

# RESPECTING THE TENSIONS AND TRADEOFFS THAT MAKE LEADERSHIP A BALANCING ACT

*New Frameworks and the Case of Versatility*

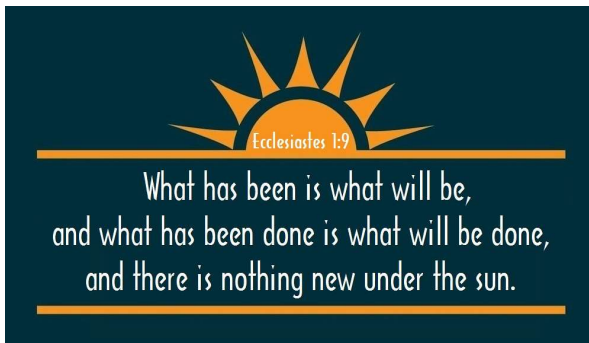


Robert B. Kaiser



RETHINKING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TO CREATE  
AGILITY AND RESILIENCE FOR THE "NEXT NORMAL"

October 7-8 | Atlanta, GA



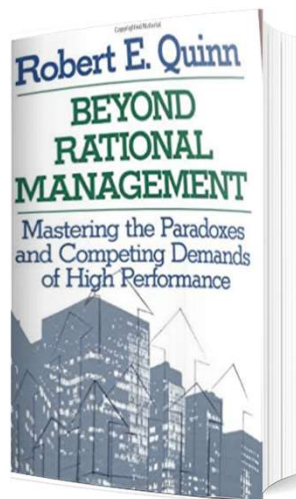
## Current state of leadership

We know...

- the *requirements*
- the *competencies*
- the *derailers*
- *assessment*
- *feedback/360*
- *assignmentology*
- *potential*
- *coaching*

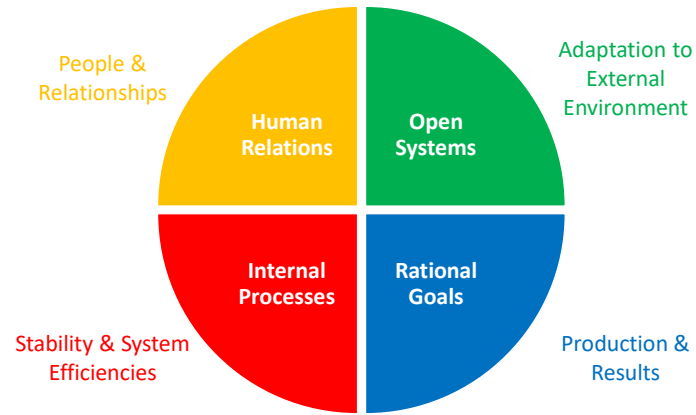


Bob Eichinger  
Minnesota Professionals for  
Psychology Applied to Work  
2016

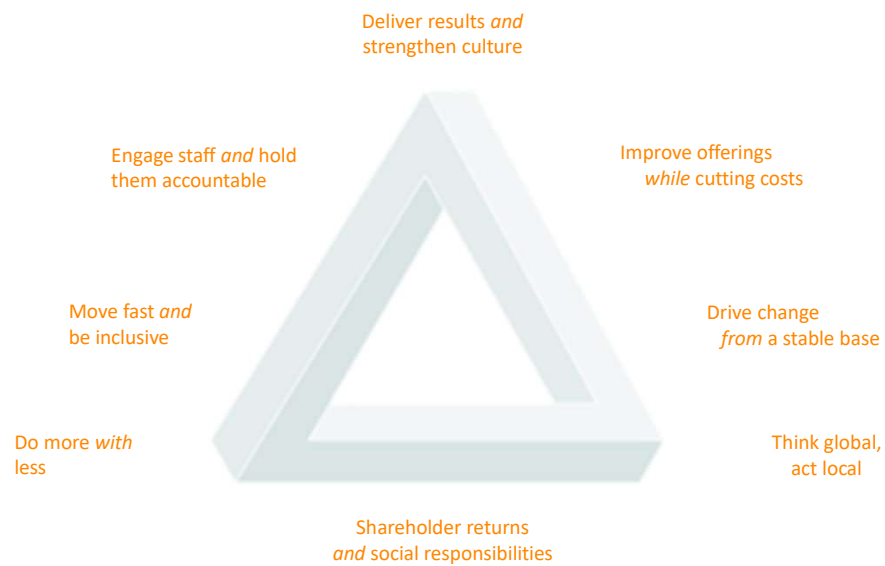


**Why does the OD literature  
contain so many conflicting  
recommendations?**

## COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK



Quinn (1988) *Beyond Rational Management* (Jossey-Bass)





