

How to Improve Leadership Through Experimentation

Tags: [#learning](#) [#innovation](#)

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Dialogue

We begin to believe too much that we can control the universe. These systems and structures— particularly in our organizations—trick us into believing that there is much more about the world that is complicated and much less about the world that is complex. We humans enjoy the feeling of being in control and of knowing what happens next, so we act as though that's possible—even when it isn't.

Distinction between what's complex and what's complicated

Neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett has found that “uncertainty is more unpleasant and arousing than assured harm, because if the future is a mystery, you can't prepare for it.” She goes on to write, “When people are seriously ill but have an excellent chance of recovery, they are less satisfied with life than people who know their disease is permanent.”

We really don't like complexity, do we?

We tend to want to do is make our desired change happen. We want to push, work, cajole it into being. But in complexity, that's not the way.

Distinction --> Creating conditions vs. outcomes

Example: your holiday job of making gift baskets at a gourmet store.

Point --> In complexity, a planned, step-by-step approach doesn't work. Instead of a plan, take action through thoughtful experimentation.

Example: you did this in your organization with diversity.

To grow our experimenting genius:

- Release your attachment to outcomes (tactics -- imagine what happens when it goes right / imagine what happens when it goes wrong)
- Lean into humility (your humility can create the conditions for greatness)
- Don't shy away from endings
 - Put end date on experiments

- Pare back, strip out, or end something. We tend to think improvements are additions.

Reserve

Genius of noticing:

First, check in with your body.

Second, check in with your breath.

Then turn to your thoughts.

Finally, check in with your emotions.

Genius of breathing, moving, and sleeping.

Philosophers began to write thousands of years ago about what psychologists and neuroscientists have proven since: we construct our version of the world by seeing it.

We were once creatures who had to move to save our lives from deadly things outside us, and now we are creatures who have to move to save our lives from deadly things inside us.

Stages of development:

Impulsive mind (early childhood)

Imperial mind (adolescence)

Socialized mind (46% of the adult population)

Self-Authoring mind (41% of the adult population)

Self-Transforming mind

Cynefin map (Unpredictable / Predictable)

Complex / Complicated

Chaotic / Obvious