Developing Leadership Agility
The key to competitive success in a complex world

Ann Kruse
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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

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

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## Complexity Assessment

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

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

Stages of Development

Expert: I solve problems

Achiever: I achieve goals

Catalyst: I set a direction

45% 35% 5% 5% 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.

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

Part 2: How to develop Agility
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERT RELIES ON</th>
<th>ACHIEVER RELIES ON</th>
<th>CATALYST EMBRACES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I know the answer.”</td>
<td>“We each have part of the answer.”</td>
<td>“What different questions should we ask?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>Being wrong has value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My answer is right.”</td>
<td>“What do you think?”</td>
<td>“How might I/we be wrong?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being decisive. “I know the answer now.”</td>
<td>Taking the time to gather other perspective.  “Together we will discover to the best answer.”</td>
<td>Every decision opens new questions. “What else is emerging from this?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 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?”


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

6. Seek others’ perspectives.
## Other HR Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talent acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job design; Org design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Groups: design and facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal communications: communicating across stages of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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

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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
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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.
I welcome invitations to connect on LinkedIn. Please tell me you were in today’s presentation.