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# THE VUCA-PLUS ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY

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**The Center for Personal and Organizational Assessment**

**The Professional School of Psychology**

# The VUCA-Plus Environmental Inventory

We are living in a very challenging world—and it is good on occasion to gain a perspective on the nature and strength of specific challenges. This inventory provides you with a series of questions about the environment in which you are working and living. Please imagine that you are being interviewed about the challenges that you are facing and respond to the interviewer by offering (checking) one of five options as to the accuracy for you of a specific description. There is no one correct answer for everyone—especially given the many different settings in which people completing this inventory are likely to be working and living. The only correct answer is your honest appraisal of each statement.

Here is a brief description of each option you can check:

**Never Accurate [1] =** I find that this statement is not at all related to the current environment in which I work and live.

**Rarely Accurate [2] =** This statement might occasionally be applicable to the current environment in which I work and live.

**Sometimes Accurate [3] =** I find this statement to be applicable with some regularity to the current environment in which I work and live.

**Often Accurate [4] =** I find this statement to be applicable most of the time to the current environment in which I work and live.

**Very Accurate [5] =** I find that this statement fully captures the daily reality of the environment in which I currently work and live.

# Tell me about the environment in which you operate.

1.Many different natural and human environments must be considered when planning for any initiative

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

2.There always seems to be a new environment with new technology requiring a lot of experimentation and testing before implementing new initiatives.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

3.There always seems to be multiple interpretations of the current environment—with emerging technologies mudding up the water rather than providing clarity.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

4.It is hard to predict the outcomes related to many initiatives given the chaos that often reigns supreme.in the environment.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

5.All thoughtful considerations in planning for most initiatives require attending to multiple geographies, locations, and cultures

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

6.The environment always seems to be changing when planning for and managing an initiative.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

## Tell me what it is like to plan for an initiative at this point in time.

7.When planning for an initiative, it is common for some changes to be easily made while other changes are very difficult is not impossible to enact.

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

8.When planning for an initiative, it is common for many relevant situations to be quite divergent in their form and/or context.

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

9.Multiple sets of regulations, documentation requirements, laws, procedures and political interests must always be taken into account when planning for and managing most initiatives.

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

10.It is often hard if not impossible to make valid plans or choices in response to events—given current information that is available.

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

11.There are many "unknown unknowns" in the world when planning for an initiative.

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

12.When planning for and managing any initiative there are often rapid changes of circumstances

| **Never Accurate** | **Rarely Accurate** | **Sometimes Accurate** | **Often Accurate** | **Very Accurate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **[1] ____** | **[2]____** | **[3]____** | **[4]____** | **[5]____** |

**Tell me what it is like trying to figure out if something is operating successfully at the present time?**

13.Deliverables associated with specific initiatives usually can't be easily defined or assessed.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

14.It is rare regarding any initiative that there is clear governance and straightforward decision-making.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

15.Competing "hidden agenda" always seem to be abundant regarding most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

16.It is hard to determine the outcomes related to many initiatives, since the available sources of information are often in disagreement.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

17.Outcomes are not easy to envision with regard to most initiatives

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

18.The scope of most initiatives is elusive--not well defined and without firm approval of all relevant constituencies

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] _____ | [2]_____ | [3]_____ | [4]_____ | [5]_____ |

**Tell me how you are dealing with the information needed to do something under the current circumstances?**

19.There are many risks associated with not being able process all the information correctly when planning for most initiatives

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

20.When planning for and managing an initiative there usually are both predictable and unpredictable circumstances.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

21.it is often hard to identify all the stakeholders and their relationships to an initiative when planning for and conducting these initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

22.Most important initiatives seem to reside at points of profound and often heated contention.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

23.Causal relationships related to a specific initiative often seem to be changing. It is hard to rely on anything.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

24.Relevant information is often hard to obtain when planning for an initiative

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

## Tell me about what it looks and feels like to be operating in our current environment

25. The environment looks and feels like white water swirling around me.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

26. The environment looks and feels like a heavy, enveloping fog.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

27. The environment looks and feels like a massive tug-of-war between competing parties.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

28. The environment looks and feels like a heavy enmeshed network of many nodes/points/boxes.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

29. The environment looks and feels like it is being plotted as a wavy line on a chart.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

30. The environment looks and feels like an expanding cone of possibility.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

## Describe how you manage in the midst of our current world.

31. Rapid changes in supply/availability of needed resources are common with regard to most initiatives.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

