



THE LEADERSHIP REPORT

WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO

I was talking with an HRVP recently.

She was clear on what kind of leadership development her firm needed, based on a new competency model by a leading business school. She has plenty to choose from: the new competencies a leader needs to navigate these turbulent times are being proposed and re-proposed by myriad providers, from firms like Korn Ferry to business schools such as IMD.

All of these play to the apparent HR need to define what a good leader has to be.

And once these magical qualities are defined, these institutions can devise programmes and interventions to bridge the gap between what they unsatisfactorily have into what they optimistically think they need.

This can lead some leaders to look in the mirror and ask *"Can a silk purse really come from a sow's ear?"*, with the 360s lurking to add to the stress already suffered by volatile, uncertain, complex and

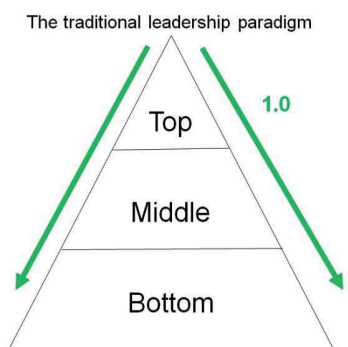


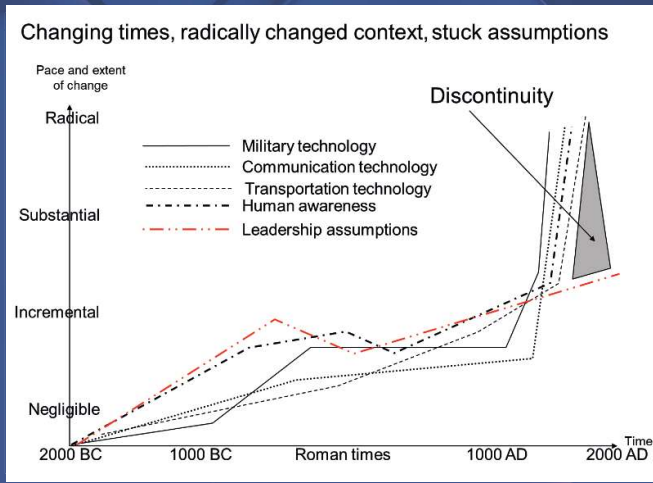
ambiguous (VUCA) times.

However, these re-definitions of leadership all hark way back to the mid-19th century when Thomas Carlyle proposed the "great man" theory of leadership – the hero

who leads the many. The great leader. The person who mobilises the masses to achieve great things.

Since then, we have frequently redefined leadership: from that heroic "great man" leader of 170 years ago, to the decisive directive leader of 130 years ago (Frederick Taylor) to the transformational leader of 90 years ago (Mary Parker Follet), built on and added to the transactional





leader of 50 years ago (James Burns), to the servant leader of 40 years ago (Robert Greenleaf), to the empowering leader of 30 years ago (Julian Rappaport), to the restorative and resilient leader of 20 years ago (Seana Steffen), to the agile leader of 10 years ago (Iacocca and Witney) to the digital leader being defined in several iterations as I write! It's all still mostly Leadership 1.0 - leadership done by leaders. However, it is "leaders" (good ones) that have been redefined rather than "leadership" (which is assumed to be done only by leaders). Leadership 1.0 is still relevant, but no longer sufficient. This view of what leadership is about, something done by leaders, has been around for thousands of years.

So too was the fastest way to cover ground – a horse. But when was the last time you went to work on a horse?

This struggle to define leadership via leaders may explain why we grapple with VUCA times.

We are applying an old paradigm to new problems in a radically different context from the past.

And as HR pursues its view of the perfect leader, the leaders themselves are more concerned with other issues. How can they navigate uncertainty when they themselves no longer know the answers? How to ensure their firms can deliver results? My conversations with business leaders about the need for leadership development have less and less common ground with the HR professionals who are supporting them.

Maybe Tina Turner was right – that we don't need another hero. Maybe what we need is a new paradigm for leadership itself...



Nick Obolensky

Nick Obolensky
 Founder, Complex Adaptive Leadership

WHO ARE COMPLEX ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP?



CAL is an ISO certified global firm which combines modern western Complexity Science with some ancient Chinese wisdom to enable leaders to get better results, faster for less resource/effort, resulting in enhanced organisational agility.

Our interventions extend mindsets from Leadership 1.0 (traditional, albeit redefined many times, with leadership done by leaders/managers, downwards), to cross-boundary organisational Leadership 2.0 (where leadership also has to go sideways and outwards without "formal power"), to Leadership 3.0 (where leadership needs to go upwards with leaders needing to enable and learn to follow the people they lead, and followers needing to learn to take the initiative and lead themselves) which all combine into Leadership 4.0 (where leadership becomes a dynamic, not just a role or attribute).



For more information visit: www.complexadaptiveleadership.com