



Intuition in the VUCA world Challenge for leaders, facilitators and trainers

The constant development of new technologies, high staff turnover rates and ever changing economic conditions are making it increasingly difficult for businesses to establish a strategy for long-lasting success and to make 'the correct' decisions.

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Complexity, interdependency and uncertainty require a flexible and innovative structure and balanced change management. And you need leaders that know how to motivate and support their staff and how to create team spirit. Whenever we find ourselves in circumstances that are already volatile (unstable), uncertain, complex and ambiguous, it's important to train our own intuition. As it is advisable to keep calm and pay attention to your gut feeling and inner voice. To get a feeling yourself for how the situation feels, what seems difficult, in order to reduce unconscious fears and not be driven by your emotions. And ultimately - which ideas or future scenarios will arise.

Intuition is about having the perception skills to recognise trends and the unknown, to reduce complexity, to generate (exceptional) ideas, to have an instinct for potential outcomes and 'the best current solution' – when the world seems unpredictable and chaotic. Therefore, finding the solution to a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous VUCA world presents major challenges for both companies and their employees.

Companies have an urgent requirement for 'new employees' who can operate in a credible and auto-



nomous manner, show enthusiasm and create innovation within their team, who are good at networking and bring sustainable solutions to the business, - and understand current priorities in this crazy, complex world. These are all skills that initially relate to one's personality (self-management) - especially the intuitive skills. In addition intuitive facilitation skills are needed to turn a group into a team with good spirit and flow.

For the most part, corporate cultures have not yet been aimed at VUCA-environments, that's why leaders are pushing the hierarchical boundaries and existing structures, 'employees do not want any more

responsibility and commitment'. One project example illustrates how future managers can create this potential and the significance of this for trainers and facilitators.

Dynamics of change within an organisation – challenges for future leaders: project example

In the group of companies with 900 employees in the media sector, the aim is to enact quick change at a systemic level and to manage the VUCA challenges.

- › Large-scale change dynamics and the speed of change prevail acutely: to hold your own in a cutthroat market, to grasp new products and market opportunities in an increasingly fast-paced digital world of change (volatile), in which it's rare to be able to plan or predict what will be successful (the future is uncertain, ambiguous).
- › It is important to manage the increasing complexity, to integrate different divisions, companies and acquisitions, to evolve from a traditional line organisation to a well connected project and complete business organisation.
- › Moreover new synergies must be created through a new culture of leadership (complexity). This

also means a high pressure to change is placed on the employees - to optimise internal processes, to create links between divisions and business units, speed up this process and establish the necessary skills for this. Personal responsibility and proactivity are required now – which will also reduce uncertainty. Management are also now being required to effect change in a successful and results-oriented way – a quantum leap in the direction of Change Leadership and Performance Management.

Leading in a VUCA World – preparing young managers for the future

In order to meet these new challenges a growth programme was devised, in which young staff members are also adequately prepared for the management of company-wide projects. Participants from every department are given coaching as part of a shared development process with multiple workshop modules and receive support for the implementation of a strategic project. The topics covered range from self-management and personality to communication, the management of teams, multi-projects and business processes. Unlike previous trainee programmes, participants take on personal responsibility from the start for their own shared learning process.

The training concept itself varies according to the challenge – participants experience a fluid transition between training and job (project),

while the role of the trainers changes constantly from input providers and training supervisors to moderators and coaches, and they are also facilitators.

What are the EFFECTS of the new concept?

The challenge consists of improving participants' potential through ongoing contact and creating scope for this – an intuitive and attentive approach. The applied methods are already well-known from other development programmes - a good mix of practical and theory, from input and exercises to practical case studies, business games, learning, reflection and transfer. The process dynamics are distinguished by the intuitive ability to sense and develop a culture of appreciation, trust and openness.

An effect is created within the group that can be best described as flow¹ or team spirit and provides scope for the exceptional development of potential, which differs from the group dynamics of the other programmes. The effects are manifested in:

- › **High motivation and self-responsibility**

Participants exhibit an extremely high identification with the company. The group appears to be greater than the sum of its individuals, while there is also no 'in-group' or driving force. A productive team spirit is noticeable. Less focussing on problems and more 'how can we manage that, what are the possibilities?'. An intrinsic motivation to get things done is apparent, even in the face of obstacles. For

example, there are significant barriers and areas needing work within the organisation such as a poorly supportive management style by some of the managers. The participants in question vary between 'something needs to happen', the company villain who says: 'leave things as they are' and the prevailing self-responsibility, 'I will do whatever I can' rather than waiting for someone else to do it (for me). There is little 'grumbling', releasing of frustration or feeling like a victim of circumstances – do just what you can to create change (I would describe it as a proactive flow that circumnavigates any obstacles) – on an equal footing.