32. Many parties must often be involved in an initiative: subcontractors, organizational departments, multiple organizations.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

33. Most initiatives seem to be filled with competing interests and desired outcomes.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

34. The "real" agenda never seems to be very clear regarding most initiatives

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

35. Can rarely use only a few and proven technology components when planning for and managing an initiative

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

36. Connections between tasks are rarely clear when managing an initiative.

| Never<br>Accurate | Rarely<br>Accurate | Sometimes<br>Accurate | Often<br>Accurate | Very<br>Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

**Tell me about how decisions are made and how risks are assessed in the world where you operate.**

37.Risk factors are not well known and are often hard to document regarding most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

38.Most initiatives require interfacing with multiple technologies, projects and/or operations

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

39.Risk factors are often a source of contention. It is often hard even to agree on how to document the risks associated with most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

40.It is hard to define, determine or manage risk when planning for most initiatives

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

41.It is hard to establish and maintain known, well-defined objectives with regard to most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

42.Risk factors are not well known and are often hard to document regarding most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

## What is known and what is not known in the world that you live in each day?

43. When planning for an initiative, most of the necessary information is well known and accessible. However, the vast amount of information makes it hard to navigate once the initiative is underway.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

44. There often is not agreement on what is "knowable" and what is "unknowable" in the world when planning for an initiative.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

45. Most initiatives seem to reside at the border of human knowledge and at the boundary of the future.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

46. The cause of an event is understood, but it is unknown when and which implications it will have if any at all regarding most initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

47. Solid contracts can rarely be relied on throughout the duration of an initiative

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

48. The "knowns" and "unknowns" related to a specific initiative often seem to be shifting. It is hard to remain certain about what we know.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

## Tell me about the potholes and pitfalls that often are encountered in your execution of a plan.

49. There are many stakeholders associated with most initiatives—often with time zone/cultural differences

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

50. There never seems to be adequate timeframe with good slack in schedule when planning for an initiative

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

51. When planning for an initiative, it is common for many relevant situations to be unique in their form and/or context.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

52. Some stakeholders associated with specific initiative never leave (even if we want them to go away), while other stakeholders don't seem to hang around very long (even if they are critical to this initiative).

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

53. Some information is available with regard to specific initiatives, but the volume or nature of this information can be overwhelming to process.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

54. There is rarely agreement regarding what is "hidden" in the agenda and what is readily apparent for all stakeholders to see.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

# A few final observations about your work at the present time

55. Despite a lack of other information, the basic cause and effects of specific events as they relate to a specific initiative are known, which means that change is possible but not a given.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

56. It never seems to be simple to do planning—there is rarely straightforward/sequential execution

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

57. It is rare that an initiative has been engaged many times before. This makes it hard to learn from the past.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

58. There is usually no agreement among the stakeholders regarding the desired deliverables associated with specific initiatives.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

59. It is hard to determine the outcomes and causal relationships related to many initiatives, since there is no past information to help predict these outcomes.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

60. We seem to be living in a time and in an environment that is filled simultaneously with rapid change, repeated change and non-change> It is quite a mixture.

| Never Accurate | Rarely Accurate | Sometimes Accurate | Often Accurate | Very Accurate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] ____ | [2]____ | [3]____ | [4]____ | [5]____ |

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS INVENTORY**

# Ψ

**The VUCA-Plus Environmental Inventory**

# Score Key

## Directions

To determine the total scores for each of the six environmental categories, record the score for each item associated with each category and then add together the scores for this category to determine the total score.

