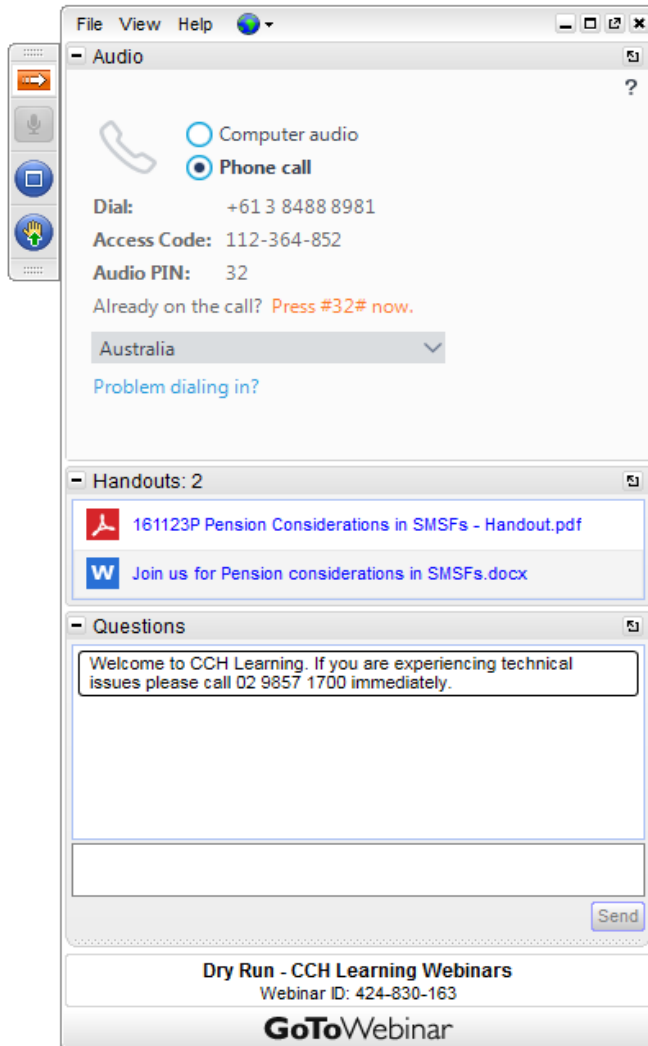

Responding to Leadership Challenges

Deb Assheton

Thursday 6 April 2023



How to participate today



- Handouts Section - PowerPoint
- Sound Problems? Toggle between Audio and Phone
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Susannah Gynther
Moderator

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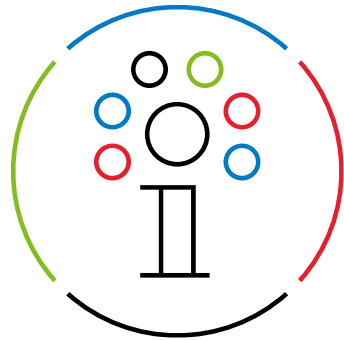
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Your Presenter



- Deb Assheton
- Director
- The Amplify Group

Today's session will cover



Responding to Leadership Challenges

- Our VUCA World
- The changing nature of challenges
- Maintaining Leadership perspective
- Adaptive Leadership
- Overcoming control and perfectionism
- Navigating adversity and distraction
- Q & A

The Global Environment



Volatility Uncertainty Complexity Ambiguity

For Leaders VUCA is...

Is changing the nature of challenges

Changing the nature of mistakes

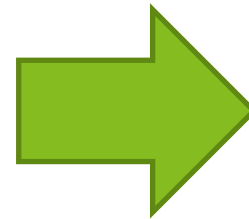
Elevating the importance of Diversity and Inclusion

VUCA is changing the nature of our problems & challenges

Historically Leaders have solved mainly technical challenges

Technical challenges are:

- Easy to identify
- Can be solved by the knowledge of experts
- The link between problem, solution and implementation are clear
- Resolution is easily identifiable



Adaptive Challenges

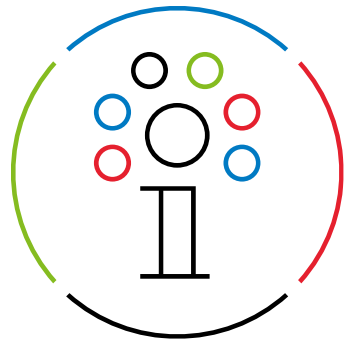
Adaptive Challenges

- The problem is hard to define
- There is often no one clear solution
- Is easy to resist or ignore – generate disequilibrium and avoidance
- Have a longer timeframe than technical challenges
- People need to solve adaptive changes through a process of experimentation
- Leaders need to be able to generate and sustain productive discomfort

Source: Dr Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky. Leadership on the line Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Change. 2017

What 'types of challenges is your workplace or team facing?