- › **A great openness** and high level of trust exists both within the group, amongst participants and between participants and trainers – on an equal footing. Especially in small coaching units, individual topics are introduced that motivate participants to do the job itself, which they hardly mention in the job. And they motivate themselves to reflect on their own areas of development and to take on feedback, bring themselves out of their comfort zone and build intuition and the ability for reflection.

- › **Create synergies within the company - transfer:**

At the organisational development stage, there is a deep understanding of other people, hierarchies, the relation between the company and its environment, which creates new opportunities. The participants network throughout the company's departments, form new networks and develop a different understanding of work

performed in other departments. New, unusual concepts are tackled: For example, a few sales representatives from 3 product areas arrange to meet in a seminar to visit customers together and put together some cross selling or even a complete package – which their bosses had possibly never contemplated.

For the first time in any of the development programmes, the trainers have little to do to stimulate the transfer of knowledge to the company. The group feels personally responsible for the knowledge transfer and the collective project, even moderating the transfer themselves in the meantime, while the trainers maintain a low profile and provide methodological support. The participants present the fireside gathering themselves, along with senior management staff and project managers - in a presentation methodology devised by the World Café, which is new for both them and the organisation. The whole event takes place on an equal footing and this format is a first for the management staff – resulting in a productive interaction. The group gives plenty back to the company through a practice-based project run in association with the programme. As part of the 2020 company strategy, their demanding project aimed at attracting employers is largely completed autonomously.

- › **At the same time, there is pressure for change** ‘from the bottom up’ – the new leaders want things to be run differently, request feedback and opportunities from their seniors, and also for them to take

seriously the leadership required by the company as a route to self-responsibility.

These effects are elements of the leadership required for dealing with VUCA worlds. Below is a description of the role played by intuition in the above described effects, how the underlying internal training process is designed and how intuitive concepts are required both at facilitator level and amongst participants.

Design intuitive processes

If such effects ‘are produced’, is this a result of coincidence or methodology?

Within the ‘magic’ triangle of setting, mindset and methodologies, it is important to create this holistic process – the development of a generative learning environment and the achievement of a flow state:

- › Appreciative attitude and working on practical topics on an equal footing with the participants. The participants are responsible for their own development and goal

setting, while the trainers provide support for these objectives in a coaching role.

- › Use a methodological approach to create scope for co-creative dialogue, reflection and engagement.
- › As a trainer, be mindful and have resonance with the group in order to get a feel for the mood and needs of the group and participants: what is currently happening? How does that feel? What are the group’s present needs?² (intuitive skill)
- › As a facilitator, work at an intuitive level in parallel with workshop events, methodologically integrate intuitive insights (provide methods, structures and form for the development), thereby intervene selectively and carefully. Interventions could take the form of paradoxical exaggerations to reflect the mood and design or providing feedback in order to give transparency to what is happening subliminally, e.g. blockades or ‘relapses’ into cantankerousness or non-listening within the group.
- › Allow the group dynamics to ‘happen’, welcome obstacles as

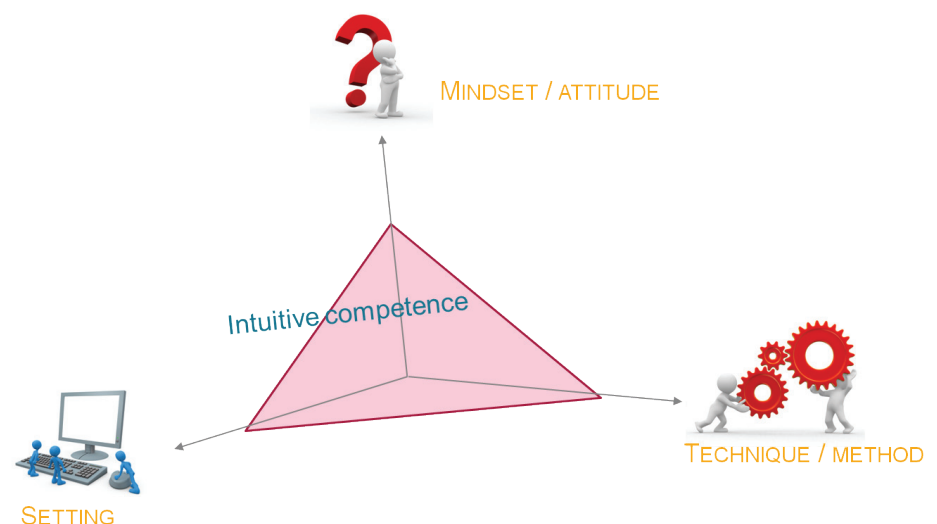


Fig. 1 Intuitive Competence

a necessary element, engage with participants on an equal footing and take a look into the depths of their feelings/emotions, in other words, below the water's surface as conveyed by the image of an iceberg.

