

ADAPTABILITY: DEFINITION, ASSESSMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

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summarizing

Assessment Centre Global Villagers' White Paper

Colorado State University

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Adaptability

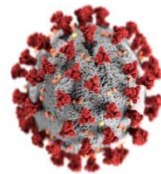
is important for managers
and leaders !

All levels and organizations.



Adaptability

has been in 2020 and
continues to be in 2021
even more critical in the crises
created by the Covid19 pandemic.



Adaptability is on many lists of managerial abilities and leadership characteristics for decades. But....

Lack of consistency.

We spent several months in 2020 sharing ideas.



Purpose of Presentation
Summarize the contents of a
white paper prepared by
AC Global Villagers.



How do you
define
Adaptability?



A variety of answers!

“Willing to change”

Personality

“Good ideas, smart”

Creative

“Flexible”

Motivation

“Vast experience”

Knowledable

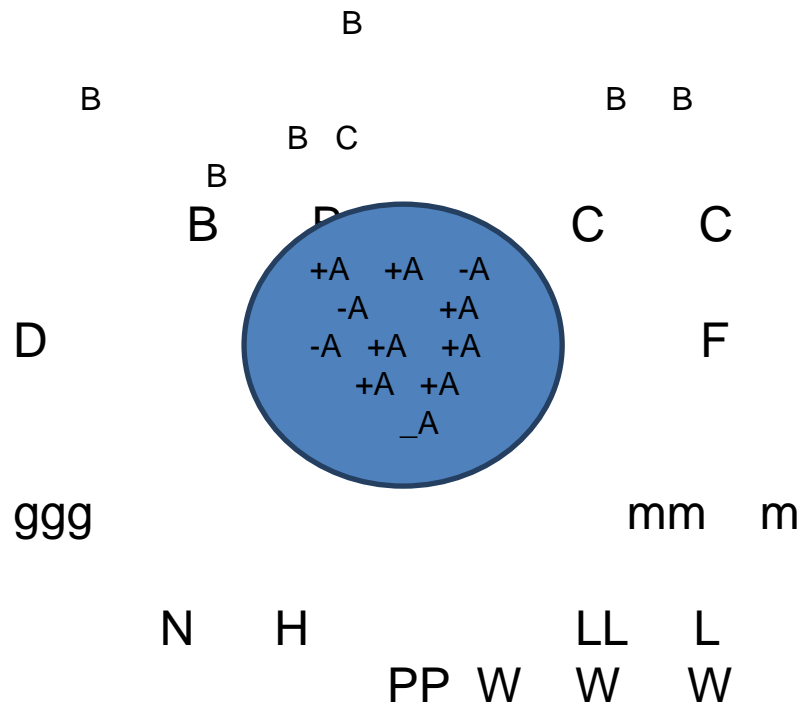


AC Villagers saw a need for:

- Behavioral *definition* of adaptability
- Method to *assess* adaptable behaviors
- Method to *train* adaptable behaviors



Positive and Negative Adaptive Behaviors



Behaviors showing adaptability

(Lists of behaviors are available in white paper)

Positive

- Changes approaches to solving problems over time
- Lays out alternative paths for action
- Provides others with recommendations on how to adapt effectively to a new situation
- Adjusts the form and complexity of information to the recipient
- Initiate actions that have a positive effect

Negative

- Insists the established ways are adequate
- Discourages others from innovating
- Does not seek new information to clarify the situation
- Does not assist in resolving conflicts and does not compromise
- Does not speak about benefits
- “Freezes up” and cannot offer any alternative solutions

Two types of “negative” behaviors showing *lack of* adaptability

Overt “bad” behavior

Insists the established ways are adequate

Discourages others from innovating

Failure to take action

when situation calls for action!

Does not seek new information to clarify the situation

Does not assist in resolving conflicts and does not compromise

Does not speak about benefits

Consolidated Definition by Assessment Center Global Villagers

Recognizes that challenges have changed in the volatile, uncertain, chaotic, or ambiguous (VUCA) environment.

Modifies own reactive and active behaviours to initiate actions that have positive effects.

Encourages and prepares organizations, employees, and others to make behavioural changes.

How would you
assess
Adaptable Behaviors?



Behavioural Assessment of Adaptability: Method 1

Two or more sequential
behavioural simulations are
needed to evaluate

Adaptability

to make behavioural changes in a
changing environment.



Example 1:

**Situation 1
Individual
Situation**

Compared with

**Situation 2
Group
Situation**

Example 2:

**Situation 1
Role play with a
subordinate**

Compared with

**Situation 2
Role play with a
Company CEO**

Example 3:

**Situation 1
Presenting to two
colleagues**

Compared with

**Situation 2
Presenting to five
Company
Executives**



Use **Trait Action Theory**

Behavior related to a trait will be demonstrated if it is elicited by situation calling for that trait

A situation is relevant to a trait if it provides cues relevant to a trait

Strong situations elicit same behavior from all people; weak situations elicit behavior only from people who are high of the relevant trait (Tett)

Role Plays

**(One-on-one Interview
Simulations)**

Lethargic employee

then

Over-zealous one



In-basket / box

**Inject conflicting
information in two memos
or**

**Shorten the time demand
half way through**



**Leaderless
Group Discussion (LGD)
Observe person in
cooperative discussion
then
competitive discussion**



Case Study Exercise

Purposely build in

- *conflicting information**
- *confusing due dates**
- *regional differences**
- *different preferences from two boss**



