21ST CENTURY LEADER: AGENT OF CONNECTION

Recent world events have underscored the importance of adaptability. The past decade has seen a new era in the globalization of the world economy, with major strategic and operational implications for businesses worldwide. Globalization has created an environment of complexity with intensified competition, as companies strive to be among the two or three leaders in their industry. Organizational leaders are already being confronted with additional markets, multiple stages of product development and many stakeholders, and must build more complex yet flexible organizational structures in order to survive.

In a business environment of great uncertainty and rapid change, the central strategic discipline is organizational capability. Increasingly, a company's strategic options are defined by its organizational capabilities – the quality and motivation of its people, the flexibility of its organizational structure and the openness of its culture. As a result, organizational leaders are rapidly entering the **Innovation Age,** an era characterized by constant *innovation* to gain a competitive advantage. According to a 2003 J.D. Powers survey of 300 companies in 33 countries, innovation is already the primary strategic initiative for 90% of companies and considered an essential competency for success. In this age of innovation, a CEOs' core task is the role of designing and implementing the "right" infrastructure in a rapidly changing world environment.

WHAT? – THE CHALLENGE

The world is increasingly complex and uncertain, as 'more, better, faster' has become a common refrain. The future, arriving more quickly than anyone would have predicted, is being shaped by a combination of globalization, societal changes and major technological advances.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a product of increased trade, expanded labor pools, improved telecommunication and the Internet and has resulted in the breaking down of economic, social and political barriers between countries. In the face of this hyper-competition, the global organization will need to adapt their strategies and processes to meet new market requirements and will also seek multi-lingual leaders with international experience, comfortable with diversity and able to communicate across cultures.

Business Trends:

- ➢ Increased global interdependence in which even the smallest fracture in the business infrastructure will be globally felt.
- ➢ Struggle to be one of the worlds top 5 companies as America loses its' innovative edge to foreign countries.
- ➢ Effects of decreased labor pool as potential employees move overseas or relocate to find work in growing economies.
- ➢ Learn new ways of communicating and dealing with a growing amount of diverse cultures and languages as the global community becomes even smaller.

SOCIETY

The dramatic shifts in society will have a strong impact on business. Organizations will need to shape business strategies to meet demographic changes, which will be reflected in different employee expectations. We can expect to see an altered employer-employee relationship, with greater instances of contract workers hired to carry out specific (highly specialized) functions. Additionally, past and current corporate scandals will directly impact employees' trust of organizations and will shape the future leaders business and organizational initiatives.

Business Trends:

➢ A new, and more knowledgeable, workforce that prefers life to work and will demand a more flexible schedule, stimulating work and freedom to work outside the office.
➢ Creating a more enticing work environment to attract and retain employees and combat the expensive effects of "job-hopping".
➢ In era of corporate scandals, the need to re-create corporate trust and loyalty between employees and organizations.
➢ Becoming more socially responsible and work towards building relationships with social groups, ethics committees, etc.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology seems to be moving so rapidly that there is a great temptation to assume that extraordinary advances, which we presently know nothing about, will transform life in 2024. Technological improvements are enabling the world to become continuously connected and will have the greatest effect on business relationships. For example, by the year 2015, more then 50% of employees will perform their jobs at least partially from remote locations[1] and many client relationships could be managed without ever having to meet one another. Although technological improvements could replace face-to-face communication, it will create many new challenges for the future leaders.

Business Trends
➢ The de-humanization of the workforce with more employees working from home and face-to-face meetings becoming obsolete.
➢ Increase in employee corruption and less feeling of moral responsibility due to social disengagement and technological isolation.
➢ Relocation becoming out of date as technology enables more employees to be able to work for an organization from across the country or the world.
➢ Increase in competition from individual and smaller firms.

The Impact

The world continues to evolve into a free market environment, eventually resulting in one big market, with all of us acting as players in that market. As these dramatic shifts occur, organizations will find themselves functioning in one interlocking system, sharing resources, labor markets and consumers. In addition, ongoing improvements in technology will further decrease boundaries. Already, one can sit anywhere and communicate instantly anytime and almost anywhere. Imagine attending a 'virtual' meeting with colleagues on every continent, facilitated through a giant plasma screen connected to the phone or computer.