- Mainly technical
- Mainly adaptive
- A mixture of both



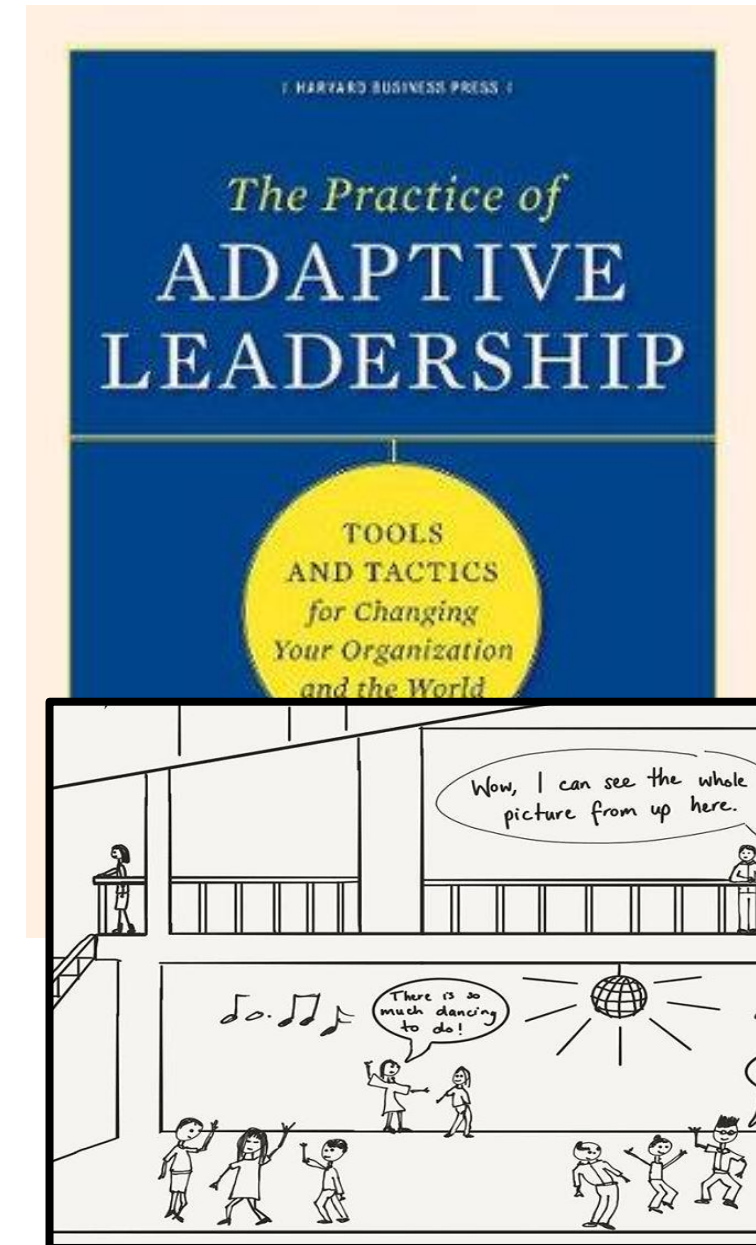
Leadership in VUCA

Top 3 pitfalls:

1. Misread the environment – ineffective leadership interventions
2. Inflexible leadership style - unconsciously lead for comfort not performance
3. Failure to adapt to new challenges – unable to make or sustain change

The Balcony and the Dance Floor

Balcony and Dance Floor



The work of VUCA leadership

Leader's responsibilities	Type of Situation	
	Routine	VUCA
Direction	Define problems and provide solutions	Identify the adaptive challenge and frame key questions and issues
Protection	Shield the organisation from external threats	Let the organisation feel external pressures within a range it can stand
Orientation	Clarify roles and responsibilities	Challenge current roles and resist pressure to define new roles quickly
Managing Conflict	Restore order	Expose conflict and frame it's emergence
Shaping Norms	Maintain norms	Challenge unproductive norms

