

Introduction: Leadership in the Digital Age

In section 1, we had discussed the fact that digital transformation is a lot more than incremental technology change and it has to be end to end. In section 5, we further built on this theme and emphasized that digital transformation cannot happen without organizational transformation. We also explored the various elements of organizational transformation. In this section, we will focus on the role of leaders in the digital age.

Digital age and this VUCA world are a great test for leaders. They have the responsibility for navigating their business through uncertain times while making sure that they are driving innovation and a growth agenda and are being cheerleaders and role models for the employees. Clearly, leadership in the digital age in the VUCA world is not for the fainthearted.

From managers to leaders

'Manager to Leader' sounds like a cliché, but it is very true in the digital age. In an era of unprecedented uncertainty and change, traditional tools of management like structure, strategy, planning and policies not just lose their effectiveness but can become a roadblock.

Instead you need vision, inspiration, intuition, collaboration, and ability to constantly adapt. This requires a shift in the expectations of executives from being efficient managers to entrepreneurial leaders.

Fundamentals of leadership do not change

Even though this is the VUCA world, the fundamentals of leadership do not change. The most important aspects of leadership remain: the focus on giving rather than getting, the ability to inspire others, and the courage to do the right thing. However, building these leadership fundamentals is easier said than done. A key challenge for enterprises and leaders is how to inspire and develop the next generation of leaders.

Managing duality becomes more important

Digital age poses many contradictions that leaders need to respond to—vision/strategy versus execution, growth versus profitability, short-term versus long-term, customers versus employees, data versus intuition, man versus machine, and many more. It is not enough to find the trade-offs on these complementary values, but leaders need to find win-win solutions. This increased need to manage duality is an important expectation of leaders in the digital age.

Balance and Sustainability are also critical

The breath-taking pace of activity is a defining feature of the digital age, but it is also one of its biggest challenges. The pace, the frenzy, the growth obsession, have significant repercussions at all levels—the individual, the organization, and the society. Individuals are at a greater risk of burnout, anxiety and depression. At society-level, the obsession with growth is resulting in irreparable damage to the environment and is creating grave socio-economic issues. All of this is leading to a world that is increasingly volatile, violent and

unsustainable. I strongly believe that leaders in the digital age have a responsibility not just to their enterprises, but to the society as a whole. First, they need to find balance within themselves. I believe spiritual practices and meditation can be very helpful for leaders to centre themselves and find peace within. In addition, they need to consider how they can build an ethical foundation for their organizations and make a broader contribution to the society.

I have explored these themes across the chapters of this section.

Chapter 1: My Leadership Beliefs

In this chapter, I have shared the core leadership principles that I believe in and try to live by. The leadership fundamentals for me are helping others realize their full potential, making a difference, building a compelling view of the future, courage, trust-building, connecting, integrity, balancing the head and heart, humility and being true to yourself. Leadership beliefs act as a compass pointing us in the right direction. They act as the beacon that lights the way and enables the team to navigate uncertain times.

Chapter 2: How Great Leaders Inspire Others: The ‘5 Cs’ Formula!

In this chapter, I have tried to cover why inspiring the team is important and what is the best way to do it. Across the previous sections, we covered the fact that an organization’s ability to win in the VUCA world depends not just on the leader but also on the readiness and ability of the team. Whether it’s through role modelling, creating a compelling vision or effective storytelling the role of the leader is pivotal in inspiring others. Getting others to sign up for a higher purpose, go beyond the call of duty, beyond their ordinary limits and achieve great results. To be able to do so, the leader has to care, connect and inspire them from within.

Chapter 3: How to Create Great Leaders

For enterprises to succeed, it is important for the leader to not have the sole responsibility to drive change and deliver on enterprise growth targets but build a team of next-level leaders who are driven, empowered, customer-centric and have the right level of expertise to own and deliver outcomes. To be able to build a team of great leaders, first we have to believe that everybody has leadership potential within them. Second, we need the right trigger of experiences to **unlock it** like providing stretch assignments and teaching through role modelling. Before you ask others to follow suit, you have to live the values you want them to demonstrate.

Chapter 4: Mastering Duality: A Key Skill for Leaders to Succeed in the Digital Age

Among the challenges the VUCA world throws at leaders, most of which have been dealt with in the previous chapters, this one is particularly unique. It is a very critical need for leaders to manage contradictions or seemingly conflicting objectives at the same time. Because of the level of volatility, leaders will need to be agile, consistently evaluate scenarios and go beyond making trade-offs to mastering operating with duality to succeed. Those who are able to master this skill will grow to a different level of professional maturity and impact.

Chapter 5: Spiritual Balance—A Necessity in Today's Digital Age

In this chapter, I cover a topic you might not expect to find in a book on digital transformation: the need for spiritual balance! The unprecedented pace of change has increased expectations from leaders and their teams on various fronts—to lead the firm through this period of uncertainty, stay on top of the digital transformation

implications for their firms and build their own capabilities. While this has led to its own share of stress, what adds to it is the constant stimuli and distractions provided by the extraordinarily digitized and interconnected world, consisting of multiple gadgets, 24x7 connectivity and social media. All of this does not provide us with an opportunity to take a breather and reflect. As a consequence, stress levels are increasing, and people are developing serious health problems. I feel it is imperative to develop spiritual balance to centre ourselves, prioritize, clear our minds and focus on things which are most important.

Chapter 6: Sustainable Development—Rethinking Consumption

In this chapter, I wanted to take a moment to pause and recognize the fact that we are, by nature, competitive and will constantly strive for growth and challenge the status quo. Our current mental and economic models—individual, corporate, societal—are driven by growth. We are driven by ever-increasing needs and desires and the constant race to fulfill them. However, if left unchecked, it can spiral out of control and lead us down an unrecoverable path. My recommendations are to drive a set of prudent actions for sustainable development. At an individual level, it is to balance spirituality and materialism; at the corporate level, we should put customers before profits; and, for our society, it is for all of us as citizens to take the initiative and drive positive change.