



Welcome to CLCentre's monthly update.

The aim of this journal is to share information and resources and to spark further discussion on the practical application of Complexity Leadership in the workplace.

Chronical Content

1. Research in brief
 - Current Paper: *Safety Leadership Functions Using Complexity Science, 2020*
 - Classic Paper: *Complexity leadership theory: shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era, 2007*
2. Thought Morsel: *What you think is solid is 99.99% space*
3. Anecdotes: *Complexity Leadership From the Field*
 - Complexity Comic: *The joyful art of Complexity Leadership 1*
4. CLC News
 - Research: *COVID-19 workplace leadership survey*
 - Membership: *Free Membership*
 - Events: *Free Webinar: Results & Implications: COVID-19 Workplace Leadership Survey: Qualitative Deep-Dive Friday*
5. Latest Articles & Blog Posts
 - *Data shows Australians want to keep working from home*
 - *Working from home? I don't think so!*
6. July Edition
 - a. Quantum Entanglement

1. Research in brief

Current Paper 2020: *Safety Leadership Functions Using Complexity Science*.*

The paper looked at the role of leadership in relation to workplace injury prevention and proposed that conventional leadership models such as transformational and transactional leadership are not dynamic enough to address the complexity of leadership style on safety outcomes. “...leadership is a complex, multi-phased concept...”

Thus proposing *Complexity Leadership Theory* provides a more sophisticated and flexible methodology to our post-industrial, knowledge-based workplaces and those who lead them. The authors argue that a complexity leadership model reflects an environment where people work together collectively in adaptive and creative ways in an *ever-evolving system*. “...complexity science supports the flexibility, innovative and dynamism of leadership; not as a set of capabilities or standards innate in any one person.”

This is a shift from the idea that leadership and control sits rigidly with a particular individual to the concept of *interrelatedness* (i.e. agents do not act in isolation) and *entanglement* (i.e. agents are inextricably linked) within a Complex Adaptive System (CAS: a system which spontaneously changes due to the interactivity and entanglement of its agents) where all agents influence behaviours.

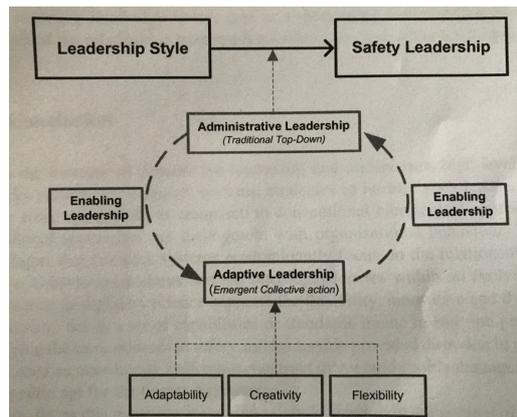


Fig2 Safety Leadership Framework, p.402

The above figure was taken from the paper. The bottom three boxes represent the framework for complexity leadership theory which feed into the middle circle displaying the three interacting complexity leadership functions: administrative, enabling and adaptive. These six constructs interconnect to impact leadership style and, in turn, influence safety leadership behaviours and attitudes and thus, workplace safety outcomes.

* Ojuola J, Mostafa S and Mohamed S (2020), Safety Leadership Functions Using Complexity Science. K. Panuwatwanich and C. Ko (eds.), The 10th International Conference on Engineering, Project, and Production Management, Lecture Notes in Mechanical Engineering,

Classic Paper 2007: Complexity leadership theory: shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era.**

This paper is a little heavy going, but I'll do my best to provide a brief overview to entice you to explore further...

"We're in a knowledge economy, but our managerial and governance systems are stuck in the Industrial Era."

The article focuses on creating a Complexity Science language and a framework for leadership and leading within Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS).

"CAS are neural-like networks of interacting, interdependent agents who are bonded in a cooperative dynamic by common goal, outlook, need. etc."

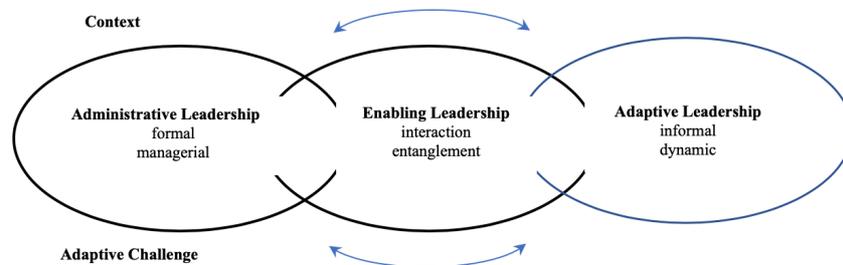
The key argument is that our workplace social systems are complex, thus in need of complex leadership. The way to develop complex leaders and leadership processes to keep up with our fast-paced and unpredictable environments is to apply complexity science principles to socially dynamic contexts.

Four *critical notions* are presented:

1. Context – the nature of interactions and interdependencies among agents
2. Leader (person)/Leadership (process) – leader: an individual who influences interactions and outcomes through their actions and, leadership: the dynamic systems and processes that occur through leading.
3. Managerial/Emergent/Interactive Leadership – Managerial is labelled *Administrative Leadership*; formal acts that coordinate and structure activities. Emergent is labelled

Adaptive Leadership; informal, dynamic leadership that occurs throughout the organisation. Interactive is labelled *Enabling Leadership*, which manages the interaction and entanglement between Administrative and Adaptive Leadership.

4. Adaptive challenges/technical problems – Adaptive challenges require new and innovative learning and behaviours. Technical problems can be solved with current knowledge and procedures



A further point of importance in understanding complexity theory is knowing the difference between *complex* and *complicated*. A complicated system can be described according to its individual elements e.g. a jumbo jet. A complex system cannot be fully understood by its elements in the same way as they are inextricably interconnected e.g. mayonnaise. In other words, you can disassemble the parts of a jet. You cannot do the same with a blob of mayonnaise. We need to take this thinking into the way we develop leaders and leadership processes.

