

## A New Thinking for Strategic Leadership

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It is widely acknowledged that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century leader has a need for strategic thinking, tolerance of ambiguity, global dexterity and a more adaptive, responsive and innovative style of leadership.

To do this there may be a need to ‘change’ our brains – that is to change the neural pathways that process information and to challenge our mental maps (the maps that form our mindsets).

By forming new neural connections in our brains we can process information more accurately and assimilate new information that we have not had to deal with previously.

The big challenge is that we all fill in the blanks of incomplete or new information by using the deep neural pathways that form our mind maps. These have served us well in the past. In short, we interpret information in the way that is most easy for our brains. This makes life easier. The difficulty arises when there are new problems to solve that have never been encountered before – like the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

We bombard our brains with the new information but our brain takes perceptual short cuts to save energy.

Our thinking is informed by our mental maps and mindsets (the long term concepts that structure the way we think and interpret information), rather than by the facts before us. Therefore we need to create new pathways and maps.

Leaders can do this by working to develop all 4 quadrants of our brains or at least by ensuring that we cover all areas when analysing information, problem solving or setting future direction. This helps us to access different thinking styles and approaches.

The good news is that we can all force our brains to perceive information in new ways and move beyond old habits – move towards novel alternatives and solutions.



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