Think of the world as a system comprised of inputs and outputs across boundaries, which constantly interact with each other in a dynamic process that stimulates (or yields) value. With this perspective, thinking locally is no longer an option. Likewise, one can also think of an organization as a system, it too is comprised of interacting elements (people, business functions, etc) that acquires inputs (raw materials, knowledge) from its environment and transforms them into marketable outputs (products / services) to be discharged into the external environment. Likewise, the world can be depicted as an organization. The following visual illustrates this concept:

Globalization has impacted our current business environment and will continue to do so. With outsourcing and offshoring, many manufacturers have migrated production to facilities in the developing world, just as service providers have done with their customer support function. So far, these developments have brought new job opportunities to the developing world, where labor cost is low. At the same time, they will lead to redeployment of labor and reduced costs in the developed world – a benefit to both parties. Increasingly, Americans (and their counterparts in other developed nations) are afraid of becoming marginalized, as they perceive their own job functions as disappearing. However, some argue that these trends will not mean fewer jobs, but rather many new jobs involving innovation and strategic management where the knowledge is centered.

Welcome to the 21st Century (21C)

A typical 21C organization will reach different countries and cultures, all connected through a complex web of technology. A typical 21C employee will be nimble and able to function in non-linear ways as noted below:

| Characteristics of the 21C Organization	Characteristics of 21C Employees
• Global/Multi-national • Virtual • Creative web • Customized (environment, society, its employees and clients) • Values based • Dehumanized • Flat • Flexible • Diverse • Innovative • Technical oriented • Supports the desire for work-life balance	• Multi-lingual • Effective communicators • Proactive • Specialized • Adaptable to change • Values based • Individualistic • Team-oriented • Flexible / fast • Diverse • More creative • Technical oriented • Searching for work-life balance

NOW WHAT? – THE RESULT . . . INNOVATION

These dramatic shifts are forcing organizations and people to become significantly more innovative. As legendary GE chairman Jack Welch said in many different ways, the only sustainable competitive advantage is to innovate and change faster than the fastest competitors – just as a racecar driver who goes the fastest is the most talented driver in the fastest vehicle.[2] Extending Welch's metaphor, as future organizations travel along the road of competition, leaders in 2024 will also ride on the most resilient tires and have the most responsive brake systems.

THE *NEW* 21C LEADER

Leadership propels organizations along these roads of hairpin turns and blind curves that extend further and further out from core business. Being a global leader is no longer an option – it's a requirement for maintaining a strong and secure place in the market. The role of the 21C leader will be to encourage – and practice - *innovation* as the lynchpin of competitive advantage.

Guiding effective organizations will require nimble leaders with the skills, abilities and knowledge to master the 'new'. Those who are going to be the innovators are going to be the leaders, just as those who are most astute at working across cultures will be successful. This may be a paradigm shift and requires new leadership roles.

We believe that successful 21C leaders will exhibit a combination of these six leadership roles - *Vista-Leader, Innova-Leader, Adapta-Leader, Collabo-Leader, Communi-Leader and Edu-Leader*.
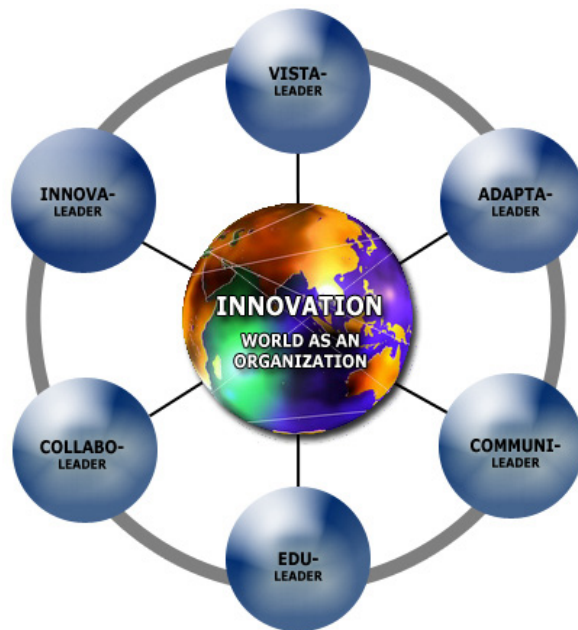
(1) VISTA-LEADER (FUTURIST)

STRATEGY AND BUSINESS - - - FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

The Vista-Leader focuses on the future. S/he is a visionary who digests the 'now' and understands where the organization needs to focus. This leader is an optimist, creating symbols and mileposts to rally folks around the vision and managing forward to get there. The Vista-Leader is able to see a clear path to the future while the rest of us are stuck staring at the clutter. S/he is able to establish an organization wide "trends-radar" (a7-5) in which all employees are encouraged to look out for developments that will shape the future of the organization.

