

Leadership agility - from good to great

What are the first words that come to your mind when thinking of leadership? Drive? Determination? Assertiveness? Confidence? Oxford English Dictionary defines Leadership as “the activity of leading a group or an organization”.

Part from this, there are several views on leadership- personal ones such as “leaders are born not made”, and scientific ones like behavioural theories or the more recent transactional and transformational theories. However, no matter which view or theory one ascribes to, it is clear to us that over time, one attribute remains true across all interpretations: Leaders know how to adapt to their environment.

The most prominent leaders in history were always somehow a step ahead of the game. They had the incredible ability to think on their feet and adapt to changes in their environment. A perfect example of a leader who personifies this is His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Sheikh Mohammed after taking the mantle from his brother, drove the incredible transformation of Dubai.

This city wouldn't be what it is today, a premier business hub and one of the most prestigious holiday destinations in the world, without His Highness's vision, leadership and impressive adaptability. To quote His Highness: “Leadership does not need strength. Everyone gets in return what equals his efforts and what he puts in. One must be dynamic and able to change and adapt to lead and grow”.

Leadership is in short supply these days. We live in a turbulent environment- the US Army College calls it a VUCA world:



Skills are imperative, differentiating oneself as a leader is most critical.

- **Volatility:** The nature, speed, volume, magnitude and dynamics of change
- **Uncertainty:** the lack of predictability of issues and events
- **Complexity:** The confounding of issues and the chaos that surround any organization
- **Ambiguity:** The haziness of reality and the mixed meanings of conditions

Recently, The Conference Board and Development Dimensions International (DDI) released their latest Global Leadership Forecast 2014/2015 where over 13,000 leaders, 2,000 companies across 48 countries were surveyed. The results were significant yet far from astounding.

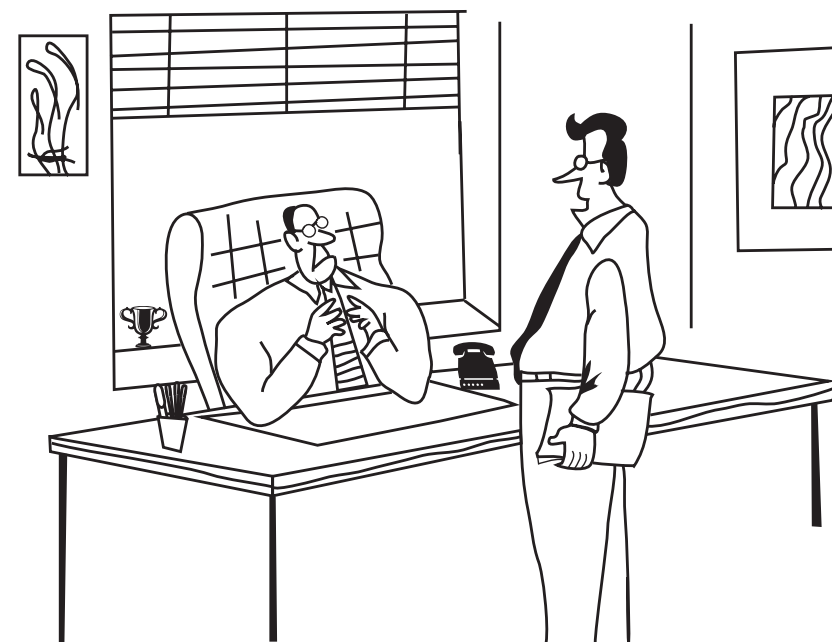
What these findings reveal is that organizations whose leaders are capable of demonstrating agility are three times more likely to have financial performance commensurate with the top 20% of organizations. At the same time, the survey also revealed that 1 in every 4 companies feel that their leaders are not VUCA capable, in

other words, not agile enough.

It becomes very apparent that going from good to great in such an environment requires something more than commonly accepted basic leadership skills. Adapting and taking action in a quick, clever and astute manner, in one word to be agile, is more relevant than ever. **Agility Leadership is not the mastery of one skill but rather the mastery of a group of skills necessary to reach sustainable success in a volatile, complex and fast paced global environment.**

Agility is:

- To have systemic thinking. A way to approach a given situation in its entirety and understanding the influence of each component as a whole and its relationship with one another rather than in isolation.
- To take responsibility to act proactively instead of reacting and adjusting to a given situation or passively expecting something to happen.
- To act together in a cooperative manner for mutual benefit and common sense of purpose rather than having an individualistic approach.
- To be able to anticipate the consequences of one's actions in a rational and intuitive manner in a given situation rather than reacting to them.
- To innovate and change only what is needed, when needed. Being open to new ideas or solutions to deal with context and step out of the usual frame of reference.



"Well, I would have exhibited more leadership qualities if someone would have told me to."

So what does this mean for an entrepreneur? An entrepreneur is by definition someone who is not afraid to take risks. They have most likely sacrificed a steady day job and pay cheque in the hope of creating something big. In order to succeed they must possess and demonstrate several skills, such as decision-making, creativity, strategic thinking, and planning. However, while these skills are imperative, differentiating oneself as a leader is most critical.

Leading the creation of a successful and sustainable business requires one to act, anticipate, get out of the comfort zone and adapt to changes in any given context. Whether it is about keeping an eye on the competition or on new technology you always have to keep your finger on the pulse!

In a world where the only constant is change, can you really

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afford to stay still? Remember, one's success cannot rely on what has been done in the past or the present but what is being done to foster the ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment. Thus, developing agile behaviours is no longer an option but an



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absolute must.

So, where does your organization stand in terms of agility? Do you want to explore your team's agility or your own? Connect with us at The Pathway Project to learn more about our Agility program, workshops and coaching.