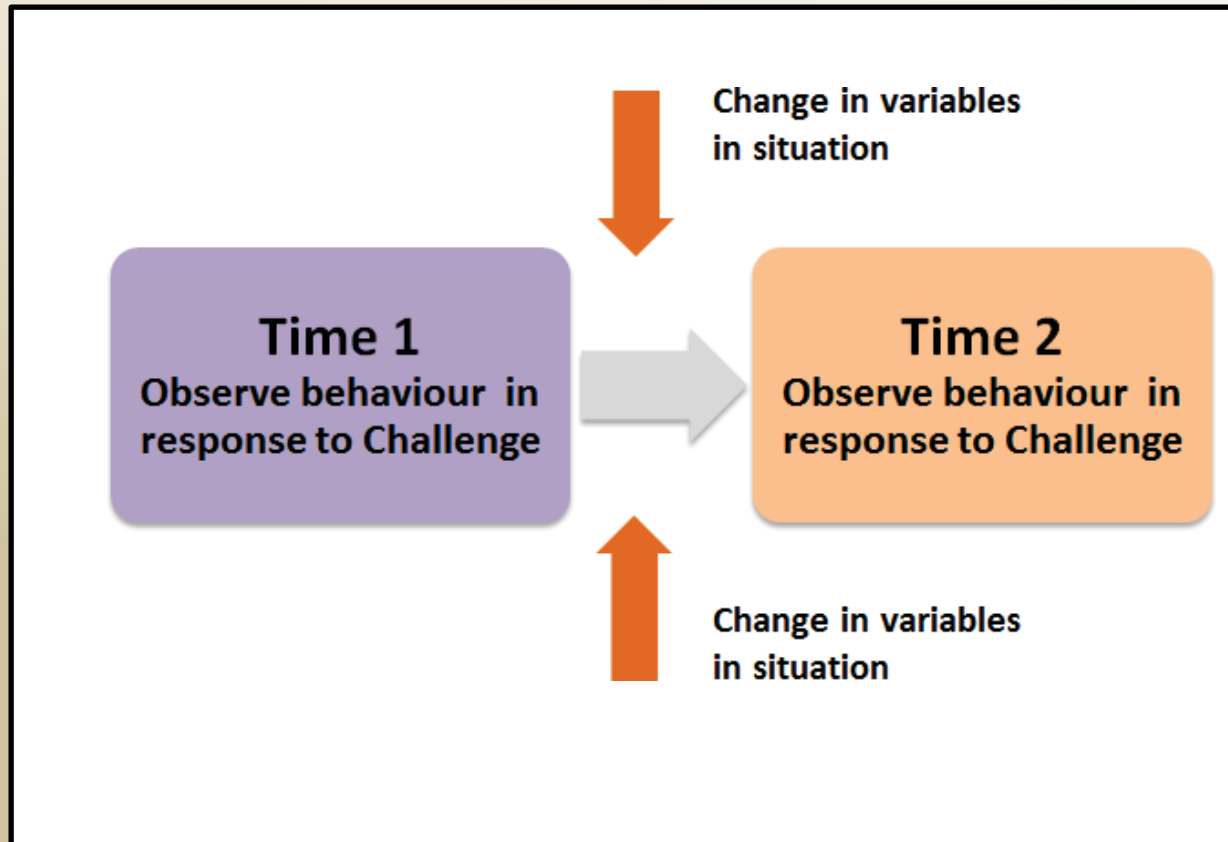
Summmary

Purposely build cues in simulation exercises to present situations which are volatile, uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous.

Watch for adaptability



Method 2



Behavioural Assessment of Adaptability: Method 2

Present a similar challenge twice
but change the intervening
situation:

Time 1: “Complete this project”
with these instructions/rules.

Time 2: Give new instructions/rules.
“Now complete the project.”



Both methods allow a
comparison of behavior to meet a
change in situation =
Adaptability



How would you
develop
Adaptable Behaviors
in managers/leaders?



Developmental Assessment Center

1. Provide a cognitive understanding of Adaptability

Lecture

Readings

Demonstrations

Discussion



2. Provide multiple opportunities for PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK/COACHING

In simulation exercises
One-on-one role plays
Presentations
Case studies
In box

Change:
Type of challenge
Type role player
Time pressure
Instructions
Rules
Amount of
information



3. Observe and give feedback/coaching

- positive behaviors
- negative behaviors
- failure to take action

“Missed opportunities” to adapt



4. Ask leader to self-reflect on
own behavior and
how to behave differently

Give the individual responsibility
Personal involvement
Positive motivation

“You can show more adaptable
behaviors!”



DAC Built on **Adult Learning Theory**

Provide cognitive understanding of the competency

Use simulations of real-life work settings

Multiple rounds of practice and feedback & coaching

Build self confidence of adult learner

Provide time for self-reflection and personal goal setting



Coaching Development Center

Orientation for cognitive understanding

Demonstration of behavior

Feedback and coaching

Second demonstration of behavior



Reality Check

Adaptability is a complex competency

Multiple methods to assess and develop Adaptability will help



Three take-aways

Adaptability should be on any list of competencies in any organization

Adaptable behaviors can be defined, assessed, and developed

Leaders can be trained to show Adaptable behaviors.



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