



# LEADERSHIP IN UNCERTAINTY: MODERN APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

Bukan Liliia

National Technical University of Ukraine «Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute», Ukraine

e-mail: [bukan777888@gmail.com](mailto:bukan777888@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

**Relevance.** In the modern world, organizations and leaders are increasingly faced with conditions of high uncertainty, instability, and rapid change. In the face of such changes, classical leadership models that rely on stability, predictability, and control are increasingly proving to be insufficient or irrelevant. In this regard, studying the characteristics of leadership in the context of uncertainty is becoming extremely important for both management theory and the practice of organizational development.

**Research Problem.** In the current scientific literature, there is a growing number of studies on topics related to adaptive leadership, leadership under uncertainty, and the development of leadership competencies in such circumstances. However, there are many unresolved questions that are worth exploring: which leadership approaches and styles are most effective in conditions of uncertainty; what internal and external factors influence a leader's ability to act effectively in crisis, rapidly changing conditions; are new frameworks or integrations of approaches needed?

**Aim.** The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze modern approaches to leadership in uncertain conditions, as well as to reveal the key challenges that leaders face in such conditions, in order to formulate practical recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of leadership in an unstable environment.

**Tasks.**

1. To determine the nature and characteristics of the environment of uncertainty in modern organizations;
2. To understand which approaches and leadership styles are most effective in conditions of uncertainty;
3. To analyze internal and external factors that affect the leader's ability to act effectively in crisis, rapidly changing conditions;
4. To offer practical recommendations for leaders and organizations to improve the effectiveness of leadership in conditions of uncertainty.

**Research.** The subject of the study is the set of leadership approaches, strategies, and behavioral models used by leaders in conditions of uncertainty, as well as the challenges they face in the process of implementing leadership activities.

**Methodology.** The study uses a combined approach: theoretical analysis of the literature and empirical methods. A systematic review of publications on leadership in uncertainty was conducted, key themes, approaches, and leadership competencies were identified, and practical recommendations were formulated on the basis of this.

## Theoretical assumptions:

In an environment of high uncertainty, leadership effectiveness largely depends not on the choice of one “universal” style, but on the leader’s ability to dynamically adapt, that is, to quickly switch between styles, to involve cognitive flexibility, to create conditions for collective cooperation and learning in the process of actions. This ability to adapt is a key leadership competency that mediates the influence of both internal factors (personal characteristics, learning capacity, tolerance for uncertainty) and external factors (organizational culture, technological variability, structure, information uncertainty) on leadership outcomes.

According to research by Becky Villan and Ben Heyman (2024), almost three-quarters (70%) of employees in large companies believe that senior managers are not sufficiently prepared to manage effectively in a global environment of instability and rapid change. This indicates the existence of a leadership crisis and the need to develop competencies that allow them to navigate in a turbulent environment. Theoretically, this confirms the concept that modern leadership requires not only managerial skills, but also the ability to strategically forecast and adapt.

Employees’ demands for leaders are also now evident. Research by Becky Villan and Ben Heyman (2024) shows that the key qualities valued by employees are: clear communication – 43% of respondents named it the most important, and a clear purpose that goes beyond simply making money – 28% of respondents. That is, there is now an increasing demand for leadership that should be not only decisive, but also meaningful, consistent with modern theories of transformational leadership, where the leader inspires the team with a shared vision and values.

Another important aspect of effective leadership is adaptive leadership, which allows solving complex problems where there are no obvious solutions and requires collective learning and behavior change. Leaders must combine management competencies with emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and manage team emotions, and ensure organizational justice, which increases employee trust and motivation.

In addition, an effective leader creates an environment for change, defines a clear vision and rationale for the need for change, which helps employees understand the reasons and support them. Adaptive leadership involves flexibility, creativity and collaboration, which allows organizations to respond effectively to rapid change and complex challenges.

Therefore, it is assumed that leaders who demonstrate a high level of adaptability, achieve open, frequent communication and create an environment of trust, team involvement, learning by doing - have a higher probability of successful functioning of the organization in conditions of uncertainty than those leaders who rely exclusively on stable leadership models, control or similar styles.