**Classic Reference - Uhl-Bien M, Marion R, McKelvey B (2007) Complexity leadership theory: shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *Lead Q* 18(4):298–318

2. Thought Morsel

If you find yourself getting a little too confident in what you believe to be real and true then consider the fact that the seat you are sitting in or the floor you are standing on is made up of 99.99% space. To get your head around this quickly, think fan blades. When not moving, you can stick your hands through the gaps between the blades, when the fan is spinning you're likely to lose a few fingers if you attempt to pass your hand between the moving rotors – it becomes impenetrable. While we don't risk losing body parts when we sit on a piece of furniture, we would do serious damage if we tried to force our hand through the kitchen table. Why is this so, if it's really just a bog blob of nothing? It is because the particles within that table are constantly on the move as are the fan blades when its switched on. The difference is, we haven't yet mastered switching off particles in the things we consider solid around us, including ourselves. So the next time you swagger in being incredibly sure that your solution to that business problem is foolproof, just be careful that you haven't missed those spinning blades and you're about to lose a body part (metaphorically, of course...)

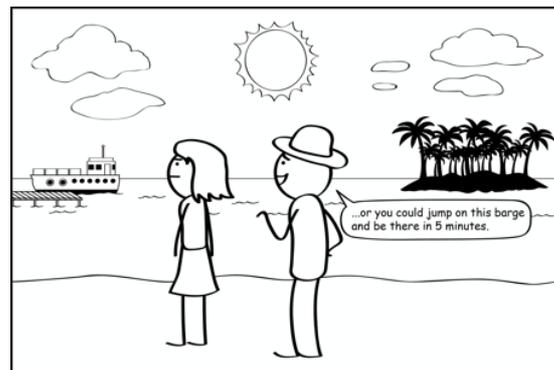
3. Anecdotes: Complexity Leadership From the Field

Many, many years ago I had a client. A senior leader who over the years had climbed the leadership ladder due to exceptional technical capability and in spite of, what can only be described as, inhibited social-emotional awareness. As the years progressed the individual found themselves managing smaller and smaller teams until the point where there were no

direct reports at all. I was then called into work with this person because their work ethic and skillset was highly valued, but the cost of workplace complaints and justification of level of pay was too great to overlook any longer. After a few months of working with this person something shifted. I am no miracle worker, so the shift was not magically transporting this person into a completely new individual. But the change was enough that the complaints stopped. Additionally, not only did the complaints stop, but the individual I was working with suddenly started innovating. Nothing world changing, mind you, but business changing in my client's world and personally life changing for their place in the world.

What has this got to do with Complexity Leadership, I hear you ask? I consider it a solid example of emergence, a key principal of Complexity Science. I asked myself why working with me enabled such a difference for this client where past interventions had failed. And the answer I came to was, because I took a *complexity approach*, that is to say, I went into the partnership aware of my *bias* and *preconceptions* regarding this individual and I chose to deliberately put my *assumptions* aside and let the process unfold of its own accord without an outcome in mind. This was not easy, but the payoff was that, for possibly the very first time in a very long time, this individual had someone unconditionally in their corner. Someone committed to sharing back the truth as honestly and cleanly as I could muster. What this allowed was space for this person to start to see themselves as others experienced them. Not to drag this person into the shoes of others, but to actually support them stepping into their own shoes and experiencing themselves. I liken this to my *Schroedinger's Cat* moment of being in two states simultaneously with each being equally real and valid. It was the recognition of this *dual reality* that turned the coaching experience on its ear and freed (or at least eased) an individual from a lifetime of misunderstanding. And as we parted for the final time, my client said "I wish I'd met you much earlier in my career." To which I responded "Maybe you weren't ready until now..." It's all about be ready to step beyond your own ideas and consider options that may just not be otherwise visible.

The joyful art of Complexity Leadership 1



4.CLC News

Research

Excited and pleased to share the launch of our **COVID-19 workplace leadership survey**. If you haven't had a look, please access the summary report [here](#)

Here's a little take-out explaining the thinking behind the survey in alignment with CLCentre's commitment to bridging theoretical research and field study to enhance practical understanding of workplace leadership while constantly being mindful of our subjective relationship with truth:

"In leadership surveys, there is often a circumspect, highly strategic, big picture lens applied. To balance that, this survey is deeply personal and provides insight into the experience of being in the middle of an event rather than viewing it at a distance or speaking for others. All perspectives add value in building an accurate picture of what went on in our businesses as COVID-19 caused fear, uncertainty, rapid change and loss of life globally. The COVID-19 Workplace Leadership Survey is but one perspective to give dimensionality to the volume of analysis that will no doubt ensue as we reflect on the learnings of this extraordinary period." Excerpt, COVID-19 Workplace Leadership Survey Qualitative Deep-Dive, May 2020, full report

Membership

Free Membership: if you're interested in receiving the full COVID-19 survey report, our monthly CLCentre Chronicle and member discounts, please sign up [here](#)

Events

Upcoming events: Free Webinar: Results & Implications: *COVID-19 Workplace Leadership Survey: Qualitative Deep-Dive* Friday July 3 12pm-12:30pm. If you're interested in coming along, please register [here](#). If you have any particular questions or something you would like me to focus on during the webinar, please feel free to let me know in advance [here](#).

5.Latest Articles & Blog Posts

[*Data shows Australians want to keep working from home*](#)
[*Working from home? I don't think so!*](#)

6.July 2020 Edition

Next month's Chronical will be all things *Quantum Entanglement* or as Einstein phrased it "spooky action at a distance."