Source: Heifetz and Laurie, The Work of VUCA Leadership. HBR 2001

The Balcony and the Dance Floor



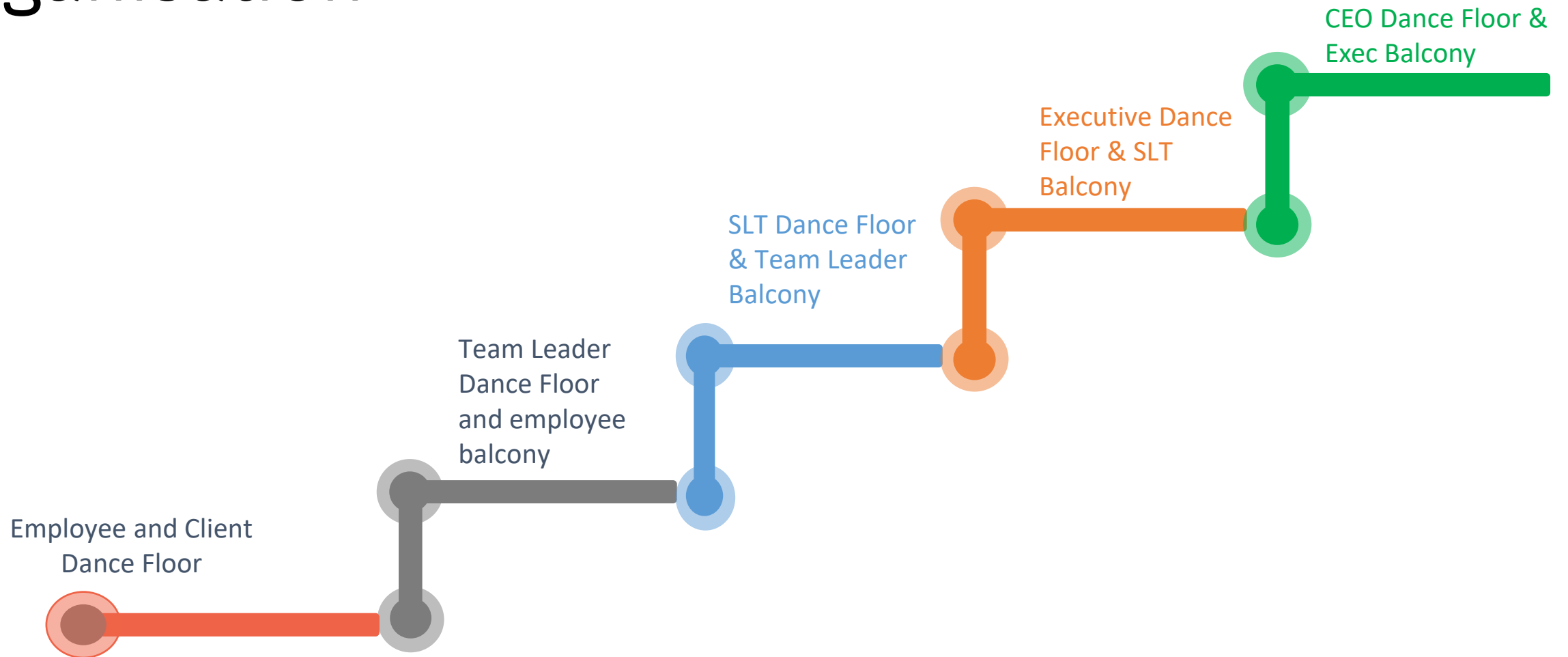
Reflection ...

- How much time do you spend on the balcony considering strategic themes?
- In meetings do you typically present a dance floor or a balcony perspective about the topic being discussed?
- Do you typically notice Balcony 'problems/issues' or Dance Floor 'problems/issues'?
- Do you typically notice Balcony opportunities or Dance Floor opportunities?
- Do you typically have Balcony insights or Dance Floor insights?
- Do you typically provide Balcony feedback or Dance Floor feedback?
- Can you think of a time where you have successfully combined both perspectives while on the dance floor or while on the balcony?
- What do you need to do differently to better position your perspective/time/energy and insight?

