

**The New
Leadership
Literacies**

Pre-Read

Looking Back From The Future – But Acting Now

Literacy 1 of 5

Recap

It is easier to anticipate directions of change when you look ten years ahead than it is to look just a year or two ahead. Many of today's leaders are experts in the present and they step their way *out to the future*.

In a VUCA World (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous), there is just too much noise in the present to see clearly where things are going.

The best leaders will look, think, and act in a *future-back* (not just a present-forward) framework. Foresight provokes insight that will lead to better decisions in the present.

The Big Lesson

In a highly uncertain world you have to be very clear about where you're going—informed by your foresight—but very flexible about how you will get there. The future will reward clarity, but punish certainty. Clarity is best expressed through compelling stories from the past and the future.

Storytelling is important for foresight, insight, and action—as well as hindsight. Every great leader I know is a great storyteller. To learn more about leadership and storytelling, see Kendall Haven, Story Consultant/Author/Master Storyteller:
www.KendallHaven.com

Thinking systematically about the future helps us to loosen up, keep an open mind, and question our own assumptions. But this is tough work. Trend consultancies and the business press tend to start from today's world and work a few years out. Some of these consultancies focus on fashion or fads, which are short-term shifts in preferences or behaviors. This is important work, but it is not enough—especially in highly uncertain times. Trends are patterns of change you can extrapolate from with confidence. Disruptions are *BREAKS* in the pattern. Disruptions are looming, not just trends.

I'm suggesting that leaders think ten years ahead, then work backwards to identify opportunities today—given the external future forces of the next decade.

One of the most common mistakes is to over-estimate the impacts of a possible future in the short run, but under-estimate the impacts in the long run. Leaders need to keep their minds focused on the future—but with strong links back to the present. The long view helps you keep your bearings as you act today.

*The future will
reward clarity, but it
will punish certainty*

Your Tool Kit

Clarity

Seek signals from the future to shape a sense of the present

As a leader:

- Think systemically about the future to loosen up and question assumptions
- Be explicit about where you are going but be flexible about how to get there
- Look for signals from the future while filtering out the noise of the present
- Become a sense-maker in a world that is becoming increasingly fluid, ill-defined and constantly changing, using foresight to make sense of the present
- Generate ideas, but more importantly, do the hard work of creating insight
- Get to that a-ha moment that creates a new pattern of connections in your brain
- Seek shared collective moments of insights when people reach the same realization together
- Learn to embody humility and humor as you explore opportunities that foresight provokes in the present

Dilemma-Flipping

Look in unexpected places for opportunities to create a shared future

As a leader:

- Turn dilemmas into advantages and opportunities
- Come to terms with the existence of other futures and recognize that people will live differently within those futures
- See long-term patterns of change 10 years ahead to expand your leadership potency by looking really long
- Bring a future's perspective to every conversation, using those perspectives to influence decisions in the present and turn them into likely more positive outcomes
- Become an open-minded person that allows you to see alternative futures – not just one future
- Avoid judging too soon (the classic mistake of the problem solver) and deciding too late (the classic mistake of the academic)

Storytelling

Construct new patterns and communicate compellingly to create a collective story

- Listen for signals from the future and create stories whenever possible
 - Seek provocative stories from the future, as well as the signals to bring forecasts to life
 - Learn to express clarity in your stories and how to moderate the certainty that is expressed as rules
 - Communicate a way forward, expressing it with clarity and ideally as a compelling story
 - Become aware of the stories you tell yourself about the past, the present and the future (your own personal neutral story net) that shapes your current view of the world
 - Seek insightful a-ha moments that create new stories based on new patterns of connections in your brain
 - Increase sharing and encourage increased flow to contribute to and create a collective story
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An Introspective Look

Rate yourself on the extent to which you have these leadership traits:

- I can see long-term patterns of change ten years ahead, beyond the noise of the present
- I bring a futures perspective to every conversation
- I believe that a futures perspective makes better decisions in the present more likely
- I develop my clarity but moderate my certainty

Further Research

*You can find out more information about this literacy and the new book here:

www.newleadershipliteracies.org

Voluntary Fear Engagement

Recap

If you don't have some fear about the future, you're not paying attention!