ROLES:
o Visionary - anticipates future organizational challenges
o Envisions organizational / team direction – vision from the top
o Inspires others to action
o Foresees, anticipates the landscape of the future
o Provides direction; manages forward
o Has the courage to be true to his/her own values
o **RESULT:** Improves organizational effectiveness

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:
o Strategic thinker
o Able to conceptualize
o Able to see the 'big picture'
o Capable of breakthrough thinking
o Communicates a compelling vision
o Capable of inspiring and motivating entire units / organizations
o Able to project decisiveness in the face of the unknown and unknowable
o Is not blocked by boundaries – either physical, cultural or business function
o Anticipates future consequences and analyzes / identifies the most desireable outcome

THE VISTA-LEADER AND FUTURE TRENDS:
o Globalization – The Vista-Leader will be able to forecast new global areas of development and develop business strategies to encourage future organizational growth.
o Society – Vista-Leader will spot future societal and workforce trends/demands and determine organization initiatives to accommodate and become leader.
o Technology – Vista-Leader will be able to discern which technological advances are best for their company and utilize them to the organizations best advantage.

(2) INNOVA-LEADER (INNOVATIVE)

IMAGINATION AT WORK - - - FROM CHAOS TO PROCESS

The Innova-Leader seeks new ways to achieve competitive advantage, draws on all available resources to achieve organizational objectives, and puts clever ideas into action. This leader is comfortable dealing with the unknown and enables organizational success through the creation of innovative culture and structure.

ROLES:

o Always operates from innovation – *it's a frame of mind*
o Produces competitive advantage through productive creativity
o Creates chaos to get to better ideas
o Forms protected 'hot houses' (temporary conceptualization monopolies) to ensure competitive advantage
o Shapes the organizational culture / structure / processes and benefits to support innovation
o Consistently reinvents him/herself
o **RESULT:** Encourages innovation, creative thinking and imagination

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:

o Abstract thinker
o Challenges the status quo
o Able to hold competing / conflicting ideas simultaneously
o Has a high comfort level with the unknown and can therefore challenge the organization to take risks – without needing to control everything
o Sticks to a commitment and stays 'on purpose'
o Able to take a concept from idea generation through implementation
o Can take an innovation and create the business context / structure within which it can thrive

Future Trends and The Innova-Leader:

o Globalization – The Innova-Leader embraces the chaos and uncertainty of globalization because through it they can create an atmosphere of creativity and innovation.
o Society – The Innova-Leader understands the constant societal changes and changes organizational culture and structure to support new societal and workforce norms in order to gain the most competitive edge.
o Technology – The Innova-Leader ?

(3) ADAPTA-LEADER (RESPONSIVE)

CHANGE AND TRANSITION - - - FROM ENDINGS TO NEW BEGINNINGS

The Adapta-Leader is a master of duality. S/he manages dual forces and is not daunted by working through out-of-sync phases and processes.

ROLES:
o   Multi-dimensional, capable of looking forward, backwards, and sideways
o   Presides over endings and beginnings
o   Manages (dual) opposite forces
o   Monitors paradoxes (not controls them) to create organizational tension and responses
o   Is fast and flexible
o   **RESULT:** Responds to organizational challenges and sustains the organization

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:
o   Flexible
o   Fast thinker
o   Able to analyze and prioritize data
o   Possesses 'Intellectual horsepower' and mental agility
o   Understands the 'big picture' and how it relates to local conditions
o   Can work to sustain organizational values while promoting / encouraging huge shifts
o   Has a systems perspective of change, incorporating global and local perspectives
o   Can make sound decisions in an ambiguous and uncertain environment
o   Able to learn from experience and adjust course accordingly

Future Trends and The Adapta-Leader:
o   Globalization – The Adapta-Leader will be able to quickly respond to immediate global business disasters and devise ways to sustain the organization through the immediate future.
o   Society – The Adapta-Leader will understand how societal and workforce changes and spot the hot issues that will have major effects on the organization.
o   Technology – The Adapta-Leader will be able to sort through the deluge of information that technology throws at the organization and swiftly understand what matters and what doesn't

(4) COLLABO-LEADER (RELATING)

MASTER FACILITATOR - - - FROM TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN TO RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN

The Collabo-Leader understands the importance of building and nurturing relationships. S/he balances individual components with teamwork and partnerships that occur across borders.