## DE RIGUEUR: THE COMPETENCY MODEL

Visionary	Tactician	Facilitator	Contributor
Understanding and translating strategy into work group requirements	Ensuring results are achieved by effectively planning work, delegating responsibility, and reviewing performance	Creating an environment of collaboration and partnership to ensure effective working relationships	Creating organizational success by contributing their personal talents, experiences, and abilities
KEY EXECUTIVE COMPETENCIES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating Vision &amp; Purpose</li> <li>■ Planning Strategy</li> <li>■ Leading Change</li> <li>■ Cultivating a Learning Environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Setting Organizational Goals</li> <li>■ Directing Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Negotiating</li> <li>■ Listening</li> <li>■ Presenting to Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Making Strategic Decisions</li> </ul>
KEY MID-LEVEL COMPETENCIES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Communicating Vision &amp; Purpose</li> <li>■ Developing Structures &amp; Processes</li> <li>■ Understanding the Competitive Environment</li> <li>■ Knowing One's Own Organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Directing Outcomes</li> <li>■ Delegating Decisions</li> <li>■ Managing Budgets &amp; Expenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Negotiating</li> <li>■ Persuading Others</li> <li>■ Listening</li> <li>■ Speaking Effectively</li> <li>■ Leading Teams</li> <li>■ Adapting to Cultural Differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Understanding Business Issues</li> <li>■ Making Decisions</li> <li>■ Understanding Business Fundamentals</li> </ul>

- Linear lists
- Isolated competencies
- No sense of the dynamic interplay among competencies



## A NEW PARADIGM?



Article

### Dichotomies, dialectics and dilemmas: New directions for critical leadership studies?

David Collinson  
Lancaster University Management School, UK

### Leadership

Leadership  
2014, Vol. 10(1) 36-55  
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### The Genius of AND



### SIX PARADOXES OF LEADING INNOVATION

UNLEASH Individual identity  
SUPPORT Support  
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT Learning & Development  
IMPROVEMENT Improvement  
PATIENCE Patience  
BOTTOM-UP Bottom-up



HBR Blog Network

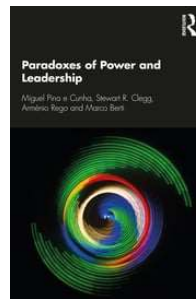
HERMINA BARBRA  
Hermina Barbra is a professor of organizational behavior and the Coa Chaired Professor of Leadership and Learning at Insead. She is the author of *Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2003).

### Is "Command and Collaborate" the New Leadership Model?

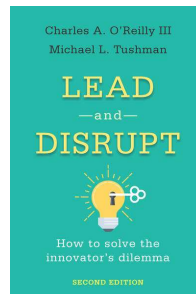
By Hermina Barbra | Comments (54)

EMAIL SHARE PRINT

The theme at Davos this year was "The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models." One of the models up for discussion was leadership. Panels with titles like "Leading Under Pressure" and "New"

