

Change Management

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PMG323

Lecture 10



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Agenda Leading change in uncertain times

- Introduction.
- Leading change in uncertain times
- The impact of uncertainty on our working lives
- Identifying the key shifts in the global systems
- 6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty
- Leading Change Management in Uncertain Times with Certainty
- A. Define, Measure, and Celebrate Success

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Change Management

This subject is about making sense of change management. The world we live in continues to change at an intense rate. Not a day goes by, it seems, without another important discovery or boundary-pushing invention in the scientific fields. The economics of globalization seems to dominate much of our political and corporate thinking, while the shadow side of globalization—develops at an equally alarming pace.

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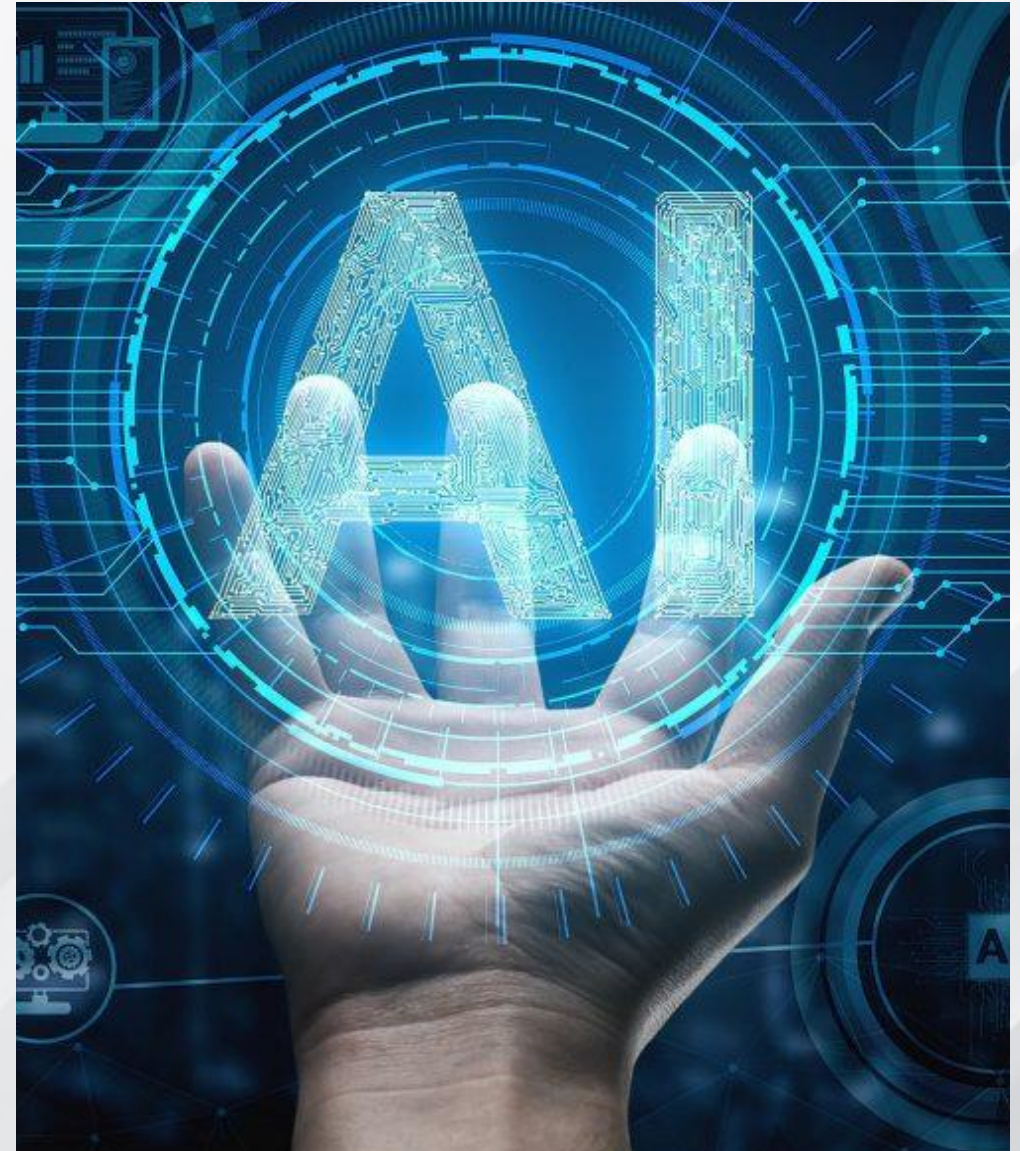
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Leading change in uncertain times

