



# Adapt To Changing Conditions

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The Octopus is a champion of adaptability, learning to survive and thrive in almost any environment. With a soft meaty body that is attractive to predators, they've found all kinds of ways to hide and protect themselves, including learning to forage the coconut shells discarded from tourist boats. They pull together two halves to make a suit of armor and wiggle their way inside.

When the Octopus ventures out, millions of cells on the surface of his skin are sensing and adapting to his environment, constantly changing shape and color to perfectly match the immediate surroundings. When a potential mate appears, some octopuses will pulse half of their body in vibrant color displays (the one facing the potential mate), while the other half is dull and inconspicuous to avoid attracting predators and even other male octopuses.

Successful adaptation relies on incorporating diversity – using multiple forms, processes, or strategies to meet a functional need. Systems are not predictable, so more diversity allows for changes to be met with a variety of options. This fosters resilience, the ability to bounce back and maintain function after a disturbance.

As our world becomes increasingly unpredictable, how do we build a capacity into our organizations and strategies to be adaptive, to respond to changes, to be resilient?

Hierarchical organizations with command-and-control leaders are being replaced by nimble and decentralized networks that act more like a nervous system than a factory.

Policy campaigns are shifting from activating people toward focused, single-issue electoral wins to building a growing and self-renewing base of citizens committed to improving our society over time. The 10-year plan is out; capacity to be adaptive is in.

**How can your leadership cultivate an ability among groups to respond to dynamic contexts and adapt skillfully to changing conditions?**