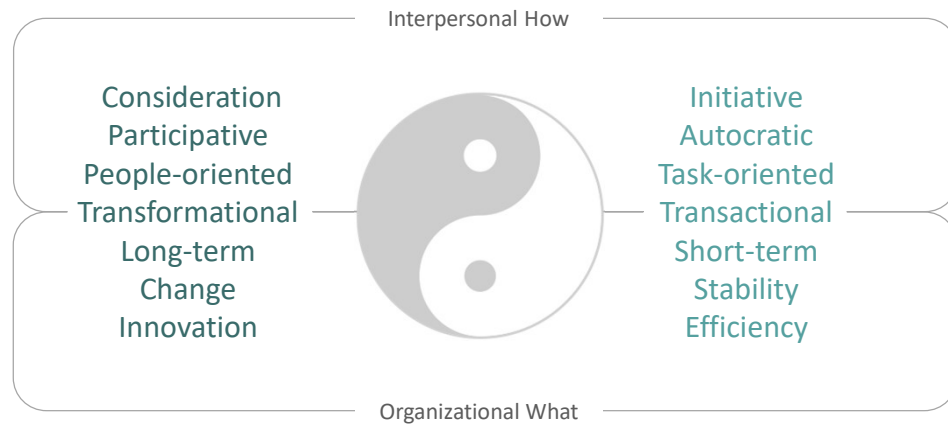


Paradoxical Leadership  
Hierarchical & Collaborative



Ambidextrous Leadership  
Explore & Exploit

## (RE)DISCOVERING DUALITIES

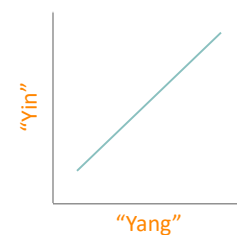


Kaiser & Overfield (2010) Assessing flexible leadership as a mastery of opposites. *Consulting Psychology Journal*  
 Kaiser, Lindberg, & Overfield (2012) The how and the what of leadership. *Consulting Psychology Journal*

## A FLY IN THE OINTMENT

**Supposedly opposing and contradictory behaviors are *positively* related**

- Meta-analytic correlations ( $\hat{\rho}$ ):
  - LDBQ: Consideration x Initiating Structure = +.46
  - MLQ: Transformational x Transactional/Contingent Reward = +.80
- Even measures based on Quinn's Competing Values Framework
  - Avg  $r = +.52$
- Virtually all 360s – everything is positively correlated with everything!



***“Either the assumption of a ‘conflict among opposites’ is wrong—or the measurement method is flawed.”***

Kaiser, Lindberg, & Craig (2007) Assessing the flexibility of managers: A comparison of methods. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*

Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies (2004) The validity of consideration and initiating structure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*  
 Judge & Piccolo (2004) Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*  
 Lawrence, Lenk, & Quinn (2009) Behavioral complexity in leadership: Psychometric properties of a new instrument. *Leadership Quarterly*

## DERAILMENT RESEARCH



## LVI | NEW RATING SCALE



U.S. PATENT NO. 7,121,830

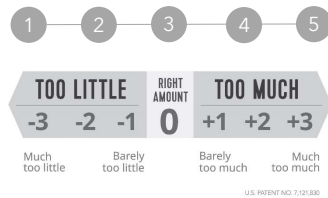
Kaiser & Kaplan (2005) Overlooking overkill. *Human Resources Planning*

Kaiser & Kaplan (2005) On the folly of linear scales. *Performance appraisal: A critical view*

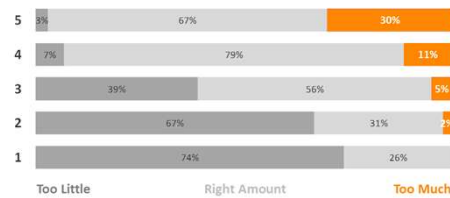
## IS A "5" REALLY THE BEST SCORE?

### STUDY

Employees rated their manager twice on the same set of items using two different rating scales:



### NEARLY A THIRD OF 5s MEANT "TOO MUCH"



Vergauwe, Wille, Hofmans, Kaiser, & De Fruyt (2017) The "too little/too much" scale. *Organizational Research Methods*

## LVI | BEHAVIOR MODEL





	👉 FORCEFUL	🤝 ENABLING	💡 STRATEGIC	🔑 OPERATIONAL
👉 FORCEFUL	(.94)			
🤝 ENABLING	<b>-.69</b>	(.93)		
💡 STRATEGIC	.44	-.04	(.92)	
🔑 OPERATIONAL	.09	.00	<b>-.27</b>	(.82)

Scores based on average rating across coworker rater groups  
 Values along the diagonal are scale reliability coefficients ( $\alpha$ )

*N* = 29,344 senior managers  
 LVI global norm data base (2015-2022)