## Volatility

6. _____

12. _____

17. _____

20. _____

29. _____

31. _____

41. _____

47. _____

50. _____

56. _____

Total _____

**Uncertainty**

1. _____

10. _____

18. _____

24. _____

30. _____

**35.**_____

40. _____

46. _____

49. _____

55. _____

              Total _____

**Complexity**

5. _____

9. _____

14. _____

19. _____

28. _____

32. _____

38. _____

43. _____

53. _____

57. _____

              Total _____

## Ambiguity

2. _____

11. _____

13. _____

21. _____

26. _____

34. _____

42. _____

45. _____

51. _____

59. _____

          Total _____


## Turbulence

4. _____

7. _____

15. _____

23. _____

25. _____

36. _____

37. _____

48. _____

52. _____

60. _____

          Total _____

## Contradiction

3. _____

8. _____

16. _____

22. _____

27. _____

33. _____

39. _____

44. _____

54. _____

58. _____

Total _____

## Total Scores

Volatility _____

Uncertainty _____

Complexity _____

Ambiguity _____

Turbulence _____

Contradiction _____

## Range of Scores

**Very Low:  10-15 [Total Score]**

**Low: 16-22**

**Average: 23-30**

**High: 31-40**

**Very High: 41 and Above**


## Implications

**Very High:** This condition seems to be having a profound impact on your life and work. You are required to address your world in a new way. This is required whether or not you want to make changes in the processes of problem-solving and decision-making in which you engage. The challenges accompanying this condition might seem to be too great at times for you to address in a consistently successful manner.  It is important that you take care of yourself and avoid UVA-Plus induced burn out. You might even wish to consider ways in which to avoid some of the pressing challenges that are associated with this condition.

**High:** This condition is likely to often be a source of disruption in your life and work. It forces (or enables) you to make changes in the way in which you assign priorities and feel about the world in which you are interacting. You are likely to be solving problems and making decisions in a way that differs from how you approached these critical processes in the past. This condition is likely to be a source of stress in your life—though this stress might be experienced as a source of excitement and opportunity.

**Average:** This condition is likely to play a role in your life and work but is unlikely to have a major impact or to have much of an influence on the problems you face, the decisions you make or actions you take. This condition is more of an annoyance and periodic source of inconvenience for you than serving as a major challenge.

**Low:** This condition is likely to be of only marginal concern to you. It rarely plays an important role in your life. You know this is impacting on the life and work of other people with whom you associate, but it is only of minor importance for you.

**Very Low:** It is remarkable that this condition doesn't seem to have touched your life or work. You are either living and working in a very protected environment, or you have found a way in which to avoid challenges associated with this condition. However, you might wish to challenge your own assumptions about the lack of impact which this condition has had on your life and work. Could you be in denial?

# Ψ VUCA-Plus

Obviously, there are many specific challenges that mid-21ˢᵗ Century citizens face as they live and work in their own communities and nations. These challenges might relate to commuting by car or train into a major city or simply finding fresh and uncontaminated water when living in a small rural community. They might be domestic challenges concerning a child going off to college or a grandparent who is struggling with dementia.

These challenges are unique to each person and to each society in our world. However, there are the almost universal challenges associated with the volatility (U), uncertainty (U), complexity (C) and ambiguity (A) in our collective lives, as well as the equally as challenging turbulence and contradiction that we all encounter every day. This is the VUCA-Plus of mid-21ˢᵗ Century life—and it generates multiple challenges.

## The VUCA Challenges

We will dwell briefly on the meaning to be assigned to each of the VUCA terms and then suggest how we might expand on VUCA. In essence, complexity concerns the many elements and dynamic interaction among elements that have to be considered, while Volatility refers to the rate and shifting rate of change among the elements.

The other two terms have to do with epistemology (the way in which knowledge is acquired and reality is defined). Ambiguity concerns the assessment of both the evidence available regarding reality and the meaning assigned to this reality. The fourth term, Uncertainty, is about the stability of any assessment being made regarding reality. Does reality change over a short period of time? Why do an extensive assessment if our world is constantly shifting?

VUCA is deservedly becoming the coin-of-the-realm among contemporary organizational analysts. Here is a bit more detail regarding each element:

## Volatility

Volatility refers the dynamics of change: its accelerating rate, intensity and speed as well as its unexpected catalysts. It concerns rapid change in an unpredictable manner.

Systemic impact: Changes Everywhere – Change curves on top of change curves

Personal impact: often surprised and unprepared.


## Uncertainty

Uncertainty refers to the lack of predictability, the increasing prospects for surprising, "disruptive" changes that often overwhelm our awareness, understanding and ability to cope with events. It concerns a lack of continuity and resulting lack of clarity regarding what is going to happen from day to day.

Systemic impact: hard to plan for the future or even for one or two days from now given that nothing seems to be permanently in place -- Contingency planning rather than tactical or strategic planning

Personal impact; must keep schedule and expectations quite flexible.


## Complexity

Complexity entails the multiplex of forces, the apparently inconsistent information flow, the sensitive interdependence of everything we touch, leading to the sense of confusion in which it's hard to make smart decisions, steeped as we are in the moving dance of reality. It concerns the presence of many different things and events that simultaneously impact life and work.

