Mentoring Meets VUCA!
By Ann Rolfe

VUCA, it’s terminology I’d never heard of until last week.

If it’s new to you too, you’re not alone. I learned about it in a Citrix webinar on instructional design, courtesy of Karen Moloney. Ninety-nine per cent of attendees had never heard of it either!

VUCA is, as you’d expect, is an acronym. It was originally used in the military and, because it is a powerful concept in strategic leadership, is now being applied in an organizational context.

According to Wikipedia VUCA stands for:

Volatility. - the nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts.

Uncertainty - the lack of predictability, the prospects for surprise, and the sense of awareness and understanding of issues and events.

Complexity - the multiplex of forces, the confounding of issues and the chaos and confusion that surround an organization.

Ambiguity - the haziness of reality, the potential for misreads, and the mixed meanings of conditions, cause-and-effect confusion.

Just about sums up the world we all live in, doesn’t it?

I took Karen’s advice and Googled VUCA to learn a little more and found Denise Caron’s slideshare: It’s A VUCA World. What I especially liked about Denise’s presentation was that she offers a way that you can ”turn the VUCA world on its head”. She reshapes the acronym into:

Vision – have a clear intent, a clear direction for your actions. Vision seeks to create a future.

Understanding – In the face of uncertainty, listening and understanding can help leaders discover new ways of thinking and acting. Listening leads to understanding, which is the basis for trust.

Clarity – the VUCA world rewards clarity because it helps people make sense of the chaos.

Agility – The VUCA world rewards networks because they are agile, while it punishes the rigidity and brittleness of hierarchies.

Doesn’t this sound like a recipe for a mentoring conversation to you?

I could have my mentor-coloured glasses on but the way I see it, mentoring helps people develop Vision, clear intention and direction for their actions, in the midst of volatility. Mentoring conversations are all about listening and Understanding, building trust and the ability to deal with uncertainty. The insight people gain through mentoring develops Clarity so they can make sense of the complexity around them; and the relationships and networks people build in mentoring give them Agility to cope with ambiguity.
What do you think? Comment in the Mentoring Network forum.

References

Karen Moloney, Director, The eLearning eXperts karen@theelearningexperts.com.au
www.theelearningexperts.com.au
Denise Caron, It’s A Vuca World