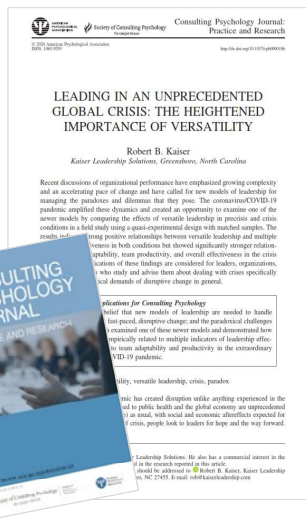
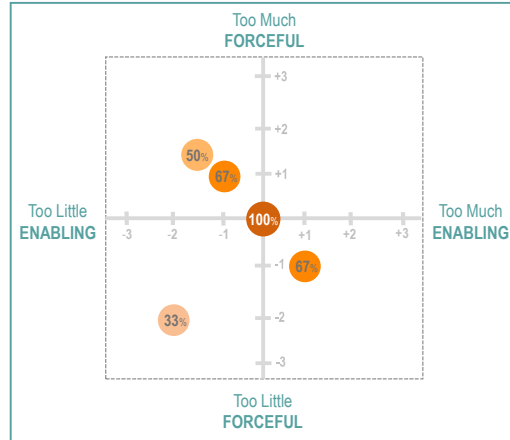
## VERSATILITY

the ability to **read** and **respond** to **change** with a wide repertoire of complementary behaviors

Measured as ratings close to “the right amount” on both *Forceful and Enabling*, both *Strategic and Operational*

Kaiser (2020) The best leaders are versatile. *Harvard Business Review*  
 Kaplan & Kaiser (2003) Developing versatile leadership. *MIT Sloan Management Review*

## VERSATILITY SCORES



### Quasi-experimental design

- Matched samples
  - Leaders from the same 6 organizations
  - Matched on Level, Tenure, Mgt Experience, Age, & Gender
- 193 leaders in “crisis” sample, 193 in “pre-crisis” sample



## RESULTS

All analyses based on coworker “360 scores” for versatility

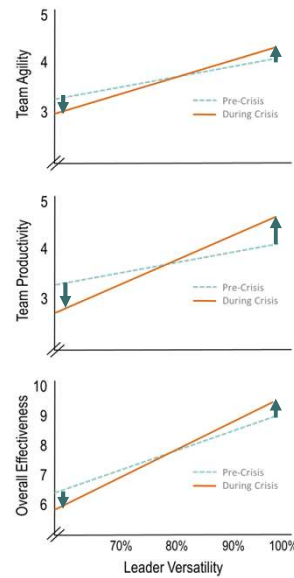
- *Grand M* (*M* Manager, *M* Peers, *M* DRs)

Tested differences in the relationship between leader versatility and:

- Overall Effectiveness (360)
- Team Engagement (DRs)
- Team Agility (DRs)
- Team Productivity (Manager)

All versatility x outcome relationships significant (and sizable)

Significant differences Pre-Crisis vs During Crisis for 3 outcomes



Kaiser (2020) Leading in a global crisis: The heightened importance of versatility. *Consulting Psychology Journal*

## PARADOXES IN CRISIS LEADERSHIP

Take quick, decisive action with limited information

Creative solutions to novel, non-routine problems

Take personal responsibility

Provide hope, optimism

Group sense-making and information sharing

Provide stability to calm concerns, provide a sense of control

Empower others to help

Be realistic, credible

Kaiser (2020) Leading in a global crisis: The heightened importance of versatility. *Consulting Psychology Journal*



## SAMPLE FOR CURRENT ANALYSES

Time period		N
2019 - Feb 2020	Year before COVID	1,849
March 2020 - 2021	1 <sup>st</sup> year of COVID	1,280
April 2021 - now	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of COVID+	3,117

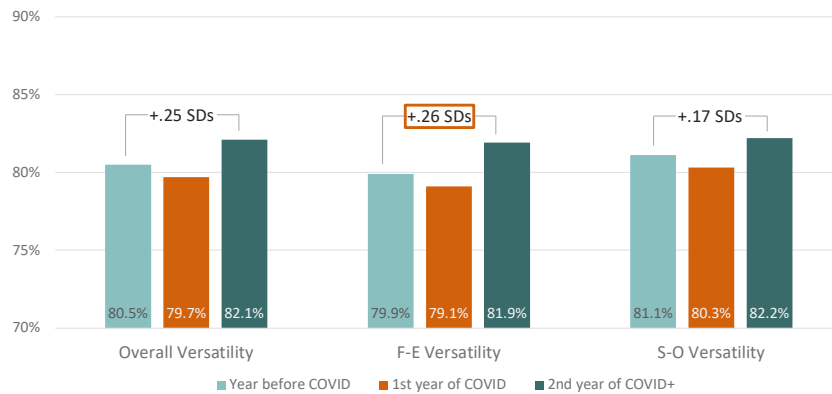
### Convenience sample

- Only those that had ratings from 1+ Manager, 3+ Peers, and 3+ DRs
- Only for-profit business organizations
- Across all 3 time periods, comparable:
  - level of leaders (Director to C-suite)
  - range of industries
  - regions of the world (~60% in the US and Europe)