Systemic impact: very hard to make sense of or even find meaning in that which is occurring every day. Slow thinking rather than fast thinking

Personal impact: must often spend considerable amount of time trying to figure out what is happening before making decisions or taking actions.

## Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the 'haziness' in which cause-and-effect are hard to attribute, relativity seems to trump established rules, weighing heavily on our ability to hold inconsistent data and still function and make choices. It concerns the presence of many things and events happening that are quite confusing and often not very easy to observe clearly and consistently.

Systemic impact: can't trust accuracy of that which we see or hear or what "experts" tell us. Social constructivism rather than objectivism

Personal impact: often must look and listen a second and third time to ensure that what is seen or heard is accurate.

# The Additional VUCA-Plus Challenges

We add two other challenges: turbulence and contradiction. They are both interwoven in the fabric of VUCA and add a further layer of challenge to that now being faced by us in our mid-21st Century society.

## Turbulence

Some things are moving rapidly, while other things are moving in a cyclical manner, not moving at all or moving in a chaotic manner.

Systemic Impact: four subsystems are operating at the same time. Nature of the "white water" world.

Personal impact: requires a search for balance and direction which in turn requires ongoing attention.

In describing Turbulence, we turn to a metaphor offered by Peter Vaill, who suggests that we are living in a "white water" world. We propose that this whitewater world represents a turbulent system. Furthermore, this whitewater system incorporates four subsystems that are exemplified by the properties of a turbulent stream: (1) rapid change (flowing segment of the stream), (2) cyclical

change (the stream's whirlpools), (3) stability/non-change (the "stagnant" segment of the stream), and (4) chaos (the segment of a stream existing between the other three segments).

All four of these subsystems are operating in our current time of pandemic invasion. There is rapid change occurring as the virus rapidly spreads and communities throughout the world are massively impacted. Cyclical change is to be found in the patterned way that COVID-19 enters and spreads in a community—and tragically in the probable way in which the virus will return seasonally (until such time as there is virtually global immunity). We can find stability and non- change in the resistance to new norms and rules in virtually all societies. All of this leads to the growing presence of the fourth subsystem: Chaos. This is to be found not only in the inconsistent way we are each living our lives in response to the virus, but also in the way public policies are being formulated and revised in many countries.

## Contradiction

Messages are being delivered all the time that are valid—but they often point in quite different directions. Contradiction concerns the frequent presence of radically different constructions and interpretations of reality and the differing meaning assigning to the reality that is being constructed.

Systemic impact: credible advice is being offered by people and institutions that can be trusted—but the advice is often inconsistent.  The New Platonic Allegory of the Cave

Personal impact: must change our mind or at least be open to new perspectives and ideas.

# Implications of VUCA-Plus Conditions

In our mid-21st Century world, we must make decisions that consider VUCA-Plus conditions. There is ambiguity, uncertainty and contradictory. Polarizing values are present making thoughtful consideration and caring compassion difficult to sustain; furthermore, these decisions are subject to frequent review and modification as we try to navigate our volatile, complex and often turbulent VUCA world.

Goal setting is often unrealistic. The ad hoc character of our VUCA-Plus world often produces a feeling of infinite possibility and an unrealistic sense that the sky's the limit. Failure and

disenchantment frequently are associated with a lack of realistic goal setting unless the process of designing and managing an organization includes not only re-examination of context and strategy but also the regular re-examination of goals. Another frequent problem we faced in a VUCA-Plus world concerns the complex interpersonal and task related skills that are needed to run such an organization. We are often "in over our heads" when seeking to build and sustain a viable working relationship with other people.

Thus, it seems that we must enter the challenging world of VUCA-Plus with several critical skills. First, is the ability to think in a careful, systemic manner about the world swirling about us. It is easy to think quickly with nothing but a desire to make the anxiety go away. We are fleeing the lions—but to little avail. Second, we must acknowledge the stress associated with the VUCA-Plus challenges. We must be mindful of the stress and find ways to reduce it while being proactive in our response to the VUCA-Plus challenges.

Finally, our problem-solving and decision-making in a VUCA-Plus environment must be done in collaboration with other people. We are not strong enough to fight about the VUCA-Plus challenges alone. It is in collaborative dialogue with other important people in our life that we find the courage, clarity and strength to not just make sense of our mid-21st Century world, but also learn from the VUCA-Plus challenges and find nourishment and sense of self-purpose in successfully confronting these challenges.