Leading Change Management
in Uncertain Times with
Certainty

#certainty

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Leading change in uncertain times

The whole globe is shaken up, so what are you going to do when things are falling apart? You're either going to become more fundamentalist and try to hold things together, or you're going to leave the old ambitions and goals and live life as an experiment, making it up as you go along. Pema



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The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

In his dense but highly readable short book, Liquid Times, Professor of Sociology Zygmunt Bauman (2007) suggests five sources of uncertainty in today's world that he says are leading us to be more fearful and 'selffocused' as individuals:

The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

- 1. Social forms** – the institutions, businesses and other organized entities that limit individual choice and guard behaviour – are not expected to keep their shape for long, and are unlikely to steady before re-forming – so can no longer serve as fundamental frames of reference for human actions.

The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

- 2. Power and politics are becoming separate:** Newly free global power bases are calling the shots while increasingly irrelevant local politics is left impotent in the face of people's real-life problems. Local politicians are now abandoning the functions they traditionally performed, leaving these to market forces.

The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

3. **Individuals feel increasingly vulnerable to the illusion of the markets.** The reduction of the welfare state's care for individuals in tough times encourages competitive attitudes and downgrades collaboration (unless it's a temporary strategy for individual success)



The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

4. **The collapse of long-term thinking**, planning and acting is leading to a life experienced as a series of fragmented, possibly unrelated steps or 'projects', where dropping old habits can be more important for success than building on previous learnings.



The impact of uncertainty on our working lives

5. **The responsibility for making choices** in this constantly changing environment is put on the shoulders of individuals, who must take risks beyond their capacity to comprehend and act, without any authoritative advice.



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Identifying the key shifts in the global systems

Otto Scharmer (2007), slightly more optimistically, identifies the key shifts in our global systems as follows, and says that our challenge in facing up to these shifts is to find ways of co-creating the future:



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Identifying the key shifts in the global systems

- • The rise of the global economy: downsizing, deregulation, corporate restructuring, emerging technologies.
- • The rise of the network society: globalization of governance, loss of lifetime employment and social security, perpetual individualization.
- • The rise of a new consciousness: the rise in the number of NGOs, the rise of the creative class, and a spiritual revival.

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Things leaders do to pretend that uncertainty doesn't really exist

Otto Scharmer (2007), slightly more optimistically, identifies the key shifts in our global systems as follows, and says that our challenge in facing up to these shifts is to find ways of co-creating the future:



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Things leaders do to pretend that uncertainty doesn't exist

- Blame stakeholders/the CEO/others for not being decisive – and just keep your head down and carry on without challenging or requesting time to talk.
- Avoid your team and your key stakeholders and continue to pursue your isolated agenda instead of developing a joint agenda.



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Things leaders do to pretend that uncertainty doesn't exist

- Invent a series of over-simplified projects that look like they are delivering something, without having a proper conversation with colleagues about what they are supposed to achieve.
- Get as close to a senior stakeholder as possible and focus purely on delivering what he/she wants, rather than understanding the key issues.



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Things leaders do to pretend that uncertainty doesn't exist

- • Pack meeting agendas full of updates and reviews of things that have already happened rather than creating spaces for discussion or questions about the big, concerning issues.
- • Create artificial actions and/or rules and come down very hard on anyone who transgresses.

