

The GR8 VUCA Leader Tool

Summary of dimensions

VUCA Approach

An effective manager in a VUCA world is capable of being preoccupied both with the organization and signals from the external environment, optimally adapting the pace of the decisions and changes he/she implements, paying attention to the details that matter, and implicitly to the impact on his/her people. He/she can approach quick methods of action without getting bogged down by ambiguity (*Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018*), clearly communicate a clear vision that is adapted to new conditions.

A manager displaying a VUCA Approach does not remain rigid in the face of impediments that can stall progress, motivates through personal example, creating opportunities for others in the organization to achieve success (*Kouzes, J., Posner, B., 1987, 2012, 2017*).

Great People Inside description: They are positive and enthusiastic, believing that to every obstacle there is a positive side. They adapt their management style to the particularities of the organization and team, being aware that the same efficient management style cannot be replicated in any organization. They have a good understanding of the constantly shifting economic environment, being capable of communicating a clear and motivating vision. Before making a decision, they analyze its pros and cons. They prefer postponing a decision, rather than making a mistake, but own up to their mistakes when they do arise. They are mindful of the feelings and sensibilities of others but do not make compromises only to please them.

Managing Generations

The leader of today must adjust his/her communication/questioning, but also delegate tasks according to the generational typologies around him/her. He/she can explain and show how the knowledge and skills of each, in the frame of inter-generational collaboration, can solve a situation that the group faces, motivating and making the team more efficient. Harnessing the traits and abilities of each generation, in a flexible, unbiased way, will reduce the uncertainty of many situations and increase the level of control in an otherwise ambiguous situation (*Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018*).

Great People Inside description: They demonstrate a flexible managerial style that is adapted to each generational typology. They use techniques for motivating direct reports, adequate to the features of their generation. They are aware that no generation is better than the others and that performance and engagement in professional activities is not necessarily related to age. When they form their team, they attract people from both younger and older generations, using the characteristics of each generation and encouraging intergenerational collaboration to obtain high performance.

Strategy

The VUCA manager makes good predictions, correctly anticipating future trends, starting from a careful analysis of the available information. He/she prepares managerial tools that can help him/her make quick and good decisions in critical situations (e.g. signaling thresholds, approval lines in different scenarios etc.). He has the talent to quickly understand the nuances of the ever-changing work environment and to be excellent at adapting to the global context (*Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018*). With a very good overall perspective, he/she is able to think of long-term, global plans, to customize and execute them based on the local particularities of his organization, and to adjust them in the short term. He/she inspires others to look to the future as well and develop their creative thinking processes. In keeping with the overall vision he/she has, he/she follows the steps necessary for its implementation, consistently and with discipline, remaining open to new approaches that can increase the efficiency of his actions.

Great People Inside description: They are attracted to activities that involve designing long-term strategic plans. They are aware that every change should be supported by a unique, custom strategy, which may not be replicated from one company to another. When making decisions, they prefer carefully analyzing all available information, being interested in how they are affected on the long rather than immediate term. They encourage the team to look to the future, so that present plans and actions may be effective. They understand the business in its entirety, are disciplined and consistent in their decisions, being open to new, innovative approaches.

Openness to Experience

Effective managers in the VUCA environment are curious, full of ideas, with a rich imagination, being aware that change is the only constant. They are motivated by changes that bring progress. They do not show excessive caution in the face of risk, tolerating it well (*Volini, E., Roy, I., Schwartz J., 2019*). Managers who score high on the Openness to Experience dimension understand things easily, are not afraid of failure, accepting the challenges that can teach them something different than traditional professional practices.

Great People Inside description: They carry the conversation to a higher level, having an advanced vocabulary. They can process a great deal of information, easily understanding things and have a lot of ideas, being vividly imaginative. They like to read thought-provoking material that helps them act beyond a traditional style based only on their own experience. Such people are motivated by changes that lead to progress.

Connection to Others

The VUCA manager is always by the side of his/her people, truly appreciates the group and team spirit, enjoying working with others. He/she spends time with others, interacting and socializing with ease. Cooperates amicably to contribute constructively to the group's success and make it responsible, without seeking personal gain. Communion and familiarity, as well as communication of the expectations of both sides (manager-subordinate) will support the feeling of belonging to a common goal and vision, increasing the interpersonal confidence at the level of the whole team (*Bick, R., Yu, T., Chang, M., Wang K., W., 2020*).

Great People Inside description: They find it easy to relate to those around them, feeling comfortable when doing things together with others. They make friends easily, substantially expanding their circle of friends, year by year. They are able to empathize with the states of mind and problems of their friends, feeling, in turn, understood by those close to them. When there are conflicts in their circle of friends, they tend to look for ways to reconcile. They like getting involved in social responsibility activities, helping people for free.

Stress and Resilience

Resilience in the face of stress in a VUCA manager is his/her ability to handle adverse events, risks, failures and difficulties, even major ones, being prepared and adapted to a high level of complexity and ambiguity without showing anxiety, and without giving in. Optimism, being well grounded in the now, with flexibility in the face of change, are ingredients of the behavior of an efficient manager who will manage to withstand failure, accepting and acknowledging it sincerely, and quickly learning the lesson that comes with it (*Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018*). Also, as the VUCA manager transforms failure into training for risk-taking, he/she will also emotionally balance things in the group, recognizing the effort made by each, celebrating achievements whenever they occur (*Kouzes, J., Posner, B., 2017*).