Fear is not a bad thing. It's what you do with your fear that can turn bad.

In a VUCA World (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous), a world of disruptive opportunity, leaders will need to learn how to practice **voluntary fear exposure**. They will need safe zones to practice their leadership skills and develop their capacities, knowledge, discipline, practices, perspective, and worldview.

Play Through Your Fear

Gaming, simulation, role-playing, improvisational theater, immersive travel, and similar experiences can help leaders create safe zones to practice their own leadership. Leaders need to be scared safely in the interest of developing their own readiness and resilience.

Gaming—defined as obstacles we volunteer to overcome through emotionally-laden attention—will be reimaged over the next decade to help leaders prepare for the VUCA world.

Safe zones are not places where leaders will be free from what upsets them. Safe zones are places where leaders can confront their fears and learn to play through them in low-risk settings. Leaders must learn to play through their fear and develop effective and efficient responses, turning fear into something positive.

Sociologist Margee Kerr helps us understand how we can flip fear into something positive. In her surprising, scary, and entertaining book, Kerr puts her expertise to the test. Not merely content to observe others' fear, she confronts it in the form of things like skydiving, paranormal investigations, and a visit to Japan's infamous "suicide forest." In her willingness to explore the world's scariest attractions, Kerr shows why we seek out terror even when there is plenty to fear in everyday life. Whether she's dangling by a cable from a 116-story tower or walking the streets of Bogota, Colombia, Kerr parses the elements of fear with humor and the precision of an expert. Along the way, she takes a personal journey that leads to valuable insights about what we fear—and what it says about who we are. Voluntary fear helps build resilience. Building resilience — the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress — can help manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

Scream: Chilling Adventures in the Science of Fear

*If you don't have
some fear of the
future, you're not
paying attention!*

Gameful Engagement

For some senior leaders, the word “game” just may not sound businesslike. (“We are a serious company—we don’t play games!”) When I encounter resistance to the word gaming, I generally go for a less controversial term like immersive learning experience, scenario, or simulation. To me, gaming *is* immersive engagement. Gaming is emotionally laden attention. Gaming is a good story, where the players get to be in the story. The language issues will be temporary.

Gaming—or whatever it comes to be called—will provide a rich pedagogy for learning, as has already been demonstrated convincingly in war gaming, emergency response simulations, pilot training, and surgical training. The whole point of gameful engagement is to immerse yourself in a realistic but mock fearful environment and learn how to thrive, or at least push through it. You have to do that in a spirit that allows you to *fail early, fail often, and fail cheaply*. Indeed gaming and rapid prototyping are very similar.

Your Tool Kit

Ready Player One

As a leader:

- Find safe zones, games, simulations or immersive experiences to try out your leadership skills in low risk settings
- Become comfortable and adept at gaming, simulation, improvisation and role-playing
- Use gaming and guilds to develop the grit required to help prepare for the VUCA world
- Practice your leadership skills in low-risk settings, learning in a community with others preferably in immersive environments that allow you to prepare for uncertainty
- Immerse yourself in unfamiliar situations to learn from them in a first-person way

Perform at the Edge

As a leader:

- Use your gameful mindset to develop resilience
- Collaborate in guilds (sometimes called communities of practice) that bind players together in a social network enabling them to work in concert for a common purpose
- Learn to create quick early versions of innovations and keep an expectation that later success will require early failures
- Sustain interest in an investment towards very long-term goals
- Develop the grit required to lead with hope in a world of constant disruption

An Introspective Look

Leaders who have the literacy of Voluntary Fear Engagement can confidently say:

- I am comfortable with and adept at gaming, simulation, improvisation, and role-playing
- I am committed to immersive learning to engage with communities where I lead
- I practice my leadership skills in low-risk settings

Further Research

*You can find out more information about this literacy and the new book here:

www.newleadershipliteracies.org

Institute for the Future

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**The New
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Pre-Read