Esther Cameron (2011)



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6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

If there was ever any doubt about the importance of a leader's ability to navigate change, uncertainty, and disruption, the emergence of the global pandemic in 2020 made this necessity abundantly clear. And while we all hope to avoid future pandemics, one thing is certain — we cannot avoid ever-increasing complexity.

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6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

The leaders we work with often report feeling stuck, ill-equipped, or [overwhelmed](#) as they face the growing challenges of their roles. Understandably, it's easy to feel this way when the complexity of our world has surpassed our “complexity of mind,” as Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey describe in their book, [Immunity to Change](#). To put this in concrete terms, computing power has increased more than a [trillion-fold](#) since the mid 1950's, but our brains remain unchanged.

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6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

In order to effectively lead others in increasing complexity, leaders must first learn to lead themselves. Although each leader faces their own unique circumstances, we have observed six strategies that accelerate your ability to continually learn, evolve, and navigate progressively more complex challenges.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

1- Embrace the Discomfort of Not Knowing

Throughout our careers, we are conditioned to come up with the answer — as in a single, definitive, correct answer. Given that our brains are hardwired to see uncertainty as a risk or threat, it's physiologically normal to feel stress when faced with unfamiliar situations. This is especially true for high achievers who have built their career on knowing or finding the “right” answer. Although avoiding these unpleasant feelings is a natural human tendency, it can become a significant barrier to learning, future growth, and ultimately performance.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

1- Embrace the Discomfort of Not Knowing

Rather than avoid these feelings, we must learn to acknowledge and embrace the discomfort as an expected and normal part of the learning process. As described by Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, leaders must shift from a “know it all” to “learn it all” mindset. This shift in mindset can, itself, help ease the discomfort by taking the pressure off of you to have all the answers.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

2- Distinguish Between Complicated and Complex

Most of us use the terms complex and complicated interchangeably when, in fact, they represent critically different circumstances. For example, tax law is complicated, meaning it is highly technical in nature and difficult to understand, but you can break the problem down into discreet parts, consult with an expert (or several), and generally find a solution.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

2- Distinguish Between Complicated and Complex

Conversely, complex challenges contain many interdependent elements, some of which may be unknown and may change over time in unpredictable ways. In addition, an action or change in one dimension can result in disproportionate and unforeseen outcomes. As an example, foreign policy and climate change are complex challenges. While there may be no shortage of opinions on these topics, there are no clear solutions.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

3- Let Go of Perfectionism

In a complex environment, the context is continually shifting; thus, aiming for perfection is futile. Instead, aim for progress, expect mistakes and recognize that you have the ability to continually course correct as needed. For high-achievers, prone to perfectionism, egos and desired identities (e.g., of being successful or being “the expert”) can get in the way. To let go of perfectionism, identify, and acknowledge your specific core fears that are triggered — such as “I’ll fail,” “I’ll look bad,” or “I’ll make the wrong decision.”

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

3- Let Go of Perfectionism

We've worked with several clients over the years to help them actively debunk these assumptions by having them talk with others they respect about the role of mistakes or failure in their careers. They hear a lot about learning, new opportunities, and professional growth that emerged as a result, but never the career-ending disaster that they imagine. Loosening the grip of these assumptions over time can allow you to let go of perfectionism and accept that mistakes and failure are to be expected along the way.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

4- Resist Oversimplifications and Quick Conclusions

It's tempting to oversimplify complex challenges, so that they seem less daunting. For example, breaking a challenge into its respective components can help you to feel like you have a greater command of the challenge at hand, but it can also narrow your view and obscure critical interdependencies, leading to a false sense of security.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

4- Resist Oversimplifications and Quick Conclusions

Many high achievers have a bias for action and become quickly frustrated when facing challenges that don't present an evident solution and clear course of action. Instead of caving to the desire for quick resolution, leaders must learn to balance their need for action with a disciplined approach to understanding both the core problem and their own biases.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

