

SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

AUGUST 2012

A close-up portrait of a man with short, light brown hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a black t-shirt. The background is a plain, light color.

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Consultant

**Flying
Blind**

**Sales
Money Ball**

Disruptive Innovation
Create a Leapfrogging Mindset

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MARKETING/INNOVATION

Disruptive Innovation

Lead through the fog of uncertainty.



by Soren Kaplan

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION (radical change) is now the norm. If we're not proactively *forging novel paths* that change the game, someone else will—and then we'll be forced to adapt to their new rules. Many leaders are not prepared to lead through the uncertainty and ambiguity that characterizes disruptive innovation.

When we experience fear, we tend to respond with risk-averse behavior and poor decision making.

This dynamic can create a negative feedback loop. Uncertainty leads to *fear*, prompting *retrenchment* into safe behavior. *Fear-based behavior* undermines *long-term success* since it's based on *what worked in the past*, not *what's needed for the future*. When this results in *no progress* or setbacks, *uncertainty* and *fear* go up, reinforcing *risk-averse mindsets* and *retrenched behavior*.

How can we lead through the fog of uncertainty to find clarity, direction, and game-changing opportunities?

Focus on Leapfrogging

A *leapfrogging mindset* seeks to make a leap forward in products, services, business functions and processes.

1. Ask questions. Ask: *In what ways am I holding on to the status quo? What assumptions can I challenge? What breakthroughs do I want to create and lead?*

2. Use data with intuition. In times of disruption, comprehensive data

rarely exist. *There are no maps for uncharted territory.* We can either wait for data to arrive, or move forward with what we have. The goal is to use what information we can find, and then apply our instincts to fill in the gaps. Ask: *Am I holding back because I'm missing data that can't be obtained in a workable timeframe? What do I know to be true that data can't tell me?*

3. Take small steps. You need to move forward despite uncertainty. Take small steps to see results, learn, and adapt. This helps remove the fear of failure since set-backs can be viewed as

learning ops that redirect future action. Ask: *What small step would have the greatest impact? What big assumptions can be tested with the least effort or investment?*

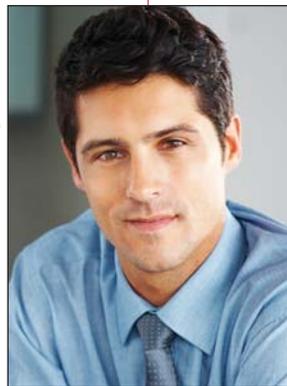
4. Savor surprise. When a surprise occurs, learn what it's telling you. Re-visit assumptions. Ask: *What surprises have influenced where I am today? What can I do to remain open to the*

power of surprise when it occurs? Bring imperfect ideas to market quickly to learn what works, and modify products, services, strategies and plans along the way.

When traversing uncertainty, we must find direction, overcome our fear of the unknown, embrace ambiguity as a key source of innovation, and use the fog to shape future opportunities. **SSE**

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ACTION: Adopt a leapfrogging mindset.



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