Shape-Shifting Organizations

Literacy 3 of 5

Recap

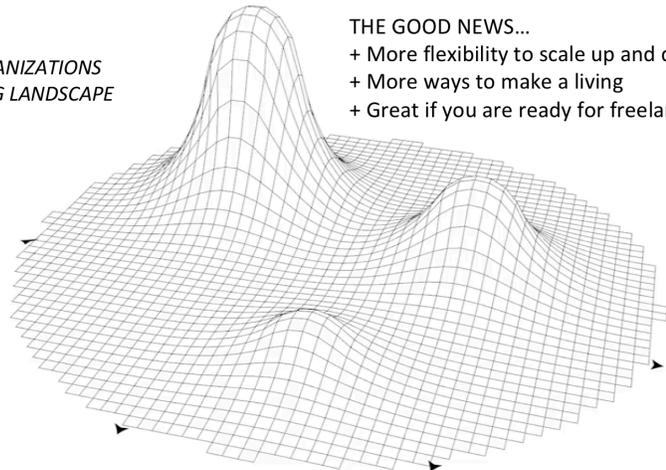
Paul Baran invented packet switching, the core technology of the internet, when he was asked to create a network that would resist nuclear attack. This was in the midst of the Cold War, in 1964. At that time, networks were centralized, so if an enemy attacked any portion of it, the entire network could become vulnerable. In the new architecture, instead of centralized switching, packets were separated as they were sent and then put back together again when they were delivered. Paul Baran first described this architecture as “hot-potato routing” but it came to be called packet switching.

This disruption created a new kind of network that didn’t require the same kind of centralized management as before. Packet-switched networks have no center. They grow from the edges, and they cannot be controlled. Packet switching and other forms of distributed computing are now ready to scale, which will allow for the creation of more robust networks—but they also introduce new dilemmas for leaders and leadership. How do you lead in organizations that have no center, grow from the edges, and cannot be controlled? Future organizations will be shape-shifting, like the one below:

*BY 2030,
EXPECT LIQUID ORGANIZATIONS
IN A SHAPE-SHIFTING LANDSCAPE*

THE GOOD NEWS...

- + More flexibility to scale up and down
- + More ways to make a living
- + Great if you are ready for freelancing



THE BAD NEWS...

- Fewer traditional jobs
- Criminals are better at shape-shifting tribes than the rest of us
- More potential for worker abuse; lower bar for employers
- Awful if you can’t adapt to the gig economy and freelance work

*In the future,
everything that can
be distributed, will
be distributed*

Paul Baran and packet switching got things started down a path toward distributed everything. Now, distributed organizations will become globally scalable. Looking to the future, everything that can be distributed will be distributed.

The shift from centralized to decentralized to distributed is underway already, in a very different context with much more advanced technology than in the early days of the Internet. The big challenge with these shape-shifting organizations is that leadership will look really different. Leading shape-shifting organizations will amplify the need for *constructive depolarization*: the ability to calm tense situations where differences dominate and communication has broken down, and to bring people from divergent cultures toward constructive engagement. It will also require *commons creating*, which allows assets to be shared and provides mutual-benefit partnering models for innovation.

Your Tool Kit

Growth from the Edges

Scan the outer regions for potential innovators, competitors and partners, to increase value across the mesh

As a leader:

- Look over the edges of your organization, identifying possibilities, potential competitors and partners
- Know what you love about your business (your right of way) so that you do not miss a major opportunity when it is moved right into your line of sight
- Seek diverse perspectives, diverse interpretations, diverse heuristics and diverse predictive models
- Learn to grow shape-shifting organizations from the edges, where diversity and innovation thrive, creating a radical increase in the potential for serendipity and mysterious opportunity
- Begin to deal in the currencies of distributed organizations: reciprocity and mutual benefit partnerships
- Conscious decide when to call order and when to spark chaos across the mesh

Hot Potato Routing

Create mutual benefit partnering models that encourage engagement throughout the mesh

As a leader:

- Look for ways to create mutual benefit partnering models for engagement with diverse potential partners who can help do what you cannot do alone
 - Seed, nurture and grow shared assets for reciprocity that benefits all players
 - Foster competition to grow the market rather than just claiming market share
 - Enable shape-shifting organizations to provide flexible ways to create business and social value
 - Create stories to bind players within the mesh
 - Learn to organize and enable distributed authority and decision making
 - Become skilled at seeding and steering wildfire-like dramatic events that compel people to act by sparking “movements”
 - Look for a single act or related series of acts that link to a larger story
-