5- Don't Go It Alone

Many of the leaders we work with report feeling isolated as they face the continuous change and uncertainty in the challenges they face. Part of their sense of isolation comes from an implicit belief that they need to solve all of the issues themselves. As the complexity and volume of our workload increases, our natural tendency is to double down on our focus and individual efforts. When facing relatively short-term challenges with known solutions, this can be an effective strategy.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

5- Don't Go It Alone

There is an inherent limit for each of us regarding what we can know and our ability to have an objective perspective on any given situation. As stated by one CEO client, “When I’m trying to make sense of a complex issue, the first thing I do is reach out to people whose opinion I value and whose experience is in some ways different from mine. I want to know “How they are looking at the situation. What’s their point of view? Who else should I talk to?” He explained, “It’s not so much that I expect them to have an answer, as I want to plug into their.”

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

6- Zoom Out

Leaders often get stuck in the challenges they face because they are too deep in them. “Zooming out,” or moving from “the dance floor to the balcony,” as described by Ron Heifetz, Marty Linksy, and Alexander Grashow in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* provides you with a broader perspective and a systemic view of the issues and can shine a light on unexamined assumptions that would otherwise not be visible.

6 Strategies for Leading Through Uncertainty

6- Zoom Out

From this “balcony” or elevated vantage point, interdependencies and larger patterns become observable, potentially revealing unforeseen obstacles and new solutions. This more holistic perspective allows for greater adaptability and course correction, when needed. Making a regular practice of conducting this dance floor-balcony shift, you can build your capacity to see the bigger picture and become more agile.

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Leading Change Management in Uncertain Times with Certainty

The current global climate has brought about a wave of unpredictability, making it difficult for businesses to plan for the future and ensure stability.

Leading Change Management in Uncertain Times with Certainty



1. Creating a Shared Sense of Purpose:

One of the key elements of leading change management is creating a shared sense of purpose among stakeholders. The first step is to understand the reason behind the change and the impact it will have on various groups.

Next, the leader should communicate this purpose clearly and regularly to the team, emphasizing its significance and the role each person will play in achieving it.

Leading Change Management in Uncertain Times with Certainty

2. Changing Mindsets:

Change management is not just about making changes to processes and systems, but also about changing the way people think and behave.

Leaders must help employees understand why the change is necessary, how it will benefit them, and how they can contribute.

To facilitate this, leaders must be open-minded, listen to feedback, and provide support and training. Additionally, they must be willing to make changes and adapt their approach if necessary.



Leading Change Management in Uncertain Times with Certainty

3. Communicating the Change:

Effective communication is critical in leading change management, especially in uncertain times. Leaders must ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed about the change and its progress and that they have access to accurate and up-to-date information.

The communication plan should include various methods such as emails, company-wide updates, and town hall meetings. Leaders must also create opportunities for open and honest dialogue and be transparent about the decision-making process.



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A. Define, Measure, and Celebrate Success



A. Define, Measure, and Celebrate Success

1- Define

One of the key aspects of leading change management in uncertain times is to define what success looks like and then measure it. This will help organizations to stay on track and make adjustments when necessary. To do this, organizations should start by defining what their goals are and what they are trying to achieve. This can be done through a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) that are closely monitored and used to measure progress.

A. Define, Measure, and Celebrate Success

2- Measure

Measuring success is critical for organizations because it helps them to understand whether or not their change management initiatives are on track. For example, if an organization is trying to increase employee engagement, it may use metrics such as employee satisfaction, turnover rate, and productivity levels to determine the effectiveness of its change initiatives. These KPIs can be used to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and track success.

A. Define, Measure, and Celebrate Success

3- Celebrate Success

Finally, it is important to celebrate success and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of employees who have helped to bring change to an organization. Celebrating success helps to build morale and create a positive working environment, which can contribute to future change initiatives. This can be done through employee recognition programs, team-building activities, and company-wide celebrations.





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