

## 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:

**V**olatility. - the nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts.

**U**ncertainty - the lack of [predictability](#), the prospects for [surprise](#), and the sense of awareness and understanding of issues and events.

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

**A**mbiguity - 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:

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

**U**nderstanding – 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.

**C**larity – the VUCA world rewards clarity because it helps people make sense of the chaos.

**A**gility – 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](mailto:karen@theelearningexperts.com.au)  
[www.theelearningexperts.com.au](http://www.theelearningexperts.com.au)

Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volatility,_uncertainty,_complexity_and_ambiguity)

Denise Caron, It's A Vuca World

<http://www.slideshare.net/dcaron/its-a-vuca-world-cips-cio-march-5-2009-draft>