

## Management and Performance Associates – November - December 2016

### Is your 2017 survival kit ready?

VUCA (an acronym for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) is a concept which was introduced by the US Army War College in order to define a world of discontinuity and turbulence, as a result of the end of the Cold War.

VUCA is ever-present in the organizational strategy setting. It is part of conversations to enable leaders to continue to obtain results. VUCA needs to be present when training and developing staff so that they become capable of breaking and changing paradigms—to figure out what needs to be improved and what needs to be innovated.

Every day, we are more and more exposed to environments with these four characteristics, and when facing these scenarios we are presented with the option of behaving like a victim or a like a protagonist. Whichever our choice, determines our ability to respond to the challenges imposed by these environments. Furthermore, it will impact our development and employability.

Let's explore each of the VUCA elements and identify what needs to be included in our kit to positively deal with these challenges.

#### **V - Volatility**

A volatile environment is characterized by unexpected challenges and instabilities of unknown length. It is normally associated with quick changes, which are without a defined trend or clear pattern.

#### **U -Uncertainty**

Although information about the situation may be available, the event's causes and impacts are not known or predictable. Frequently, changes in a VUCA environment have a disruptive nature so knowledge about the present and past are not enough to forecast the future.

#### **C - Complexity**

Complexity of the situation is characterized by the existence of many variables or interconnected parts, some are available and predictable, but understanding them becomes challenging due to their sheer volume or nature.

#### **A - Ambiguity**

Ambiguous situations present a difficulty to clearly understand what is going on, which makes causal relationships completely unclear. Normally, we are talking about situations where precedents do not exist.

A solid technical knowledge related to our deliverables is not enough. In order to positively respond to these scenarios our kit needs to include different kinds of competencies. The following are some of the key ones:

#### **Resilience**

In unstable – and sometimes unpredictable environments, resilience is the number one competency in your survival kit. Perhaps one of the best definitions of resilience is the chorus of a popular Brazilian song, which translates to: “acknowledge the downfall, don't feel discouraged. Get up, dust yourself off and take the high road.” In other words: when facing changes, instability and turbulence, an emotional recovery is needed as soon as possible to move to understanding the scenario and solving the problem.

#### **Sense of urgency**

The faster we understand what is happening or what is about to happen and the earlier we act on it, the greater the possibility of finding the proper solution to challenges. Agility and proactivity are critical to providing quality responses.

#### **Innovation**

Many times, VUCA environments require untried actions and solutions. More of the same is not enough to stay competitive. A critical decision is the choice between improving the status quo and breaking paradigms. The best outcome will depend

on a deep understanding of the situation and the ability to assess the capacity of current processes and structures.

### **Communication**

VUCA environments require the capacity to build and share a vision; to communicate in a clear and assertive manner; to build, organize and express ideas; and the skills to listen and understand other points of view. These are needed either to develop a solution or to find a way to overcome adversities, turbulences and ruptures.

### **Openness to the diversity of ideas**

Complementing our competencies, knowledge, experience and worldview with the perspectives provided by our team members will generate the synergy and engagement which are critical to achieving success.

Although VUCA environments bring higher levels of discomfort, it's in this discomfort that we have the opportunity to show our value, to strengthen our competencies and to increase our employability.

We hope 2017 brings many development opportunities. Check your kit and be prepared to start a new journey with the confidence needed to be successful in the new year. Happy Holidays

**MAPA Consulting can help you and your team to develop these competencies.**

**See you next time. As always, we welcome your feedback.**