Liquid Hierarchy

Thrive across traditional boundaries to cultivate value throughout the mesh

- Learn to lead across the mesh rather than above it, fostering relationships of interconnected, value-based networks
- Become skilled at leading through entangled networks that have no center, grow from the edges, and cannot be controlled
- Possess the ability to calm tense situations where differences dominate and communication is broken down, to bring people from divergent cultures towards constructive engagement
- Uncover the myths of identity to work through emotional pain, building connections that reconfigure relationships
- Be ready for a future of distributed authority, knowing how to act differently in shape-shifting organizations where hierarchies come and go
- Be aware of the leadership styles needed to succeed when organizations have no center, grow from the edges and cannot be controlled

An Introspective Look

Those who are fluent in the literacy of Shape-Shifting Organizations will say:

- I am very good at leading through entangled networks that have no center, grow from the edges, cannot be controlled—and where hierarchies come and go
- I always look for ways to create mutual-benefit partnering models for engagement
- I seek out diverse potential partners who can help me do what I cannot do alone

Further Research

*You can find out more information about this literacy and the new book here:

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**The New
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Pre-Read

Being There Without Being There

Literacy 4 of 5

Recap

Most leaders today are at their best when they are present physically, or as we say, “in person”. However, when leaders are not physically present there is often a big fall-off in their ability to communicate.

In a world of disruptions, as we move towards decentralized and distributed organizations (shape-shift organizations), leaders will need to have a presence at all times – anytime, anyplace. Sometimes, they will need to feel present everywhere, every time—without feeling intrusive. The best leaders will *feel* close, but not *too* close.

Leaders will need to make very smart decisions about when to travel and when to use which virtual medium in what way with whom. I have been working with senior executives for more than thirty years now, and my sense is that many of them travel too much and they travel at the wrong times. Certainly, some of today’s leaders—especially the younger ones—use today’s virtual media very well.

Leaders will need to find new points of contact in the shape-shifting organizations within which they will be working. Leaders will need a new leadership presence, through a wide mix of media and in-person meetings in varied combinations. Leaders will need to create organizational cultures that are amplified by the increasingly rich mix of media options that will emerge over the next decade.

Today’s smart phones and tablets will look quaint a decade from now. Those leaders who think they are in a futuristic world of telework now will be shocked by what is coming. Even when leaders are not present in person, they will need to have their presence felt.

Blended-Reality Presence

When I started studying teleconferencing and social media in the 1970s, most systems designers assumed that meeting face-to-face was the ideal medium for human communication. The (often-unstated) goal in those days was to design an electronic medium that came as close as possible to meeting face-to-face. However, we should be able to do better than using new technology to replicate what we did before. In-person meetings will continue to be best for certain things, but electronic media should allow us to go beyond the ways that we meet today.

*Even when leaders
are not present in
person, they will
need to have their
presence felt*

The good news is that the tools for culture seeding and nurturing will be so much better than what we have today. Augmented reality, mixed reality, extended reality, and virtual reality are the current buzzwords for a new blended-reality world of work that will take shape over the next decade. In a world where cheap sensors are everywhere, leaders will be able to sense more accurately what is going on around them—even in far-distant locations. Leaders will be informed by data layered on everything, like shown below:



Your Tool Kit

Media Mix

Consciously chose the right media and medium to deliver the right message

As a leader:

- Learn how to use the medium of audio as this will be the primary medium to bringing your leadership to life
 - Become skilled in the use of multiple media as you communicate leadership, including not only in person meetings but a wide range of electronic media
 - Skillfully chose what medium is good for what and with whom at what time
 - Create organizational cultures that become amplified by the increasingly rich mix of media options that will emerge over the next decade
 - Do not simply become trained in a wide range of media, learn to have your own signature flare within each
 - Use media at your disposal cleverly, matching it to personal style and work needs
 - Make very smart decisions about when to travel and when to use virtual media
-

Augmented Presence

Use technology to transform into a person with a blended reality presence

As a leader:

