

Does your leadership scale or are you canceling yourself out?



Dr. Julius Muia

Last week we hosted a two day Scaling Leadership Conference which included a CEO/Executive Breakfast that opened up the conversation of leading in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world.

By Sammy Njoroge,
Leadership Circle

Our Keynote speakers Bob Anderson Founder of The Leadership Circle, Co-author of Scaling Leadership Book and Dr. Julius Muia Principal Secretary The National Treasury delivered their keynotes with such mastery and grace to say the audience was spell bound is an understatement.

Dr. Muia set the stage by highlighting the unpredictable business realities (VUCA in Kenya) that we are currently grappling with from a local and global perspective e.g. Artificial Intelligence is both a threat and an opportunity, local disasters e.g. the desert locust that invaded Kenya, drought that

was followed by flooding, trade wars between US and China, Brexit, climate change among other VUCA realities are likely to affect businesses now and in the coming years. Therefore, in this VUCA environment most business leaders admit that Reactive leadership which got them to where they are today is not enough thus making Scaling Leadership an imperative and a competitive advantage.

There is a popular misconception that leadership is one of the most studied, yet least understood subjects. This notion has now been disputed from a research perspective by the authors of Scaling Leadership. Bob and Bill were curious to find out if leaders can accurately describe what great leadership is and

they wanted a 'street view' of what senior leaders say to other senior leaders when describing what worked and didn't work in their leadership. To achieve this objective they reviewed data from the Leadership Circle 360 assessment, where they have access to feedback and written comments of 150,000 leaders. This group of leaders received feedback from a population of about 1.7 million raters.

The feedback from their research was stunning they conclude that leaders not only describe what great leadership is but also how to scale individual and collective leadership to keep pace with the VUCA world. Scaling Leadership was thus written to take the mystery out of leadership by exploring how senior leaders, in their own words:

- Clarify what works in leadership,
- What doesn't and what to do about it.

Another concept that the authors introduced to the field of leadership is the canceling effect. They looked at the top 10 liabilities and top 10 strengths

of highly reactive leaders and noticed that they literally cancel each other out. Thus, when leaders experience the canceling effect their strengths are canceled out by their liabilities. For example: a leader can be visionary but not a team player, have technical knowledge but over-demanding, results focused but micromanages. You have heard statements like: he can't get out of his own way, he shot himself in the foot, that meeting just undid a months worth of work. This is the canceling effect and the question at hand is, are you canceling yourself out or scaling leadership?

Reactive leadership is not built to scale in the current VUCA world, it was necessary in a stable, certain, simple and clear environment but is insufficient in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment that was described by Dr. Muia. The primary development gap leaders face today is that they are leading amid a level of complexity that requires Creative leadership or higher. Which begs the question how do you transition from Reactive to Creative Leadership?



Bob Anderson



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