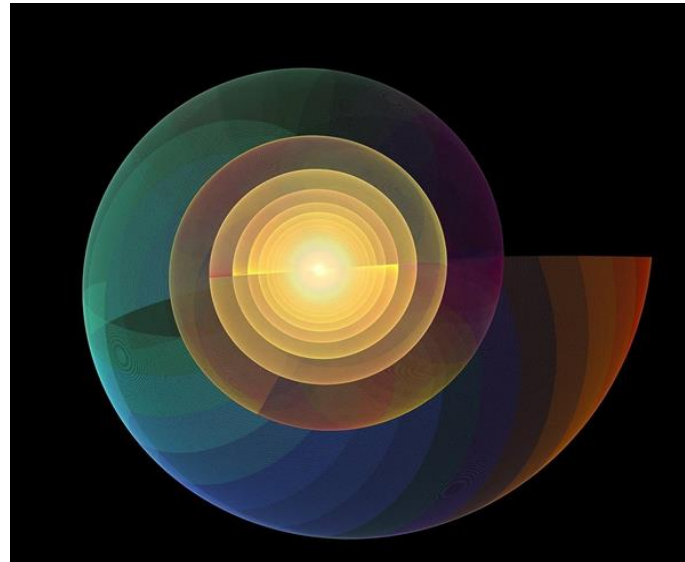


# Developing Leadership Agility

The key to competitive success  
in a complex world



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# What we will cover today

1. What is Complexity and how can you assess it?
2. What is Agility and how can it be developed?
  - Overview of Stage Development Theory
  - HR Strategies for developing Agility
  - Who should develop Agility?
3. How to deepen your knowledge of this subject

# 1. What is Complexity and how can you assess it?

# Factors that contribute to Complexity of a situation

Factor	High Complexity	Low Complexity
Variables	Many, with high interaction	Few, with little interaction
Ambiguity vs clarity	High ambiguity	High clarity
Stakeholders	Many, different perspectives, high interdependence	Few, share a perspective, low interdependence
Emotional charge (due to risk, urgency etc.)	High	Low
Time frame, predictability	Distant future, low predictability	Near term, with normal predictability
Pace of change	Volatility (frequent and rapid change)	Stability

# Complexity Assessment

The situation you are assessing: \_\_\_\_\_ Overall rating: 5 4 3 2 1

Your assessment of the degree of complexity						
Many variables, with high interaction	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Few variables, with little interaction
High ambiguity	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	High clarity
Many stakeholders, different perspectives, high interdependence	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Few stakeholders, share a perspective, low interdependence
High risk; high urgency (high emotional charge)	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Low risk; not urgent (low emotional charge)
Distant future, low predictability	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Near term, with normal predictability
Volatile (frequent, rapid change)	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Stable

## 2. What is Agility and how can it be developed?

### Part 1: Stages of Development

# Agility

Definition: “The ability to take wise and effective action amid complex and rapidly changing conditions.”

Joiner and Josephs, Leadership Agility, Wiley & Sons (2007)

# Stages of Development



10%



# Example: Reaction to two conflicting points of view

## Expert:

Two opposite poles. Which is “right?”

## Achiever:

Two points on a continuum. What other shades of gray exist between them?

## Catalyst:

What other POVs exist beyond these two?

# Smithville Exercise

## Expert:

Focus on your area of expertise and responsibility.

## Achiever:

Expand to consider the business as a whole.

## Catalyst:

Expand to broader context: social/  
economic/  
political

# Why does Agility matter for leaders and professionals?

“The demands of modern life” present us with “mental burdens” that are more complex than we can manage with the thinking strategies we now use. As a result, we are “in over our heads” in dealing with many aspects of our lives.

Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, Harvard University Press ( 1994)

## 2. What is Agility and how can it be developed?

### Part 2: How to develop Agility

## EXPERT RELIES ON

Expertise. Your own perspective.

“I know the answer.”

Advocacy

“My answer is right.”

Being decisive.

“I know the answer now.”

## ACHIEVER RELIES ON

Collaboration.

Multiple perspectives.

“We each have part of the answer.”

Inquiry

“What do you think?”

Taking the time to gather other perspective.

“Together we will discover to the best answer.”

## CATALYST EMBRACES

Asking different questions.

“What different questions should we ask?”

Being wrong has value.

“How might I/we be wrong?”

Every decision opens new questions.

“What else is emerging from this?”

## Six Practices for Developing Agility

1. Pay attention to the questions rather than the answers. Ask different questions.

2. Become skillful at both Advocacy and Inquiry.

3. Embrace what you don't know. Ask "how might I be wrong?"

4. Practice mindfulness. Slow down. Pause. Reflect. Pay attention.

5. Conduct experiments and see what emerges. Look for surprising results.

6. Seek others' perspectives.

## Other HR Strategies

Talent acquisition

Job design; Org design

Working with Groups: design and facilitation

Internal communications: communicating across stages of development

Performance issues

# Resources and References

Jennifer Garvey Berger

Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World (2012)

Bill Joiner and Stephen Josephs

Leadership Agility: Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change (2006)

Bill Torbert and others

Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership (2004)

Robert Kegan

In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life (1994) (and other books)

Ann Kruse

The Nautilus Project: Expanding Your Thinking Capacity, online learning program at [www.NautProj.com](http://www.NautProj.com).



## 2. What is Agility and how can it be developed?

### Part 3: Who?

- Those in formal leadership roles.
- Those responsible for major initiatives (e.g. post-merger integration, innovation initiatives, cross-boundary work)
- Anyone who advises these groups.

# Why Develop Agility?

“Your competition can copy every advantage you’ve got - except one.

That’s why **the world’s best companies are realizing** that no matter what business they’re in, **their *real* business is building leaders.”**

Fortune, Oct. 1, 2007

# What we've covered today

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# Ideas for next steps: criteria for first steps

- Easy to do.
- It will take 15 minutes or less to do.
- You can do it within the next few days.
- Your action creates a public commitment, so you actually follow up.

# Ideas for next steps

- Take this information to your team. How might you use it?
- Take this information to internal coaches and mentors.
- Read one of the books I recommended.
- Review the content of your Leadership Development programs.
- Look at The Nautilus Project website.

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