

# Promoting Adaptive Change in a Disruptive World

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# Overview

1. The disruptive world
2. Technical vs. adaptive challenges
3. Indispensable competencies
4. Nine strategies to rebuild organizational capacity & promote adaptive change
5. Promoting a learning culture
6. Resources, reaction panel, key learnings

# Let's Start With Two Questions

1. What are 2-3 major **challenges** facing your local government &/or community in the next 5 years?



2. To effectively address these challenges, what are 2-3 **indispensable competencies** for leaders at all levels of the organization?

# A Disruptive World

- Local governments & non-profits are overwhelmed with accelerating & discontinuous change
- Problems are complex, difficult-to-solve, emotion-laden, & divisive
- No one institution, including government, can solve any major problem



# A Disruptive World (con't)

- Power is diffuse (“veto” power)
- Citizens have lost confidence in all institutions, including government
- To confront any major challenge, leaders must cross boundaries
- Learning is key ingredient to adapting



# “VUCA”

**V**olatility

**U**ncertainty

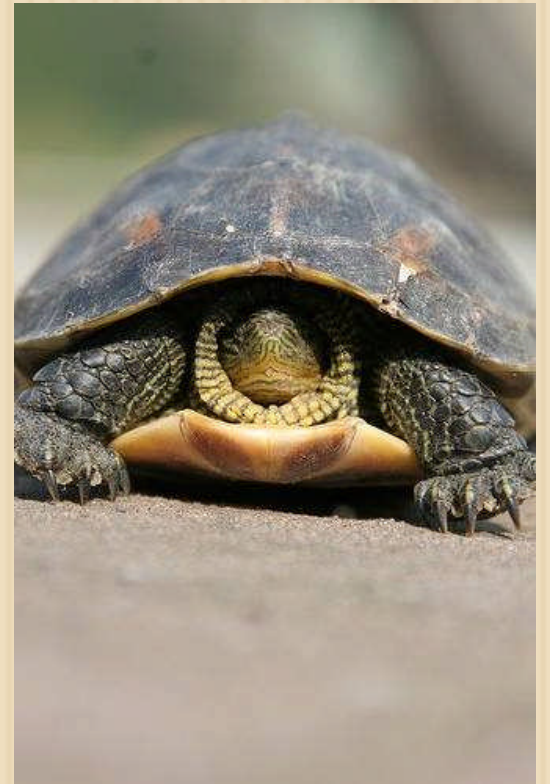
**C**omplexity

**A**mbiguity



# Diminished Capacity to Respond

- “Productivity Paradox”
- Local governments & non-profits face “permanent fiscal stress”
- Local govts & non-profits face a “retirement wave” & talent crisis
- Employees & their leaders are “hunkering down”



# The Nature of the Challenges

- **Technical challenges**

Solutions are known and can be addressed through management

- **Adaptive challenges**

Solutions are unknown, often involve value conflicts, and require leadership at all levels

# The Essence of Leadership



“Leaders do not force people to follow - they invite them on a journey.”

Charles Lauer

# Indispensable Competencies

- Active futures orientation
- Boundary-crossing and partnering skills
- Learning agility
- Ability to start conversations and tell stories
- Ability to create meaning
- Ability to develop talent



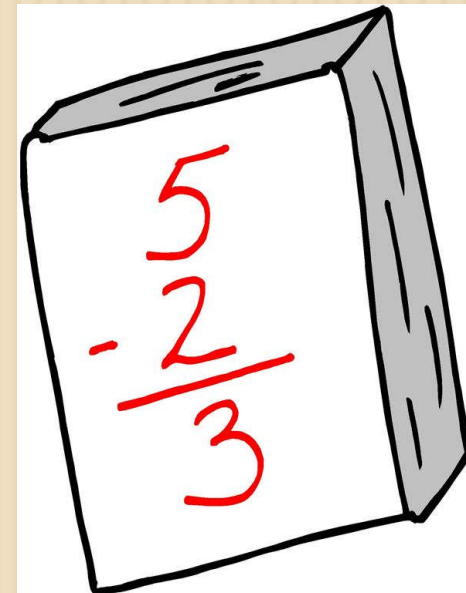
## 9 Strategies to Rebuild Organizational Capacity & Promote Adaptive Change


1. Provide emotional support for colleagues
2. Figure out your “core” business
3. Ruthlessly focus on a few priorities
4. Don't overlook assets
5. Make strategic investments, especially in talent development



# 9 Strategies to Rebuild Organizational Capacity & Promote Adaptive Change

6. Relentless “subtract”
7. Cross boundaries and create partnerships
8. “Ready, fire, aim”
9. Focus on learning





□ “Are we learning as fast as  
the world is changing?”

Gary Hamel

# Learning in Organizational Setting

- **Historic View**

Learning = classroom training

- **Contemporary View**

Learning = series of “stretching” job experiences coupled with helpful and candid coaching

# Cost-Effective Approaches

- Schedule “learning reports” at beginning of each staff meeting
- De-brief everything
- Pilot-test new ideas
- Use interim positions, rotate people, make team leadership assignments
- Encourage every employee to submit “annual learning plan”
- Hold simple “case study forums”
- Encourage teaching and coaching



# Resources

- Jim Collins, *From Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 2005
- Frank Benest, “Creating a New Future for a Downsizing Organization,” *PM*, Oct. 2005
- Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, Marty Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis,” *HBR*, July-August 2009



# Resources (con't)

- Cal-ICMA Coaching Program

[www.cal-icma.org/coaching](http://www.cal-icma.org/coaching)

- ✓ One-to-one coaching
- ✓ Webinars
- ✓ Career advice columns
- ✓ Speed coaching
- ✓ “Women Leading Government”

# One Final Question

- “Starting Monday, what is one thing I can do that will begin to enhance organizational capacity and promote adaptive change in my organization?”

**CHANGE**  
**one**  
**thing**



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