## Research results:

When analyzing current theories and research on leadership in uncertainty, a number of key aspects were identified that are important for theoretical and practical understanding of the problems:

**1) Insufficient readiness of leaders for uncertainty.** According to the Boston Consulting Group (2025) report, 40% of leaders consider themselves unprepared for market shocks in 2025. This means that almost half of top managers realize that their skills or approaches do not fully meet the current conditions of turbulence. In addition, the Deloitte report (2025) indicates that only 6% of organizations believe that they have made significant progress in creating “human resilience”, that is, a sustainable balance between business and human outcomes. These data confirm that there is a large gap between the requirements of the modern environment and the actual state of leadership preparation.

**2) The relationship between leadership and employee engagement.** According to Gallup (2024), the global employee engagement rate in 2024 was only 21%, which means that most employees do not feel highly engaged. Researchers also point out that 70% of team engagement depends on the manager or direct leader. Therefore, weak leadership – especially among middle managers – can directly impact organizational performance by reducing engagement, productivity, and increasing the risk of turnover.

**3) Strategic leadership in a turbulent environment.** The BCG (2025) report states that successful organizations in 2025 will focus on three main things: tight cost control, active implementation of technology, and strengthening corporate culture. For example, they show that over 86% plan to invest in AI or analytics in 2025. This suggests that leaders in uncertain times must combine strategic steps with cultural and communication actions - that is, not only make decisions, but also lead the organization to them through content, values, and shared understanding.

Therefore, creating a new leadership framework is more than just replacing old models. Traditional theories designed for stable environments do not take into account the demands of modern uncertainty. Leadership must be integrated, including adaptability, experimentation, collective reflection, digital and psychological resilience. Classic models are not discarded, but supplemented with new components for effectiveness in conditions of change. Modern practical strategies for leaders and organizations include:

- Continuous, open communication that builds trust even without all the answers.
  - Developing a culture of adaptability and learning through experimentation and rapid adjustment.
  - Engaging the team in shared understanding of the situation and delegating leadership.
  - Combining long-term goals with short action cycles to effectively respond to change.
- Therefore, the listed strategies create a foundation on which leaders and organizations can effectively operate in an uncertain environment. They help reduce uncertainty, increase trust and create the ability to respond quickly to change.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, in today's uncertain and rapidly changing environment, traditional leadership models focused on stability and control are becoming insufficient. The success of leaders depends on their ability to adapt flexibly, combine different styles, maintain open communication, and promote collective learning and reflection. Modern research shows a gap between market requirements and leaders' preparedness: many top managers are not prepared for crises, and low employee engagement affects the productivity and stability of organizations. Effective strategies are based on adaptability, experimentation, psychological resilience, and collective understanding, combining a long-term vision with flexible short-term action cycles. The development of integrated leadership models that complement classical approaches with modern elements of adaptability and openness is an important step towards increasing management efficiency and the ability to quickly respond to the challenges of the business environment.

## LITERATURE

1. Evolving Leadership Theories: Integrating Contemporary Theories for VUCA Realities. *MDPI*. URL: <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3387/14/11/270>
2. Malkawi, P. D. N., Mohailan, d. “Mohammadhaider“ ., Malkawi, D. R. ., & Malkawi, D. (2021). Leadership And Decision Making In Cases Of Uncertainty And Risks-The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Crisis. *International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research*, 8(8), 52–74.URL: [https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/ijetmr-ojms/ijetmr/article/view/IJETMR21\\_A06\\_2596](https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/ijetmr-ojms/ijetmr/article/view/IJETMR21_A06_2596)
3. Dr. Naveed Iqbal Chaudhry. Adaptive Leadership: Thriving in Times of Uncertainty. (2024). *Center for Management Science Research*, 2(01), 27-33. URL: <https://cmsrjournal.com/index.php/Journal/article/view/17>
4. Leading Through Uncertainty. *Anthesis*. URL: <https://www.ansesigroup.com/insights/leading-through-uncertainty/>
5. The CEO’s Guide to Delivering Despite Uncertainty. *BCG Global*. URL: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2025/how-ceos-can-deliver-in-uncertain-times>
6. Turning tensions into triumphs: Helping leaders transform uncertainty into opportunity | Deloitte Canada. *Deloitte*. URL: <https://surl.li/lyynwx>
7. State of the Global Workplace Report. *Gallup.com*. URL: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>
8. Beauchamp F. (2025). Top Leadership Development Statistics 2025 | Kinkajou. *Kinkajou*. URL: <https://www.kinkajouconsulting.com/post/topleadershipdevelopmentstatistics>