Developing Adaptive Performers

supportive leadership strategies in the context of change

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It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

~Charles Darwin, 1809
The organization of the future: \textit{agile, innovative, adaptive}

Workplaces today are characterized by high volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA environments), which is exponentially enhanced by the increasing application of digital technologies (Fourth Industrial Revolution)
Which sector do you think is most likely to benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution?

- Healthcare: 45%
- Education: 11%
- Finance: 15%
- Infrastructure: 14%
- Energy: 15%

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit Flash poll, January 2016
The organization of the future: 
*agile, innovative, adaptive*

• One of the biggest **challenges facing leaders** is the need to enable organizational adaptability, despite change-obstructing structures and people

• One of the biggest **challenges facing employees** is the need to cope with changing work environments and adapt to changing job demands, while at the same time delivering on prescribed performance indicators
Adaptive Performance

• The behaviors individuals enact in response to, or anticipation of, externally-initiated, work related changes
• Aimed at maintaining performance levels or minimizing performance discrepancies that result from these changes.

Jundt, Shoss & Huang, 2015
How can leaders enable “change-resistant” employees to perform more adaptively in response to changing work demands?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertain</th>
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<tr>
<td>- We lack clarity, or confidence, about what work situations/problems we face and how to handle them, because work situations/problems are increasingly novel</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Information processing and decision making is more difficult because we can’t rely on mental models</td>
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<td>- Increasing uncertainty regarding what the future holds for us at work, or if there is a future for us</td>
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<tr>
<th>Complex</th>
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<td>- The number of elements task work is composed of and the relationships between elements is high</td>
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<td>- Task work increasingly shared between team members assigned to interdependent tasks</td>
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<td>- Makes causal inferences difficult, and personal performance dependent on the performance of others</td>
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<th>Volatile</th>
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<td>- We experience dynamic instability in our work tasks and workload brought about by rapid change</td>
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<td>- Problems and changes emerge in our personal space and require immediate attention</td>
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<td>- Demands often exceed the available resources we need to deal with them</td>
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<td>- We often have little influence in or control over the changes occurring (externally-initiated)</td>
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<th>Ambiguous</th>
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<td>- Situations can be understood in more than one way, or can lead to more than one outcome, making it difficult to identify threats and opportunities, and what outcomes are “successful”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What is expected of us or what we need to do to achieve expectations is largely unspecified or often unclear (role ambiguity)</td>
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Hindrance job stressors: Stimulus at work that create excessive job strain because they threaten our ability to perform effectively.
Amazon customers who bought:

How to Survive Change You Didn’t Ask For

AdaptAbility

M. J. Ryan

Also bought:

50 Things to Do Before Seeing a Psychiatrist and how to actually do them

JOE BALDIZZONE
SELECT

DEVELOP
Developmental Leadership

Supervisory behaviors aimed at recognizing an employee’s developmental needs and goals, and providing the support (e.g., feedback, coaching, learning opportunities, recognition) needed to meet – and exceed – them

Rafferty & Griffin, 2006
Developmental Leaders

• Take the time to learn about each employee’s desires for further development
• Give employees the support and encouragement needed to meet these personal goals and ambitions
• Provide helpful performance feedback and the advice and support needed to improve
• Provide challenges at work that help develop and strengthen employees’ skills
• Make sure employees get credit when they do something that is good

Lai, 2013
## Transformational leadership

*To transform: to making a change in the form or nature of something*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Inspirational motivation</th>
<th>• Setting a compelling vision of a <strong>changed</strong> future state</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized influence</td>
<td>• Serving as the organization’s #1 <strong>change</strong> agent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>• Encouraging employees to initiate productive <strong>change</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>• Preparing employees to perform in <strong>changing</strong> work situations</td>
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Bass, 1985
Developmental Leadership – Adaptive Performance

Helps employees acquire or improve the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to adapt to changing work environments

Enhances employees’ confidence in their abilities to deal with a broad range of work issues, which increases feelings of control over changing work situations

Increases employees intrinsic motivation, which in turn increases their willingness to accommodate future changes at work

Produces the learning orientation needed to engage in more productive coping behavior when faced with changes at work
Who benefits most from developmental leadership?
Employees Less Open to Change

- Generally more skeptical/ resistant to changing tasks and roles
- Less likely to have experience with change

Employees Less Resilient to Challenge

- Do not actively seek out new challenges at work
- Less able to withstand, or cope with, difficult conditions
Less Open to Work Change

- Monthly adaptive performance
- Monthly learning

- Low openness to work change
- High openness to work change

Less Open to Work Change

Developmental leadership

Monthly adaptive performance

Monthly learning

Adapting

Low openness to work change

High openness to work change

Less Open to Work Challenges
(low learning goal orientation)

Adaptation performance effectiveness

Demands for adaptive performance

High learning goal orientation

Low learning goal orientation

Less Open to Work Challenges (low learning goal orientation)

Developmental leadership

- High learning goal orientation
- High developmental support
- Low learning goal orientation
- Low developmental support

Adapted from:
Some employees will experience greater challenges in changing work situations.

These employees will benefit more from receiving developmental leadership.
Developing adaptive performers - what’s needed

1. Empathy for the complexity and challenge employees face in dealing with changing work situations
2. Felt responsibility for enabling employees to perform well in changing work environments
3. Developmental leaders
Displaying Developmental Leadership

- Taking the time to learn about each employee’s desires for further development
- Giving employees the support and encouragement needed to meet these personal goals and ambitions
- Providing helpful performance feedback and the advice and support needed to improve
- Providing challenges at work that help develop and strengthen employees’ skills
- Making sure employees get credit when they do something that is good

Lai, 2013
Supporting Developmental Leadership

1. Role model developmental leadership at the highest levels of the organization
2. Promote a learning goal orientation among those having people responsibility
3. Formalize developmental HRM practices to signal to managers that developing employees is important and to give them resources to provide this support to employees
4. Rethink training and development programs that prioritize «Top Performers». Devise instead inclusive development programs that invest in all employees
Thank you!