

# 15 Future Fit Skills: Dealing with Paradox

*Are you an either-or person, encountering everything as either right or wrong, or do you allow space for the paradoxes that define the complex world we live?*

JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA, August 14, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Today, organisations and the people working in them find themselves in an environment that is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), and under these conditions, tensions that are ongoing and seemingly overwhelming can be difficult to understand, much less easy to address, without the ability to deal with [paradox](#) and seeming contradictions. It's here where the 'both/and' vs 'either/or' thinking is crucial. How you deal with paradox is one of the critical 15 future fit skills that assesses how effective you are in the areas that are most important in the world of work today and in future," explains Dr Albertini of the [Future Fit Academy](#).

"Paradoxes exist when seemingly contradictory activities operate together. In a business and management context for example, when it comes to teamwork, each individual gives of their best when they work in teams. Yet for the team to succeed, each individual draws on their insight and individual capabilities. Think of the paradox between change and stability - to change safely, you need a stable base. To find stability, you need to change often.

"By reframing these tensions beyond 'either/or problems' in need of a single solution, we are able to produce an outcome that is superior to tackling one demand at a time, with only one solution. Paradoxes do not require a choice to be made as they are not conflicting ideas, but rather ideas that are connected at a deeper level - think of it as two sides of the same proverbial coin, six of one and half a dozen of the other. It is this ability to see, experience and navigate paradox as two sides of the same challenge that defines the individual with an evolved ability to deal with paradox, and is one of the fundamentally important 15 future fit skills of good leaders. Many, if not most of the challenges leaders face in the VUCA organisation today require 'both/and' thinking," explains Dr Albertini.



Dr Eric Albertini, Future Fit Academy

What are the benefits of 'Dealing with Paradox'?

"At an organisational level, when viewing and dealing with organisational issues as paradoxes, this allows thinking on different levels - paradoxes prevent us from oversimplifying the organisational context and encourage us to think on different levels. They force managers to take a critical view of all the knowledge and information that reduces complex, changeable and ambiguous organisational phenomena to a simple arithmetical equation. Thinking in terms of paradoxes transforms the classic notion of 'planning and control' which aspires towards clear, unambiguous parameters, into more diffuse concepts such as 'dealing with' or 'managing', doing greater justice to the complex environment in which managers work.

"Paradoxes also discourage us from taking a one-sided or dogmatic standpoint to an issue or problem. Thinking in terms of paradoxes enables

us to avoid biased, self-referenced perspectives, becoming attached to a truth or clinging to a conviction that stems very much from our own perspective. It is precisely their irresolvable duality and the associated dichotomy that taps into a deeper level within the organisation, posing questions such as 'What is really going on here?', 'What is the dynamic at play?', or 'How can we unite two seeming opposites?' Removing the need for a clear cut answer allows things to emerge, including innovation, which fuels people's vitality," explains Dr Albertini.

"When these inherent contradictions work together, success follows. Leaders who can navigate paradox have the biggest impact on business results. An inability to deal with paradox narrows our vision, limits possibilities and reduces the number of choices. It affects how you think, solve problems and make decisions," he adds.

An important question is whether you can learn paradoxical thinking or not?

"This is very definite YES. The paradoxical thinker learns to be open-minded, creative, think out-of-the-box and be curious. Look for the opposites, the unusual things, paying attention to things you have been ignoring or taking for granted. Paradoxical thinkers are sceptical - they do not



Future Fit Academy



15 Critical Skills to Master for the Future World of Work



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accept what other people accept as a matter of routine or doing things in a manner simply because that’s how they have always been done. To deal with paradoxes we need to learn to reframe the question by developing and practicing ‘Integrative Thinking’, and considering divergent ideas or alternative poles simultaneously.

“By embracing and living with paradox, one accepts the tension and becomes comfortable with the discomfort of the tension. By distancing yourself and actively search for new possibilities, one gets to adopt a position and take a conscious positioning along a continuum of perspectives.

Finally, make use of Polarity Mapping – this is a visual structure for confronting problems in industry, team collaboration and other challenges. It works for paradoxical or costly challenges and problems that can be worsened by focusing on only one element more than another. Polarity maps seek to balance the costs and benefits of values within a certain problem and can be adapted toward any field. Created by Barry Johnson, this concept was created to help problems and paradoxes, so that they can be solved in a realistic and multifaceted manner,” explains Dr Albertini.

“In this complex world, you need a more agile, penetrating mind that understands a more confusing, interconnected life and workplace. This is where learning to Deal with Paradox steps in and can illuminate what seems to be a murky path. P. Scott Fitzgerald used it in his short story “The Crack-Up” and the idea is present in the minds of modern society – ‘the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function’,” he concludes.

‘Dealing with Paradox’ is just one of the 15 Future Fit skills that the Future Fit Academy provides a [comprehensive self-assessment index](#) that assesses how effective you are in the areas that are most important in the world of work today. In harnessing and developing these 15 skills, the Future Fit Academy’s Future Fit Index provides a comprehensive self-assessment tool that assesses your level of effectiveness in these 15 critical skills needed to be effective now, and in the future world of work. Based on your comprehensive results, you can then structure a course of online study with individual Future Fit courses that teach you how to develop and stretch each of the 15 Future Fit capabilities. The Future Fit Index is structured for both individuals and corporate environments – supporting the entrepreneur looking to improve their ability to compete more effectively and grow their business in a volatile and competitive world, the manager looking to develop and grow into a leadership role, through to the human capital specialist looking to inculcate a winning, future fit culture to drive business market leadership.

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