

A Perfect Storm of Change

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It's called VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity & Ambiguity)

The world is changing faster than it ever has before. Fuelled by never before seen and ever more complex interactions between people, places and technology, the world in which our commercial organisations are operating is going through unprecedented change.

For many of us working in organisations – for both our leaders and our workers – this rapidly changing world can be incredibly confronting and stressful. And at times, it can just seem downright scary. And that's OK. It's normal to feel this way in times of rapid change and increased uncertainty and ambiguity. So don't worry, you're not alone.

The reason most people and teams – and by default, the organisations that we have created to get things done in society – don't like rapid change and uncertainty is because the human species has evolved over time to deal with gradual change (we call this linear growth). In fact, we've proven ourselves to be a truly remarkable species in this regard.

But we've now gotten a little too clever for our own good – rather than just evolving to change with the times, we've actually managed to create the change ourselves, via

technology. And this type of rapid change (it's called exponential growth) is the type that only gets faster and faster.

And therein lies the problem.

Humans are not suited to deal with rapid paced, exponential change, nor the uncertainty and complexity that it brings.

As individuals, in our teams and in our organisations, we find exponential change not only difficult to respond to, but also difficult to even understand in the first place. It leads us to feeling overwhelmed by a seemingly never-ending onslaught of information overload, disruption and chaos. Our natural response to this exponential change is to disengage from it. We bunker down and try and ride out the storm.

In the old world of linear change, we were able to successfully deal with change by traditional, methodical, hierarchical and bureaucratic procedures and organisational structure. But in the new world of exponential change, these traditional methods no longer work—in fact, they're starting to fall apart. They are too heavy, and too slow. We can no longer bunker down and ride out the storm, because the storm will outlast us.

We need a new way of doing our work in this new world of uncertainty, complexity and exponential change.

Light and Fast


It's a new way for organisations to deal with uncertainty.

There are better ways in which we can better to and adapt to this unprecedented exponential change. Rather than simply aiming for robustness and resilience to withstand the change, we need to aim for adaptability to the change, so that we can improve through the change. The best way for us to do this is to reassess our traditional, hierarchical and linear approaches to the things that we do in our organisations. As an alternative, the solution in the face of exponential change is to create networked, flatter, autonomous teams.

Rather than reacting to our surrounding environment and depending upon the linear structures and centralised leadership of our traditional organisations, we need to focus on our developing internal skills, insights and traits which will enable us to pry ourselves away from our reliance upon linear structures and leadership.

Colloquially, we refer to this approach as going light and fast. And it just so happens that a small band of mountaineers have been developing this light and fast approach to mountaineering for many years. It's called Alpine style.

And now the time is right for this approach to be taken from the mountains and applied into our everyday working lives. Light and Fast is the solution to the problem of the VUCA storm.



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