- As co-creator, be present and see the potential, which is important for creating the future – the generative field will build up.³

There is another level beyond the 'normal' training, which enables participants to develop their intuitive skills – it's better to discover and utilise this. Intuition training, however, requires a particular environment and the ability of the trainer to 'train' intuitively themselves, and to intuitively manage the channels of perception and learning routes and find the 'lever' for change.

The basis for this is to respond to the feelings and needs of the participants and to make changes to things yourself within the workshop process and put in place methodologies aimed at achieving scope for team spirit and a sense of being - 'I can be myself here'. This also means letting go of your own control and personal ego (claim to power) and having trust in the collective process. It's not the trainer and having the perfect concept that are important, but the effects produced amongst the participants. The acknowledgement ('controlling') occurs through the recognition and feedback from the group - and subsequently the transfer and stimulus for company development.

This is demonstrated by the inner approach of the trainer⁴ and by the manner in which challenging practical exercises and different methodologies are combined to create a setting

in which 'more is possible'. Participant feedback is the mostly compose of: 'A good mix of theory and practice', 'varied – I didn't notice at all how fast the time went' and a whole new level of learning and experience. Potential is revealed and the flow of playful learning is experienced - team spirit emerges and more is possible. The role of the trainer is to recognise these dormant abilities and bring about the process (emerging), watch over it and provide methodological support. Moreover, this applies equally to co-creative leaders who provide direction and support for the teams.

Achieving flow intuitively in the workshop – how to train intuition?

Training is about establishing what is possible here and now, while finding the balance between pressure and maximum potential and the familiar and previous accomplishments, – to open up the flow channel. Below is a list of 10 points for designing training sessions and workshops that promote this team spirit and intuitive potential at the same time.

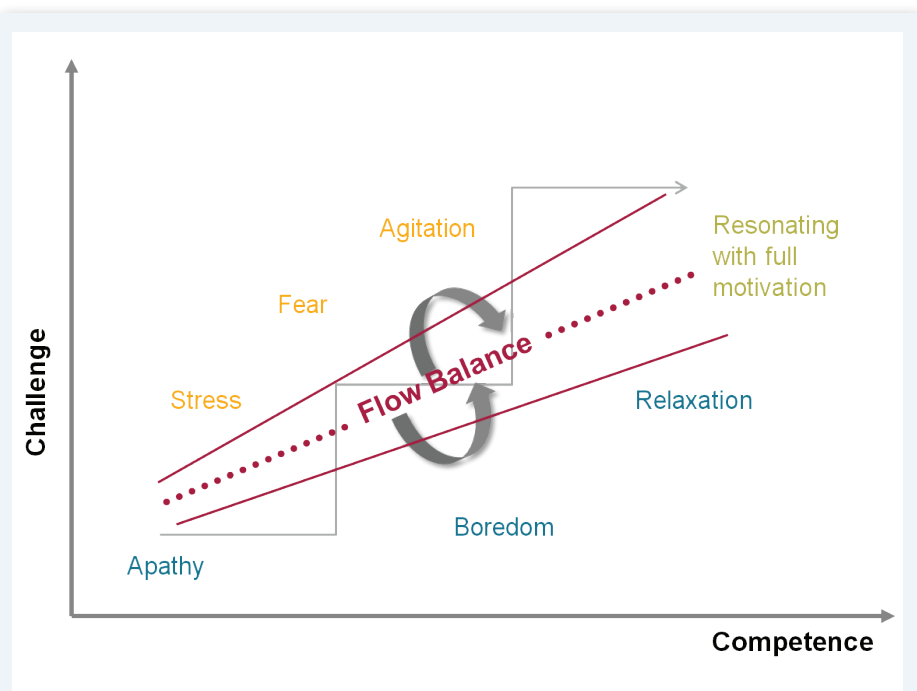


Fig. 2 Flow Balance

'Social systems, where learning and flow take place in a similar vein and people grow into their roles, develop into vibrant companies that are sustainable in the long term if contexts are provided for them that promote learning, free interaction and creativity. (...) Flow is achieved either when excessive demands lead

to uncertainty or work underload leads to boredom and a balance is created between challenge and routine. People want authentic surprises and familiar qualities. Innovation should thereby provide compatible challenges, if possible, that are based on prior experience but bring visible new benefits.'⁵

1. When **preparing** the first stage and before each module, it's advisable to enquire about the current aims and expectations and practical situations of the participants in order to align these with this workshop. These could appear as random concepts, which could still be incorporated into the module and with which the methodology could also be totally redeveloped. The trainer's manual is adapted, the aspiration level for the participants is mostly very high, the percentage of practical work and exercises > 75% - a high emphasis is placed on doing and experiencing things for yourself.