ROLES:
o   Maintains and builds collaborative relationships
o   Helps to influence shared outcomes
o   Is a great people manager - relates to people and finds out what is going on in the organization
o   Manages diversity and cross-cultural differences
o   Facilitates teamwork –From "Me to We"
o   Creates alliances, partnerships, group efforts, associations, cooperations
o   **RESULT:** Enhances collaboration and creates a community

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:
o   Networker
o   Facilitator
o   Influencer
o   Develops a support network
o   Effective at relationship building
o   Capable of creating and building virtual teams
o   Employs various management styles to deal with multiple generations in the workplace
o   Manages in an environment of diversity –across cultures and across multiple generations
o   Strategic partner – works well with customers, suppliers, external constituents and investors

Future Trends and The Collabo-Leader:
o   Globalization – The Collabo-Leader will clarify expectations that exist as a result of cultural and generational differences between co-workers, allowing teams to become more functional and effective.
o   Society – The Collabo-Leader guides the team in establishing trusting and mutually beneficial relationships which direct individual work towards group objectives.
o   Technology – The Collabo-leader is able to create and sustain unified virtual teams despite the many technological and geographic barriers.

(5) COMMUNI-LEADER (SHARING)

BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING - - - FROM INFO GATHERING TO INFO SHARING

The Communi-Leader supports and opens channels of communication and dialogue among internal and external stakeholders. S/he encourages various groups to share critical information by creating the climate for ongoing effective conversation.

ROLES:
o Opens up channels of communication
o Creates the dialogue – coaches the conversation
o Creates bridges of understanding, knowledge sharing and goodwill with global stakeholders
o Technology doesn't replace the need for human interaction – the medium might change, but the conversation content remains
o **RESULT:** Enhances internal communication

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:
o Listener / listening skills
o Understands different styles
o Reads body language well in meetings
o Grasps nuances in verbal conversations
o Has effective speaking and presentation skills
o Reads between the lines in written communications
o Communicates both personal and organizational information
o Designs new communication strategies using technology innovations
o Enables executive chat rooms, online leader access, and e-conversations
o Is a great communicator with all parts of the organization. Gets past barriers.

Future Trends and The Communi – Leader:
o Globalization – the Communi-leader learns ways to communicate through cultural differences that develop across the organization and with global business partners.
o Society – the Communi-leader creates an environment of trust through attentive listening and effective dialogue.
o Technology – the Communi-leader does not allow technology to close down communication with his/her organization; the leader actively develops new technology to maintain and enhance communication within the organization.

APPLIED INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT®

(6) EDU-LEADER (DEVELOPING)

PEOPLE FOCUS - - - FROM TALENT MANAGEMENT TO TALENT TRANSFER

The Edu-Leader focuses on transferring talent from anywhere at any time to where it is most needed. S/he thinks about how to develop people.

ROLES:
o Talent manager
o People developer
o Cross training enabler
o Teacher, learner, trainer, career paths director
o Guide - Provides guidance, learning opportunities, facilitates growth
o Gives / receives feedback
o **RESULT:** Enables talent transfer

SKILLS/BEHAVIORS:

o Trainer
o Learner
o Developer
o Feedback communication skills
o Able to identify, develop and retain talent at all levels
o Understands how to match talent with the need across the organization
o Knowledge and understanding of career paths in a global business environment
o Tailors development activities to the particular strengths and development needs of the individual, team and organization regardless of location, position or role
o Adapts traditional practices – apprenticeships, sponsorships, group mentoring, retreats
o Participates in outside positions / projects – "loaning" employees on learning projects
o Uses technology to enable e-learning advances, e-mentoring/shadowing and e-job rotations

Future Trends and The Edu-Leader:
o Globalization – the Edu-leader manages talent and growth across the organization, giving individuals and teams the opportunity to adopt innovative roles and gain global experiences.
o Society – the Edu-leader provides learning opportunities that allow individuals to reach professional objectives while also helping the organization to remain sophisticated and advanced.
o Technology – the Edu-leader utilizes technology to enable continuous learning and development of the organization's individuals and teams.

Final Thoughts

We believe that in the next twenty years the role of the OD consultant will change from **Agent of Change** to **Agent of Connection**, as organizations that survived the early years of 21C will have undergone fundamental changes and overcome the ongoing pressures of global competition. While leaders have always faced organizational challenges, never has a broader understanding of the **World as an Organization** been more essential and the role of the leader as the **Agent of Innovation** as critical. The next generation of leaders need to focus on innovation and connection in the workplace. As technology fragments human connections, leaders must focus on re-humanizing them. Therefore, the future leader will **enable the CONNECTION**.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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[1] Cetron, Marvin, and Davies, Owen, Probable Tomorrows: How Science and Technology will Transform Our Lives in The Next [19] Twenty Years, St. Martin Press, New York, 1997.

[25] *Organization 21C,* page 1 / J. Welch and J.A. Byrne, Jack: *Straight from the Guts, New York: Warner Books, 2001.*