

# The **EDGE**

## Uncertainty & Agility Toolkit

January 2022

# To get the most out of this workshop

Uncertainty normally means a period of change for people who are engaged on the workshop. You will be challenged, stretched and encouraged to see things differently, to learn new things about yourself. Often this process is, like dealing with risk, uncertainty and ambiguity, is uncomfortable at times for most people.

We encourage you to continue to reflect on what you've learned, yes, a lot of the insights happen AFTER the session. But only if you're paying attention and willing to lean into growth.

As you will have noticed, there was a WHOLE spectrum of different thoughts and feelings unfolding, both throughout the information sharing and during the live exercise.

Remember, we spent 1 hr priming you on the topic of uncertainty, challenge and change. When the exercise happened some people immediately spotted the signs, some people disengaged, some people defaulted to how they normally feel when in an 'uncertain' situation, some people were front and centre (in the whatsapp group) some people were 'observers' – just like in real life, when change happens.

Below is a **summary of small 'nudges'** to help you build these further insights.

- Always pay attention to what's happening, not what you **THINK** is happening, but what actually is happening. Notice the 'weak the signals', if something feels off it probably IS off – look for the new rules.
- Certainty and chaos are both perceptions. They don't really exist. If you want to change your experience, consider looking at it differently. Changing your perception is where the difference lies.
- We wanted you to **pay attention to your emotions**, some of you felt curious, determined, others had feelings of being bored, disengaged and getting frustrated. This is exactly what we expected (especially from those not playing the game). Part of the learning is acknowledging that the feelings we had during the game are often feelings we face when encountering change or uncertainty and when feeling disempowered (like 'I have no role to play here') - especially when others are in control of the change and we have to 'just observe' (like in org changes). One of the points of the session is to hose us the place our emotions play in both causing us to perceive things in certain ways (based on our values and beliefs) and in driving our actions, AND how our emotions are a useful warning sign that something is 'wrong'. Something needs to be looked at again.
- Remember the first session '**Self-leadership**'? Tune into your emotions, ask yourself why you are getting bored/frustrated etc. what is that doing to your behaviour? (avoid blaming others and/or the situation) – get curious. When you regulate your emotions, move from frustration to curiosity and play, that's when it becomes easier to see the new rules at play. It ALL comes back to our 'inner game'. The moment we feel like disengaging – it means it's actually time to step back in. It is what it is. You can only change how you think and feel about it.

- If you felt **not included, disconnected, disengaged** (because you don't know or care about chess) remember this was NOT chess. The point of the exercise was to demonstrate that the people who lean back (because they don't understand Chess and they think that matters) are actually the people **we most need to lean in** – they are the people who if they engage (even though it seems pointless) will lead us out of '*being stuck in the old rules*'. This was not an exercise for people who play chess, we never said it was chess, your minds decided that for you. Too often in uncertainty we default to the 'perceived' experts, when actually most of the time **we need novices to solve the unseen problems**. Where else are you feel disengaged? Is it time to reengage and look for new rules?

## 7 things to do to get the best out of uncertainty

### 1. Allow yourself to be uncomfortable

Know that being uncomfortable or feeling at risk is a good thing – it is the precursor to change and part of our lives. Don't run away from it.

### 2. Be honest

This can be surprisingly difficult at times especially when our ego and self-image is challenged. The more honest you are the greater the results.

### 3. Remain open

If you find yourself thinking that something or someone is wrong, or bad or odd or any number of other negatives it is usually a sign that the current ambiguity is causing you to close your thinking down. This is a good sign to listen harder, look deeper and ask better questions.

### 4. Stay engaged

Flight behaviour (our emotions driving our behaviour to remove ourselves from a situation we don't like or recognise, by switching off, running away, using humour to make light of a situation etc.) needs to be recognised for what it is. Flight behaviour will slow your development. More about this later.

### 5. Respect all others

Treat others, their ideas and contributions like you would like you and yours to be treated. Everyone in this workshop is learning. People who make mistakes learn. People who don't make mistakes don't do anything and don't learn.

### 6. Contribute

If you think it say it. The only stupid question is the unasked one. The only stupid contribution is the unmade one. The more you contribute the more learning you will gain and the more you will help others.

### 7. Experiment

Take a risk – that's what this workshop is about, getting good with risk and uncertainty. Fortune favours the brave.

