

Introduction

In recent years, leaders have been encouraged to have emotional intelligence and, more recently, learn agility (or grit, resilience, growth mindset, perseverance). In our research, navigating paradox has become the next wave in the evolution of leadership effectiveness.

Source: Dave Ulrich

<https://www.lifescienceleader.com/doc/why-leaders-need-to-be-paradox-navigators-0001>

Paradoxes & Contradictory Activities

Paradoxes exist when seemingly contradictory activities operate together. We experience paradoxes in daily life as captured by the popular phrases: tough love, do more with less, oil and vinegar, sweet and sour, work/ life balance, Catch 22, go slow to go fast, good and evil, and so forth. When these inherent contradictions work together, success follows. Instead of focusing on either/ or, paradoxes emphasize and/also thinking. Business paradoxes include short term and long term, top/down and bottom/up, inside and outside, domestic and global, individual and team, profitability and well-being, etc. Navigating paradox means learning to adapt rather than managing paradox which focuses on finding a solution.

Why Paradoxes Matter

The world is changing so quickly that what was right yesterday is not right today and will not be right tomorrow. An organization's success comes from its ability to adjust to change, which is often referred to as agility, flexibility, learning, transformation, revitalization, and so forth.

Increasing organizational adaptability comes from navigating paradox. Navigating paradox accepts and heightens disagreements that enable organizations to change and evolve. Without the tensions that come from paradoxical thinking and debates, organizations perpetuate the status quo and do not respond to change. Leaders of these organizations need to become paradox navigators to help their organizations respond to the pace of change

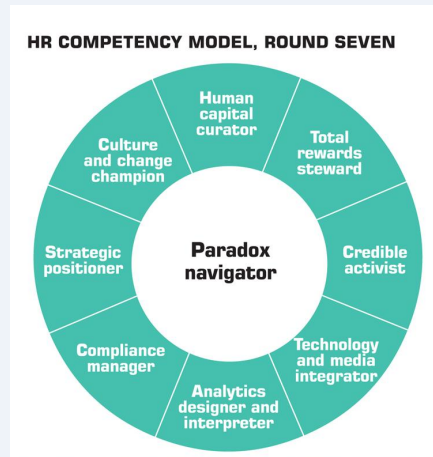
Five Core Domains for Effective Leadership

- **Strategist:** Leaders have a point of view about the future; where to play and how to win.
- **Executor:** Leaders get things done through individual behaviors and institutional processes.
- **Talent manager:** Leaders encourage employee productivity through competence, commitment, and contribution.
- **Human capital developer:** Leaders prepare the next generation of leadership through coaching, mentoring, and workforce planning

Five Core Domains for Effective Leadership (cont)

- **Personal proficiency:** Leaders have the personal requirements to build trust and confidence.

Paradox Navigation



The Skills Needed to Navigate a Paradox

- 1. Deal with cognitive complexity.** They are able to see different sides of an issue, respect someone else's point of view, and learn new ideas (generally 20 to 25 percent new ideas every two years)
- 2. Be socially endearing.** They disagree without being disagreeable, allow for tension without having contention, listen with empathy, and help others feel better about themselves after a meeting
- 3. Be socially connected.** They spend time with others not like them and observe and learn from others not in their immediate community.
- 4. Be personally aware.** They know their predispositions, but are not bound by them and judge themselves less by their intent and more by how their behavior is seen by others
- 5. Encourage divergence and convergence.** They encourage diversity of thinking if their team or organization tends to groupthink and encourage focus if their team or organization has too much diversity and no closure.
- 6. Have a growth mindset.** They take risks to experiment and try new things, constantly learn from what worked and what did not, and are resilient when things do not work.
- 7. Zoom out and zoom in.** They establish a vision and overall purpose, and envision systems and how to fold the future vision into today's actions.

These paradox navigation skills can be acquired or improved through training and experience.