- Assess your own performance, with body and other digital sensors, learning to adjust your style and behavior
- Cultivate a wide leadership presence through a wide mix of media and in person meetings in varied combinations
- Possess in-person conversational skills, but know that leadership will require a blended reality flare
- Learn to sense the mood of the mesh, adjusting your style and behavior when appropriate
- Create a vivid presence that is strong and worth sharing, constantly developing your own presence and flare
- Learn how to literally embody and sense the mood of the mesh
- Become skilled in knowing how to be close, but not too close, leading without intruding on your own or someone else's privacy
- Learn to communicate leadership presence continuously even when not physically present
- Develop your own brand of blended reality presence, using your maker instinct to remake yourself continuously

Creating Commons

Cultivate direction, alignment and commitment for shared value across the mesh

- Become better than when you are present, whenever and wherever
- Find new points of contact in the distributed organizations within which you work
- Develop a virtual cloud of resources, filtering what works for you at all times
- Develop your makers instinct, turning natural instincts to building skills for making the future and connecting with others who are making the future
- Bring together, engage with and nurture, purposeful business or social change networks through intelligent use of electronic and other media
- Find the right people and connect with them at the right time through the best media for the task at hand

An Introspective Look

Those fluent in the literacy of Being There When You Are Not There will say:

- I am skilled in the use of multiple media as I communicate my leadership, including not only in-person meetings but also a wide range of electronic media
- I am skillful in choosing which medium is good for what, with whom
- I am able to communicate my leadership presence continuously, even when I am not physically present

Further Research

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Creating & Sustaining Positive Energy

Recap

If leaders are going to thrive in a future of extreme disruption, they must not only manage their own personal energy, they must encourage, model, and reward positive energy in others. The tools for energy management are better now than ever before—and they will get even better over the next decade. Leaders will have no excuse. Fitness will be a price of entry for top leadership roles. Extreme fitness—physical, mental, and even spiritual (though not necessarily religious)—will be required for most leadership roles.

How It's Beginning To Take Shape

Over the next decade, a wide range of strategies for leadership well-being will emerge. Here are four examples that I find particularly intriguing— each with its own emphasis.

The Corporate Athlete (by performance psychologist Dr. Jim Loehr and exercise physiologist Jack Groppel) is focused on balancing your physical needs with what you're trying to achieve in business. It includes strong guidance about exercise, nutrition, and mental balance—all with a focus on energy management.

Healthiest You (by Stanford-trained internal medicine physician Dr. Kelly Traver) is a brain-based guide to help people understand their own personal top motivators. Most of us are affected by all of them to some degree, but Traver argues that the majority of people are strongly influenced by just a few. Keeping in mind what motivates you individually can guide the kind of healthy living program that will make the most sense for you.

The Blue Zone Project focuses on the ideal cycle of life: live long, live healthy, but die quickly. National Geographic funded this project to find the places on earth where people live the longest, happiest lives. The key variables all link back to interpersonal well-being. Now, an initiative is underway to encourage cities to develop and brand themselves as Blue Zones.

BlueWave Medicine (by Dr. Brad Jacobs) is an integrative approach that seeks to combine the best of conventional medicine with alternative and lifestyle medicine practices. The practice includes concierge primary care, acupuncture, bodywork, massage, psychotherapy, yoga, personal training, and health coaching. I like the language in their taxonomy of healthy living: finding passion and work-life integration, connect with self & others, mental focus & resilience, restorative sleep, health eating, and fitness & active living.

Fitness will be a price of entry for top leadership roles...extreme fitness will be required for most leadership roles

There is no magic in any single approach. The important thing for leaders is for them to develop their own programs based on what motivates them, and then stick to it. I believe that any of the strategies outlined above can help leaders to create and sustain positive energy in their leadership. Every leader will need to find or create a good approach that works for them. If you're going to be a successful leader in the disruptive world of the future, you will need to be extremely fit and project positive energy in your leadership.

Larry Smarr is perhaps the human who knows more about his own body than any other human on the planet. He has created a digital twin, a virtual rendering of his own body, that he can use to guide his own health choices. Here is [his story](#) from The Atlantic. This is an extreme case, but ten years from now, the most successful leaders will "hack" their own bodies in ways that will improve their health.