Analyses based on coworker ratings of versatility

- "360 score" =  $M$  ( $M$  Manager,  $M$  Peer,  $M$  Direct Report)

## CHANGE OVER THE LAST ~3½ YEARS



Leaders somewhat less versatile during 1<sup>st</sup> year of COVID

But by year 2+:

- Increase in versatility compared to pre-COVID
- Largely due to increases in the "interpersonal how" (Forceful-Enabling)

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	T3-T1	T3-T1 d
Overall Versatility	80.5%	(6.8%)	79.7%	(7.5%)	82.1%	(6.6%)	+1.6%	+0.25
F-E Versatility	79.9%	(7.9%)	79.1%	(8.5%)	81.9%	(7.4%)	+2.0%	+0.26
S-O Versatility	81.1%	(6.6%)	80.3%	(7.3%)	82.2%	(6.6%)	+1.1%	+0.17

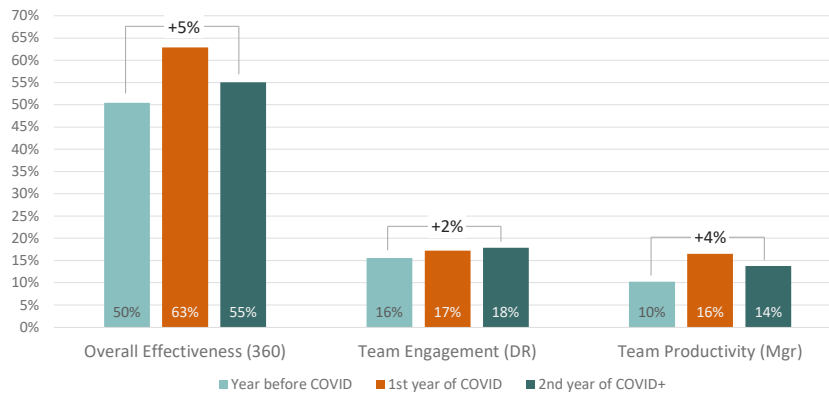
Based on 360 scores

## CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUTCOMES

### Correlation with Overall Versatility ( $r$ )

	Year before COVID	1st year of COVID	2nd year of COVID+
Overall Effectiveness (360)	.71	.79	.74
Team Engagement (DRs)	.39	.42	.43
Team Productivity (Mgr)	.32	.41	.37

### Variance accounted for ( $r^2$ )



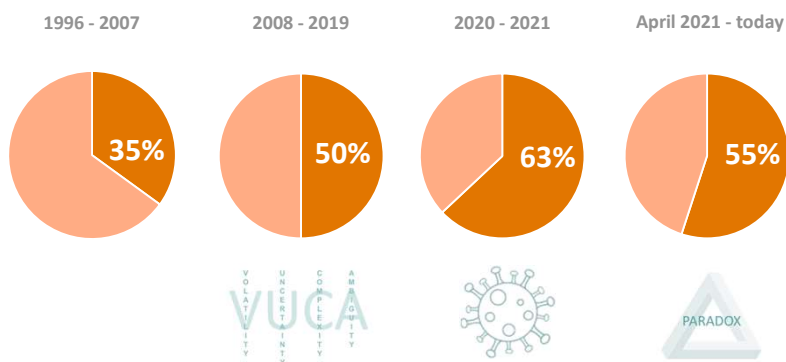
Versatility significantly predictive pre-COVID

And even more predictive during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of COVID outbreak

Somewhat less predictive the 2<sup>nd</sup> year+, BUT more predictive than pre-COVID

## STEPPING WAY BACK

### Proportion of Overall Effectiveness related to Versatility



## TAKEAWAYS

- We can't develop 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders with 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking
- We need to reflect the fact that leadership is a balancing act
  - In models and frameworks that define leadership
  - In assessment instruments that assess leadership
  - In methods for developing leaders
- Good news: we already know a lot of the “pieces and parts”
- The opportunity: to rearrange those “pieces and parts” and better apply them
- As the world gets more disruptive, chaotic, and unpredictable, the future will require more versatile, capable, and well-rounded leaders