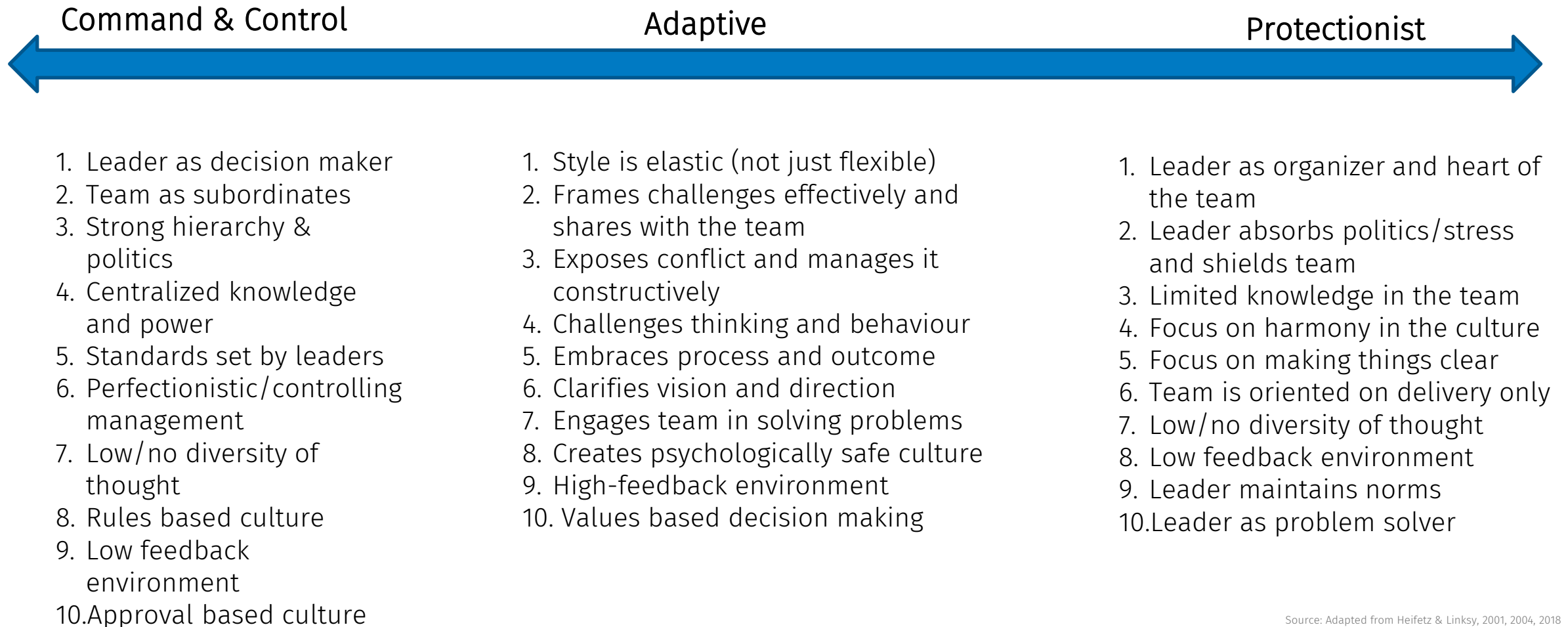
Balcony and Dance floor perspectives

	The Benefits	The Skill	One perspective only	Final outcome of one view
The Balcony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad view • Greater timeframe • Objective perspective • Systemic explanations • Situation dynamics 	Capacity to respond and initiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased levels of actual participation • Decreased capacity to manage day to day • Pontification and ineffectual 	Contribution becomes irrelevant
The Dance Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting and doing • Narrow view • Next challenge/deadline view • Task focus • Hurdles, challenges, problems perspective • Balancing resources 	Capacity to react	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to see what is coming • Decreased understanding of your own role • Decreased leadership capacity • Repetitive levels of performance 	Can only react

The balcony and the dance floor through the organisation



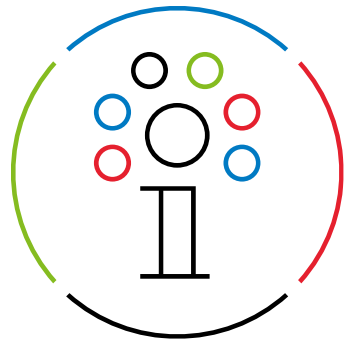
Leadership Styles



Source: Adapted from Heifetz & Linsky, 2001, 2004, 2018

What style most reflects how you (generally) lead?