Great People Inside description: They make decisions and act with determination and composure, particularly in complex, risky or unusual situations, being capable of accepting failure and learning from their own mistakes. When they fail, they treat their failure with optimism, only requiring a short time to recover. Unpleasant events, stress and moments of uncertainty don't affect their quality of life, comfort or energy level. They are well-organized.

Result-orientation

The manager of VUCA shows professionalism regarding the fulfillment of tasks, looking for new ways to improve his/her professional performance. He/She is actively involved in managerial activities, respects his/her tasks strictly and is persevering and focused on accomplishing them.

Growth in the VUCA world initially requires investment in learning - learning from the past (experience), learning from the present (exploration) and learning from the future (experimentation) (*Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018*). The best leaders know that one learns the most from one's mistakes, not their avoidance, so the VUCA manager is not afraid of failure and manages to quickly learn what initiatives and actions are needed for correction.

Great People Inside description: They easily identify specific actions that can lead to better performance, as they are astute and easily find new methods of solving situations that seem difficult or unsolvable. They have a great capacity to focus on the tasks they need to carry out. They constantly assess their experiences to learn how to improve their work, learning quickly from their mistakes.

Leadership

Leadership in situations of major changes and obstacles firstly needs a clear vision of achieving goals, assertively and equitably conveyed to team members, motivating them, inspiring them to get more involved than they have undertaken through their personal goals (*Kotter, J.P. 1990*).

The VUCA manager shows enthusiasm and passion in completing tasks, leads by his/her own example and knows how to recognize the team's achievements and successes, rightfully rewarding them. The efficient way in which he/she leads people by capitalizing on their abilities can reduce the uncertainty of many situations and instill a level of better control in an otherwise ambiguous situation (*Kouzes, J., Posner, B. 2017*).

Great People Inside description: Directs and guides a group of employees or an organization; establishes a clear vision and conveys it to others; inspires employees to perform and have increasingly better results.

Building Vision and Purpose

The VUCA manager succeeds in communicating an inspired and convincing vision and a sense of understanding of the purpose throughout the organization. A good strategist, with an overview of the long-term goals, he/she also encourages others to get involved, being convinced that the team must adhere to the organization's vision to be successful. He/she influences them through charisma, seriousness and persuasion, while being aware of the need for practical efforts and, implicitly, inciting to action (*Kouzes, J., Posner, B. 2017*).

Great People Inside description: They are good strategists, having an overall vision of the long-term goals of the organization, which they share with others with the purpose of inspiring and motivating the team or organization. They feel that for a team to be successful in an organization, it needs to adhere to the vision of the organization. They encourage the involvement of team members in building development strategies.

Courage

The ability to take initiative, face obstacles and cope with major changes, failure or stressful situations are behaviors within the Courage dimension.

In the VUCA world, the context in which the manager acts requires precisely such behaviors, without fear of risks, without regrets or victimization in the case of failure. A manager who is adapted to VUCA times will dare to face challenges, take risks, and display confidence (*Kouzes, J., Posner, B. 2017*), with responsibility for more complex projects and tasks.

Great People Inside description: They have initiative, are optimistic and confident in their own strengths, seeing failure as temporary and surmountable. They are curious, being open to new, unexpected things and experiences. They are considered by others to be trustworthy, reliable, which is why they are often called upon to lead groups or projects. They are guided by the motto "No pain, no gain".

Flexibility

The proven ability to adapt when in complex roles and environments is a behavior associated with professional success (Araoz, C., F., 2014). Being malleable, open and constructive in the face of change and conflict, when there is no clearly defined plan or when one does not know exactly what changes might occur in due course (an environment characteristic of the VUCA world) makes one react in a faster and more well-adapted manner, being able to change the perspective and mode of action if the feedback one receives is negative.

Great People Inside description: They easily adapt to new styles and work environments and have no trouble integrating into groups different from the one they are part of or into new workplaces. They are open to changes, being willing to adjust their work schedule anytime it is necessary. They treat conflict constructively and are proactive after a negative feedback.

Curiosity and Self-awareness

The VUCA manager is that well-documented manager, who studies a problem in depth and wants to get out of his/her comfort zone, seeking to explore and better himself/herself, to be informed, relate to what is not yet known to him/her, without confining himself/herself to what is strictly necessary to ensure his/her functioning in professional and social life.

Challenged by the complex and difficult situations, attentive to his/her inner feelings, he/she is aware of his/her strengths, as well as his/her weaknesses (Chauhan, A., Kumar, A., Joshi M., Abidi, M., 2018). His/her receptivity to feedback is high because his/her interest in personal and professional growth and development is particularly important in his/her case.

The VUCA manager will use what they discover and understand, sharing it with others, listening with interest to their viewpoints, and helping team members succeed.

Great People Inside description: They are curious, like to look for answers, to test things so that they may understand how they work, thoroughly documenting themselves when trying out something new. Situations that seem hopeless motivate them, as they are capable of managing and solving problems even at difficult or highly complex times. They have a capacity to anticipate failure. In a discussion, they prefer listening to talking and, before expressing their view, they study what others have to say. They generally pay attention to their inner feelings. They avoid routine.