created. The following are 4 transformation initiatives and the benefits that ensue:

Develop an Inclusive Leadership

- Promotes alignment, engagement, and commitment to shared goals.
- Generates innovation and problem-solving.
- Distributes decision-making.
- Broadens perspectives and deepens relationships.

Generate open flows of information and flexible hierarchies

- Provide a high degree of visibility and transparency on information flow.
- Enables cross-functional teaming as teams may form and then dissolve as the workflow becomes more fluid.
- Demonstrates and embeds trust and a sense of community within the team.
- Deepens relationships as members get to know each other in new ways.

Create a Learning Organization

- Integrates performance and development into one “conversation.”
- People are constantly growing and developing their skills.
- Knowledge and skills are shared and practiced.
- Meaning and purpose are part of the work-life experience.

Practice a Growth Mindset

- Demonstrates ability to adapt to rapidly changing environments.
- Enhances innovation and creativity as the aperture opens.
- Increases our sense of well-being.
- Improves diversity and inclusion.

“Whether you’re trying to become more innovative, agile, or inclusive, changing culture is really a matter of changing shared everyday habits.

Those habits are motivated by clear principles, reinforced by congruent systems, and modeled by leaders across the organization.”

~ Dr. David Rock

Complexity has always existed, of course—and business life has always featured the unpredictable, the surprising, and the unexpected. But the level of complexity has gone from something found mainly in large systems, such as cities, to something that affects almost everything we touch: the products we design, the jobs we do every day, and the teams we oversee.

We can choose an evolved paradigm and change the way we think about leading and learning, and when we do we realize that we can deliberately shape our future by creating deeper relationships with one another. As it turns out, it is empowering the human connection, that will enable our future.

Together we will accomplish amazing things.



Opportunities for further reading:

The 3 Traps That Can Prevent Us From Adapting To Change (Forbes)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pavelkravivin/2022/11/16/the-3-traps-that-can-prevent-us-from-adapting-to-change/?sh=73b05a252a1a>

Adaptability should be your new hire's top soft skill. Here's how to test for it (Fast Company)

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90482018/adaptability-should-be-your-new-hires-top-soft-skill-heres-how-to-test-for-it>

Adapting To Change (Forbes)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2020/07/17/adapting-to-change/?sh=2a20cc351949>

The CEO moment: Leadership for a new era (McKinsey)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/the-ceo-moment-leadership-for-a-new-era>

How To Embrace Constant Change In A VUCA World (Forbes)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/08/23/how-to-embrace-constant-change-in-a-vuca-world/?sh=70852eef273a>

Let General Stanley McChrystal Explain Why Adaptability Trumps Hierarchy (Fast Company)

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3045477/goodbye-org-chart>

Organizing for change (McKinsey)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/organizing-for-change>

The Resilience Imperative: Succeeding in uncertain times (McKinsey)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/risk-and-resilience/our-insights/the-resilience-imperative-succeeding-in-uncertain-times>

The wisdom of transformations: How successful CEOs think about change (McKinsey)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/transformation/our-insights/the-wisdom-of-transformations-how-successful-ceos-think-about-change>