



Growth • Innovation • Leadership Council

F R O S T & S U L L I V A N

---

## **A Virtual Executive Assembly Brief**

### ***Is Your Leadership Style a Foundation or a Fault Line?***

**Presented by Michael O. “Coop” Cooper**

***Founder, Innovators + Influencers***

#### **Introduction**

Members of the Growth Innovation and Leadership Council assembled for a Virtual Executive Assembly presentation and discussion entitled *Is Your Leadership Style a Foundation or a Fault Line?* The event was led by Michael “Coop” Cooper, Founder, Innovators + Influencers. A global Executive Business Coach, Facilitator and Trainer, Coop has worked with thousands of executives and leaders, helping them to gain insights and strategies to more effectively and humanely run their businesses. His clients have included Vodafone, Honda, and the Dali Lama. (Yes, you read that correctly.)

#### **Leading Through Change**

Coop opened the discussion with an overview of the different leadership styles including autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership and various other approaches listed in the graphic below. He noted that many Chief Executive Officers tend to have an autocratic style, which may have worked well in the past, in hierarchical organizations for example. Yet, as we enter an era of rapid change and disruption, an autocratic leadership style is no longer optimal, nor is a hierarchical organizational structure viable. In our current environment of technological change, flatter, more agile organizations are becoming the norm, and an adaptive leadership style is needed. Unfortunately, many senior executives are simply not prepared for this reality. They often lack the necessary insights or skill sets to deal with and manage ongoing change.

## Which is your leadership style?

- Autocratic
- Democratic
- Servant
- Community
- Strategic
- Transformational
- Team
- Cross-Cultural
- Facilitative
- Laissez-Faire
- Transactional
- Coaching
- Charismatic
- Visionary
- Adaptive

To succeed, the C-Suite will need to cultivate a more adaptive leadership style, one that includes overseeing deep organizational alignment, emphasizes and reinforces real trust and teamwork for better communication and results, and includes the skills needed to lead through cycles of change. Coop shared the key components necessary to achieve the “Mindset of an Adaptive Leader” in the graphic below:

### Mindset of an Adaptive Leader

1. Change is increasing, so we must leverage/lead change continuously.
2. Change requires high trust cultures.
3. Change requires alignment and continuous re-alignment.
4. Change requires frequent feedback and performance conversations.
5. Change means solving problems (requires cognitive diversity).
6. Organizational change requires systems thinking, systems diagnosis and design thinking.
7. Change requires vulnerability and resiliency.
8. Change requires valuing and leveraging human nature.

### The Importance of Trust and Organizational Alignment

The importance of trust between colleagues as an underpinning for organizational success was a key theme throughout the assembly. A high level of distrust throughout an organization, between employees, departments, etc., was identified as one of the key reasons that strategic goals are not accomplished and change often fails. In fact, when the VEA participants were informally polled, only one participant said there were no trust issues in their organization.

Other reasons change initiatives fail might include a lack of organizational alignment. Again, when asked, 90% of the participants indicated they had alignment issues in their organization. As they discussed, gaining alignment can be time consuming and arduous, but it is strictly necessary. Coop recommended that companies spend as much as 80% of their time getting alignment right and 20% on execution. He stated that we can only guess at the percentage of time and lost opportunity cleaning up a lack of alignment might mean.

Not addressing employees' natural resistance to change, or clarifying that change is an ongoing process are additional reasons why change and organizational agility can stall.

## 8 Dimensions of Trust

1. **Benevolence** – they are acting in your shared best interests
2. **Competence** – they have the skills and motivation to do what's required
3. **Integrity** – they do what they say
4. **Results** – they produce results
5. **Sincerity** – they are free from pretense, deceit or hypocrisy
6. **Reliability** – they perform consistently well
7. **Care** – they are concerned about your welfare
8. **Challenge Directly** – they are willing to address problems with your head on, rather than dance around them or avoid

### Creating an Informed and Agile Organization

How to flourish as a leader in times of change? Learn to anticipate and leverage disruption in your industry and in industries that affect it. Specifically, review and update all parts of your business every year. Coop predicts that this practice will become the norm. Additionally, leaders need to stay educated and prepared, and learn to stay ahead of change. When organizational changes need to be implemented, leaders need to have a process that thoroughly and efficiently communicates these change initiatives. They need to explain precisely what the changes are and who will be affected. This can help to minimize the guesswork and attendant anxieties that change naturally brings about in so many.

### Brain Types and Cognitive Diversity

Two other key components to consider when communicating about change are brain types and cognitive diversity. Coop briefly discussed his research and framework about the four different brain types. They are: 1. Controller + Manager, 2. Innovator + Influencer, 3. Nurturer + Harmonizer, and 4. Analyzer + Systemizer. Each of these very different types have different needs and requirements for understanding, processing and aligning with ideas and strategies.

These include varying requirements in understanding, analyzing and implementing who, what, when and why, etc. in addition to varying emotional requirements, i.e, some types are naturally very objective and analytical while others value harmony and relationships to a greater degree.

## Cognitive Diversity

|                        | Meta Function                              | Motivators                                             | Fears           | Stress Response | Basic Needs                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| Controller + Manager   | Management + Competition                   | Control Results<br>Looking Good                        | Losing Control  | Autocratic      | Challenge<br>Control<br>Choices        |
| Innovator + Influencer | Growth + Adaptation                        | Flexibility<br>Recognition<br>Impact                   | Lack of Respect | Attack          | Recognition<br>Approval<br>Popularity  |
| Nurturer + Harmonizer  | Peace + Harmony                            | Being Included<br>Close Relationships<br>Being Helpful | Being Excluded  | Acquiesce       | Appreciation<br>Stability<br>Belonging |
| Analyzer + Systemizer  | Building + Maintaining Orderly Foundations | Preparation<br>Accuracy<br>Security                    | Being Wrong     | Avoid           | Quality Answers<br>Excellence<br>Value |

The benefit of having a group high in cognitive diversity when making key decisions was also reinforced. Coop expressed that teams with a good mix of brain types and a multitude of thinking styles (as discussed above) will have more complex, deeper interactions. There may be more disagreement and discussion as they work through decisions, but will they usually arrive at better decisions than a group of individuals who all think the same way and have very similar perspectives. This has very real implications for organizational success. As noted, “a culture that encourages (explicitly or implicitly) conformity of thought breeds stagnation and imperils a company.”

### A New Playbook for Success

As the presentation came to a close, Coop reviewed some of the key strategies and behaviors that leaders will need to embrace and implement for organizational success through the coming years of change and disruption. Key recommendations included:

- ✓ Shift from planning to experimenting, learning and adapting
- ✓ Shift from managing to adapting continuously

- ✓ Shift from providing training to learning what your employees really need to improve their roles, accomplish their goals and advance their careers
- ✓ Shift from giving feedback when things need improving to asking for and giving feedback daily, conducting performance conversations weekly
- ✓ Shift from reacting to conducting scenario planning and anticipating changes

### **Conclusion**

The degree to which leaders are able to understand and apply many of these recommendations will no doubt affect their organization's short and long term success, and their ability to manage, anticipate and perhaps even initiate, positive change and disruption.

January 2019