- Command and Control
- Protectionist
- Adaptive
- I exhibit both Command and Control and Protectionist
- I am a melting pot of all three styles



Tendency for Perfectionism

Striving for flawlessness and setting excessively high-performance standards, accompanied by overly critical self-evaluations and concerns regarding others' evaluations.

You might have a tendency for perfectionism if...

- You're motivated by fear of failure
- There's no room for error, you're always the first one to point out the flaws
- You have a very specific manner in which things should be done
- You have an all-or-nothing approach
- You'd prefer to do it yourself than trust for someone else to do it
- You're really hard on yourself
- Success is never enough. You struggle to celebrate milestones
- You're waiting for a state of 'readiness'



Sources: Mary Abbajay (2018) *Managing Up*. HBR (@019. How to manage your perfectionism. Psychology Today (2018) *Managing the need for approval*. Psych. Central (2018) *When your need for control is out of control*. Fred Kofman (2006) *Conscious Business*

How does perfectionism create performance risk?

- ❑ Perfectionists are managing their fears in advance. The underlying story is that if something is perfect it won't fail.
- ❑ Perfectionists have unrealistically high expectations of themselves and others. Although they rarely see it this way, often describing their expectations as adaptive, high or necessary.
- ❑ The expectations of perfectionists are not related to what the business needs, what performance outcomes are required for success.

Perfectionists are more likely to:

- Sacrifice sleep, personal time, and well-being, just to bring their work to the highest level. Can lead to distress and burnout
- Be the least liked style of Leader (rated in the top 10 dysfunctions of Leaders)
- Wait until the 'right time' to start, when the conditions are perfect for perfection. This can give the appearance of procrastinating
- Take longer to recover and rebound from disappointments, errors, and mistakes
- Burnout good people through unrealistic expectations, and decisions based on excessive fear

Sources: Mary Abbajay (2018) *Managing Up*. HBR (@019. *How to manage your perfectionism*. Psychology Today (2018) *Managing the need for approval*. Psych. Central (2018) *When your need for control is out of control*. Fred Kofman (2006) *Conscious Business*

What do we need to do?

Steps to take:

1. Perfectionism is notoriously difficult to change. Embrace perfectionism as a limitation, not a superpower. Try to really see where this tendency limits you, and the cost of keeping this lens
2. Take responsibility for gradually releasing the grip that this tendency has on you.
3. Focus on the standard needed to get the job done not on what is ideal/perfect/optimal.
4. Find someone/ a buddy who can help you challenge your thinking around what is good enough (that doesn't mean we are settling) it means we are working to what the situation calls for not a cerebral ideal
5. Make it safe for your team and peers to call it out when you are displaying perfectionism.

High need for control

People who have a high need for control feel very uncomfortable with unpredictable future events. A constant vigilance that all bases are covered with difficulty letting go and trusting that the process will lead to an acceptable outcome.

You might have a high need for control if...

- You get stressed in situations of ambiguity
- You're uncomfortable with change
- You tend to catastrophise challenging situations
- Your first response to feedback is disagreement
- You always have the last word in an argument, or, you're accused of having the last word
- You hate being wrong and rarely admit you're wrong (right / wrong is up for debate)
- You're the one making the plans and herding the cats

How does a high need for control create a performance risk?

- ❑ Control is largely an illusion, and in a world where change, volatility, uncertainty and ambiguity are part of life, often unachievable.
- ❑ Controlling events/people is unrelated to business performance. Limiting performance rather than enhancing it
- ❑ Increased concern over the unpredictability of performance outcome heightens fear and anxiety and often prevents people from moving forward, it leads to feeling paralysed
- ❑ Leaders high in need for control are less likely to innovate and more likely to micromanage
- ❑ Being involved in everything leads people to focus on things that are outside of their control, distracting them from the task at hand
- ❑ Be a poorly regarded style of Leader (rated in the top 10 dysfunctions of Leaders). Need for control is easily observed and felt by others, and is associated with lower rates of engagement, retention and performance

Sources: Mary Abbajay (2018) Managing Up. HBR (@019. How to manage your perfectionism. Psychology Today (2018) Managing the need for approval. Psych. Central (2018) When your need for control is out of control. Fred Kofman (2006) Conscious Business

What do we need to do?

