

LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES - HANDOUT 1

THINKING COMPLEXITY AND THE ACTION LOGICS

Important Note: This handout builds on knowledge and insights shared throughout the previous modules. For more details, refer to Module 1, the Global Leadership Profile worksheet and its related resources.

Connecting with our experience

Take 5 minutes to reflect on the questions below and share in pairs for 10 minutes.

- Which action logic best describes the way I have been leading over the past several months?
- In which particular situations have I experienced “fall-back” to an earlier action logic?
- Under the right conditions, when did I lead from a later action logic?

Action logics and thinking complexity

- Discuss within your small group how do the different action logics perform in an environment that features rapid change and ambiguity.
- Which action logics have more capacity to manage the polarities implied by complex times:
 - displaying both reflectiveness and a sense of urgency
 - combining compassion/understanding and decisiveness/firmness
 - diligently collecting data for complex decisions and being able to respond to urgency based on limited available data
 - being able to adapt personal style depending on the situation at hand while maintaining integrity and purpose

MAIN IDEAS

Developing Thinking Complexity

We are constantly evolving through each action logic. However, the current complexity is inviting us to be more intentional about growing more complex ways of knowing.



Conventional Stages Diplomat, Expert and Achiever <i>Linear, rational thinking and action</i>	Transition Redefining/Individualist <i>Letting go</i>	Post-Conventional Stages Strategist/Transforming and Alchemical <i>Complex, integrated thinking and action</i>
Individuals concerns are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving efficiency and effectiveness - Systematizing processes and procedures - Reducing risk and variance - Clarifying and communicating goals - Top and bottom line success 	In this transition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some disciplines disintegrate - Participation and autonomy rise - Risk and uncertainty increase - Success begins to be redefined This supposes letting go of previous loyalties, assumptions, habits (such as the need to be right, wanting to succeed at any cost, seeking certitudes...) and letting new perspectives come.	Individuals concerns are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building wider and deeper sense of purpose - Reinventing the rules - Principle lead pragmatism - Experiments and crises provide vehicle for learning and change - Increasingly participative within and beyond the organization.

At more mature action logics (Transforming and Alchemical), powerful capacities seem to arise, namely a developed system intelligence and a more unitive perspective on reality, a growing ability to work with polarities and simultaneously hold and manage conflicting viewpoints and emotions, tapping into one’s intuition (rational thinking is no longer the dominant way to understand), a deep acceptance of self, others, the moment, without judgment, a growing openness, flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity, an ability to engage collaboratively to co-create frequent “flow” and allow the future to emerge (Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2000, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Nicolaidis, 2008).

While growing in complexity and expanding one’s capacities is crucial to meet the complexities of our current world, it is important to remember that no stage is “better” than the other. What ultimately counts is the “goodness of fit” between what our life requires of us and what we are able to do. Research has shown that many of the challenges facing leaders are actually beyond their current capacity to meet effectively (Kegan, Torbert). Thus transforming across action logics is crucial if we are to effectively respond to the challenges of our times.

Moreover, a developed action logic does not necessarily imply a developed competence and technical ability to perform the job or handle crisis and complexity (importance of developing technical ability, knowledge and skills in building and managing structures, rules, and basic resources). Complementing our awareness of our action logics and our investment in vertical learning with horizontal development as well is therefore crucial to sustain growth in times of complexity and crisis.