Your Tool Kit

Know Your Neuroscience

Understand and subvert the neurological mechanisms influencing thought and action

As a leader:

- Use a wide range of new resources to help you develop smart ways of leading
- Have a disciplined approach to physical, mental and spiritual fitness in the face of daily work
- Nurture your own mindfulness practices, with an emphasis on applying the principals of neuroscience to leadership and daily learning
- Recognize that people around you may become trapped in simplistic thinking
- Make sense out of disruptive dilemmas that often seem to make no sense at all
- Nurture bio-empathy for yourself, the ability to see things from nature's point of view, to understand, respect and learn from nature's patterns
- Learn to give, forgive and forget, leveraging the insights of how forgiveness works with our brains and our bodies, applying that learning to how you lead and live your life
- Know how to thrive between the space of judging too soon and deciding too late
- Develop a growth mindset that leads to optimistic ways of explaining adversity which will in turn lead to perseverance and seeking out new challenges

Maintain Mindful Energy

Create the space and maintain physical, mental and spiritual energy balance

As a leader:

- When you walk into a room, radiate and embody positive energy
 - Balance personal energy throughout the working day and become resilient under pressure, in consistent ways without wild swings
 - Create space for people to balance their own physical, mental and spiritual energy so that you can minimize energy droops during the day
 - Manage your own energy, but encourage, model and reward positive energy in others
 - Know how to fail gracefully at the edge of your competence without pretending that you know what you don't know
 - Partner with people who know more than you do in space where you are weak
 - Develop depth, but also breadth, playing most of the time at the edge of your competence and realize that career wellbeing will require the resilience to fail gracefully at the edge of your own knowledge
 - Have a sense of grounding, a sense of meaning that will allow you to maintain a center in spite of being encircled by disruption
 - Hold onto a sense of spiritual wellbeing in the face of worldviews that range from personally uplifting to socially constructive to downright dangerous
 - Be open and transparent about what matters to you without advertising yourself
 - Be a giver in long-term interpersonal relationships and give others opportunities to give
 - Continually pursue a work-life navigation strategy that helps you make good choices
-

Body Hacking

Use to monitor, enhance energy levels and achieve super well-being

As a leader:

- Become both a sprinter and long distance runner, depending on what is called for in particular situations, with the rituals necessary to keep the practices alive and growing
- Use nutrition as an important catalyst for physical and mental fitness
- Become extremely healthy, not just routinely healthy
- Gain insights about your body and mind and manage your energies to remain in emotional balance and not freak out
- Learn what motivates you individually and use that as a guide to create a healthy living program
- Become physically, mentally and spiritually fit in ways that were never required before
- Engage with people who work with you on your own body sensitivities and metrics

Seed and Nurture Hope

Be prepared to promote and make a hopeful future

- Be well linked into the culture, society and planet around you
- Be at your best by truly believing in what you are doing at work
- Seek to win in the future world of mutual benefit partnering in ways that multiple people can win
- Have quiet transparency with strength, humility, and empathy
- Do not seek to be a rock star, but rather develop your strength with a sense of humility
- Sustain your giving by looking for ways where giving can hurt you less or benefit you more
- Seed hope in others and become an apostolate of the “hope business”
- Keep people hopeful and optimistic and in turn be rewarded with gritty people who see adversity and change as an opportunity rather than a challenge
- Deal with disruption on a global scale and be ready to handle it, learning to develop new insights about how to be resilient in the face of next generation disruption and dilemmas
- Find ways to partner in guilds and communities so that you don’t have to do it alone
- Lead while not going over the threshold of the righteousness where others think not only that they are right but also that everyone else is wrong

An Introspective Look

Those fluent in the literacy of Creating & Sustaining Positive Energy will say:

- When I walk in a room I radiate positive energy
- I have a disciplined approach to my own physical, mental, and spiritual (not necessarily religious) fitness in the face of daily work pressures, private life, and the external world
- I balance my personal energy throughout my working day (I moderate my peaks and droops), and I am resilient under pressure
- I create space for the people I lead, to balance their physical, mental & spiritual energy

Further Research

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