Steps to take:

1. Where you have this, own it. Consciously manage yourself so that controlling is not driving how you deal with others
2. The place to start here is to challenge the illusion of control. You have control over your behaviour, and your decisions – beyond that we control very, very little
3. Question the internal voice that tells you everything needs to be controlled. Instead ask questions to give you a sense of confidence
4. Make it safe for your team and peers to call it out when you are being controlling

Adversity and distractions

Adversity

Obstacles

Setbacks

Long plateaus of no obvious progress



Distractions

Impulsivity and reactivity

Poor clarity

Personal Judgement

Short –term deviations

Indecision



Source: Duckworth (2016) GRIT. Goldsmith (2016) Triggers.

Leadership tips for navigating adaptive challenges

- Make the VUCA aspects explicit – talk about them
- Reframe the adaptive challenge or problem
- Allow time for contemplation and reflection
- Share the challenge/problem with your team
- Share the fix, rather than doing it yourself
- Take a break – give it space
- Take responsibility for what you can control
- Brainstorm options
- Clear your head
- Ask 10 different questions
- Quickly scope what is possible and start
- Roadmap more regularly to increase agility – small chunks
- Bring in some (wise) grey hair
- Identify advantages in the situation
- Ask someone to challenge your thinking
- Provide as a development opportunity to others 😊

Leadership Challenges



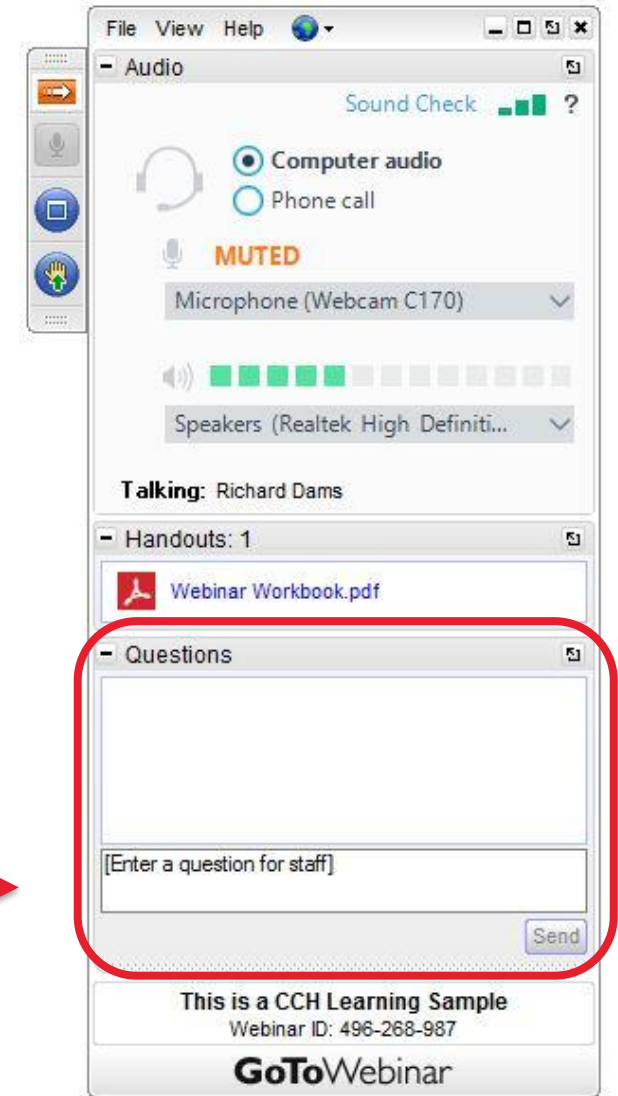
Leaders are not leading the solution.
You are leading the process of
finding a way

Questions?

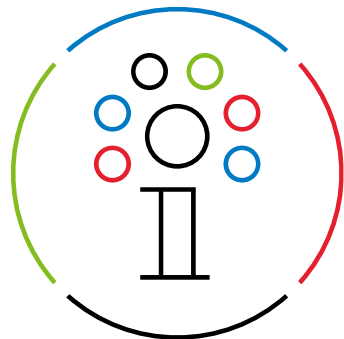


Susannah Gynther
Moderator

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- 26 April – The Tips and Traps of Drafting a Financial Agreement
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Questions



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