# The 6 Elements

Identify work examples of:

## 1. Uncertainty

## 2. Things that make you feel negative

## 3. Ambiguity

## 4. Things that are frustrating - could be any of the above

## 5. Discomfort

## 6. Anxiety making issues / situations



**Paradigm  
Paralysis  
or  
Legacy  
Thinking**



## Responses to Ambiguity & Uncertainty

1

**There is only one certainty**

- \* Be certain about your certainty

2

**Do something else**

- \* Displacement behaviour
- \* Flight behaviour
- \* Freeze
- \* Aggression
- \* Panic

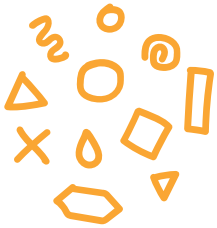
3

**If in doubt fool yourself**

- \* Denial
- \* Create a new certainty

**YOUR JOB IS  
TO FIND THE NEW RULES**

# Finding the new rules



Diversity –  
use non-experts



Play –  
it doesn't matter  
where you start



Collaborate



Experiment -  
Methodical and  
systematic



Create hypotheses



Aim to Break the  
hypothesis



Wait for emergent  
properties



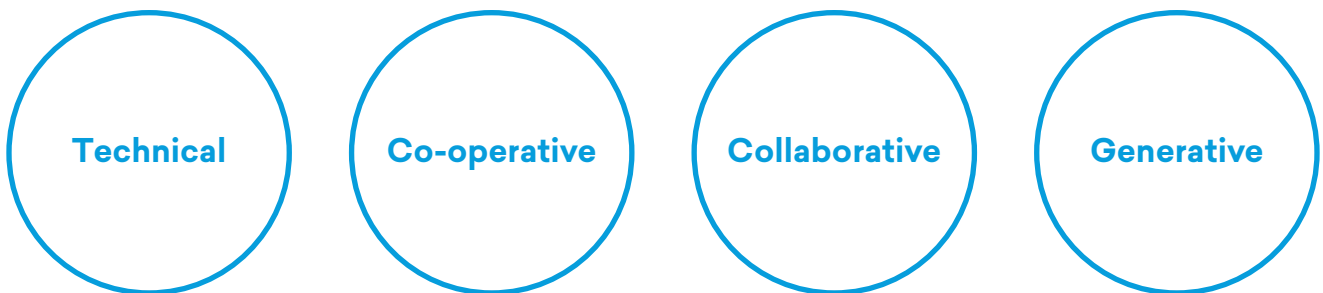
# Modes





# MODE = A way of thinking

## Modes of Leadership



### Each mode describe a person's:

**Cognitions** – The way they think and see the world

**Affects** – Their emotions and reactions to them

**Beliefs** – How they think the world works – operating instructions

**Actions** – Their behaviour in certain situations

## MODE 1

### Technical Leadership



#### Good at

- Following 'characterised' procedures
- Making incremental changes
- Postponing reward
- Staying safe
- Standardising procedures
- Leading from the front
- Detail



#### Struggles with

- Risk & Ambiguity
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Non standard thinking
- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Co-operation and collaboration
- Strategic concepts (big picture)



#### Reactions to ambiguity

- There is only one certainty
  - \* Be certain about your certainty
- Do something else
  - \* Displacement behaviour
  - \* Flight behaviour
- If in doubt fool yourself
  - \* Denial
  - \* Create a new certainty

## MODE 2

### Co-operative Leadership



#### Good at

- Minimising risks
- Using others as resources
- Team focus
- Solving cooperative problems
- Democracy
- Listening
- Task Focus
- Diversity



#### Struggles with

- Taking bigger risks
- Conflict
- Weighing up the facts
- Competing values and ideas
- High innovation
- Lack of change
- Too much change



#### Reactions to ambiguity

- Heightened awareness of negative emotional reactions to ambiguity
- Moves to reduce discomfort
- Conflict = discomfort
- Tries to reduce ambiguity and conflict by
  - \* Simplification
  - \* Appeals to cohesion and loyalty (the team)
  - \* Cooperative strategies
  - \* Behavioural frameworks etc. that promote compliance
- Creation of rules / policy – reduction of uncertainty

### MODE 3

## Collaborative Leadership



### Good at

- Aligning values
- Equality
- Meetings
- Relationships
- Feel good
- Empathy
- Emotional Intelligence
- Consensus
- Exploring risk
- Greater levels of ambiguity



### Struggles with

- Leadership
- Lack of productivity
- Difficult people
  - \* Individualists
- Breaking out of COWDUNG
- Lack of change
- Non conventional thinking at first



### Reactions to ambiguity

- Recognise the ambiguity
- Adapt to the situation
- Interest in change (of others)
- Will seek recourse to the consensus of the group/team
- Will try to 'solve' ambiguity to restore the natural order of things

### MODE 4

## Generative Leadership



### Good at

- Working with Ambiguity
- Complexity
- Finding opportunity
- Agility and change
- Speed
- Innovation
- Focus
- Using experts
- Defining problems
- Emotional Resilience
- Learning and unlearning



### Struggles with

- Working with certainty
- Lack of change & stability
- People who need time
  - \* To understand
  - \* Change
  - \* Produce things
- Procedures, policy and rules
- Incremental change
- Lack of speed and agility
- 'Small talk'



### Reactions to ambiguity

- Very happy with the existence of ambiguity – worries if it's not present
- Looks for emergent properties and opportunities inherent in situation
- Spends lots of time on problem definition and trying to discover reality
- Uses diversity of thinking and approaches to gain the advantage

<b>What is happening?</b>	<b>My feelings / emotions</b>	<b>My thinking</b>	<b>My behaviour</b>

<b>Conclusions – What it means to me</b>

<b>Plan – What I will do next time</b>

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