2. **Developing the environment** – flow space

This development of the environment is an invisible and largely involuntary process and therefore also difficult to describe (the part of the iceberg below the water's surface). Whenever this energetic environment builds, a group feeling emerges that transcends all the borders and divisions of the participants and the initial divisiveness (opinions and preconceptions about each other or 'the other' departments) gives way to a sense of unity. The participant feedback at the end of such workshops shows that they found working together to be really great and better than expected. The team members introduce themselves and their talents/aims/aspirations to the group. Personal initiative and self-responsibility are the basis and prerequisite for the emergence of a sense of unity. The effect is perhaps best described with the flow feeling - positive feelings

create synergies and creative space.

3. Use **group exercises for perception** and relaxation

The exercises should be applicable to the workplace and everyday life, even in dealing with stress and emotions.

4. Use a **learning model for perception** and intuition – in this development programme, a personality test model based on Carl Gustav Jung's typology is used, which describes two perception preferences – intuition and feeling.

5. **Individual coaching** to induce the access to individual intuitive strengths and inner resources. This initial study is concerned first and foremost with making contact with their inner world and in 'playing about' with the conflicting forces. In this way, the coachee can approach self-reinforcing issues and also learn to understand better their reactions from the Body Mind System and to use this to face inner conflicts and build up resources. As a coach I don't give any tips or solutions, but intuitively follow the path of the coachee and whose access to the unknown, whose inner landscape are anchored in the resources and solutions are found at a deeper level.

6. Change of methodology and **following group energy**

It's about having the right balance, with the right amount of energy to make the learning compatible. When to withdraw the energy, when more of the same is too much - so that the group process simmers but doesn't boil over. That

has a lot to do with demanding the greatest potential, but not too much so, and recalls the flow path. When is the right time for what, when is it important to pause, when to change the methodology, when to leave something as it is, what will possibly recur later. It is important to balance out the coherent mix of individual and group work, practical exercises, theory and reflection.

7. **Design the workshop process like a change process**

More careful introduction - prepare learning and activity fields - good exit

When do I allow steam to be let off (start of by gathering participants, conflicts in the middle of the workshop), when do I close the lid again on things (at the latest during the transfer and activity planning).

8. Nurture a **change of perspective**, pattern perception and the internal observer with the aid of practical cases – improve the participants' ability to reflect

9. Question everything (inwardly) once more, gather feedback and **trust the process** and exemplify 'it'.

10. 'Always start with the objective'.⁶

Always **focus on the objective**, be attentive to the individual development goals of the participants – aim for maximum potential and thereby achieve at last the minimum objectives (=workshop goals), find solutions using a healthy pragmatism: what works, works.

Benchmark is used, among other things, to crosscheck expectations at the beginning of a workshop and the evaluation at the end.

Innovation and future are created in the generative field

In these current VUCA times, we don't know exactly what the future holds, but we can intuitively design the generative process that gives rise to the future. Such a process of self-organisation is subject to hidden dynamics that can be recognised and influenced using intuitive skills in particular. Trusting in your own intuition and self-management gives the individual person guidance in times of uncertainty. The development of a interconnected, generative field within the organisation – as evidenced in the group of trainees – immediately

brings direct added value to the company. At the same time, this affects the culture and creates new possibilities for dealing with a VUCA world in a more flexible and dynamic way. In developing these skills, a great potential lies dormant – quantum leaps and innovations are possible, complexity is penetrated as quickly as possible and reduced to the essential, while the capacity to act is attained within intuitively foreseeable development trends. Charismatic, co-creative leaders and High Performance Teams have and instinctively use these strengths. Intuitive intelligence within the company is the key to survival and sustainability – “just let it flow”.



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Birgit Tali Menne participates for 30 years in advanced trainings in intuition and perception, geomancy, body mind techniques, focusing, trance work and hypnotherapy; executive trainings in the nature and change process accompaniment training (Dr. Peter Kruse). She has been accompanying for 15 years companies in change processes, leadership, (international) development programs, coaching and personality development - also young professionals.

Note

- 1 Flow is a sense of harmony with yourself and the contemporary world. In this case everything works in self-organisation within a company. See Czikzentmihaly 1996, 2004
- 2 See also Precensing (Otto Scharmer)
- 3 Similar to the trance processes by Stephen Gilligan (hypnotherapy)
- 4 Mindset of the emerger/co-creator
- 5 https://www.wiwi.uni-siegen.de/inno/download/pdf_dateien/3._relationales_management_-_auf_dem_weg_zum_flow.pdf P. 26
- 6 “Always start with the goal.” Insoo Kim Berg, solution focused brief therapy