

The Changing Expectations of the VUCA world



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If we imagine that modern organisations are straightforward places where we turn up, do a job and then pop back home again - then think again. Similarly if we imagine that there is a simple answer to every problem that can be distilled into a pithy quotation from an ancient Eastern sage on the back of an uplifting card with a picture of a glorious sunrise - think again.

We now live and work in what has been termed the VUCA world:

VOLATILE because things change fast but not in a predictable way

UNCERTAIN because major changes happen so quickly and so fast that we cannot read them. The past is no longer an accurate predictor of the future

COMPLEX because there are so many different things happening all at the same time with so many moving parts and so many people involved

AMBIGUOUS because the “who, what, where, when, why and how?” questions we used to pose no longer can be answered.

Our mistake comes when we try to oversimplify this VUCA world. We seek to deny the uncertainty and complexity and apply a few formulaic solutions hoping they will still hold good. Yet if we once stopped expecting it would be simple then we would start to manage ourselves and our organisations better. We would look to lead in a VUCA world by creating new ways of working which seeks greater collaboration, rather than petty competition. We should also work towards more lasting solutions to complex problems, through deeper thinking rather than our current obsession with simplistic catchphrases.


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