Rikke Kristine Nielsen, Frans Bevort, Thomas Duus Henriksen, Anne-Mette Hjalager, Danielle Bjerre Lyndgaard

# Navigating Leadership Paradox

Engaging Paradoxical Thinking in Practice

**DE GRUYTER** 

### Contents

Acknowledgments — XI

Foreword — XIII

### Part I: Paradoxes in leadership: What? Why? Who?

### Chapter 1

A paradox perspective on modern leadership challenges — 3 No need to overcomplicate — 4 The pervasiveness of VUCA - volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity and global crises — 5 Lost and found - where the rainbow ends... — 6 Paradox - energizer or stressor? — 6 What is your (im)balance point, and where do you want to go? — 8 Ten paradoxical tensions in leadership — 8 Paradoxes - natural phenomenon or creative obstruction? —10 How do they know?----- 10 Managers, leaders - and other change agents —12 A guided tour: Reading and using the rest of the book —13 References —15 Author publications on leadership paradox related to research projects on paradox navigation in practice —17

### Chapter 2

# On problems, dilemmas, and paradoxes —18 Complex-perplex-paradox? —18 Paper, rock, scissors - problem, dilemma, paradox — 20 Problem - a substantial, unsettled matter — 21 Reflection questions: Is your challenge a problem? — 21 Dilemma - trade-offs between "a rock and a hard place" and "luxury problems"----- 22 Reflection questions: Is your challenge a dilemma? — 22 Paradox - long-lasting "cork problems" — 23 Reflection questions: Is your challenge a paradox? — 23 Working through paradox in five phases — 24

XVI — Contents

```
The Paradox Pathway: 5 phases, 10 paradoxes, 15 tools, 20 cases, and 25 learning coordinates------ 26
Ready for paradox? The three "Cs" — 27
References----- 28
```

### Chapter 3

What paradox? Introducing fields of paradoxical tensions in leadership - 29

- # 1: Leadership and management 31
- # 2: Leadership: Individual leadership and collective/distributed leadership 32
- # 3: Matrix and functional organizing balancing organizational flexibility with
- specialization 34
- # 4: Purpose, passion, *and* performance **36**
- # 5: Employee mobility and permanence 37
- # 6: Hybrid collaboration physical ant/virtual presence 39
- # 7: Differentiation/localization and integration/globalization 41
- # 8: Innovating outside-in *and* inside-out **43**

# 9: Digital transformation - human resources *and* technological "non-human resources" — **45**.

# 10: Sustainabilities - profit and people and planet — 47
Opening Pandora's box of leadership paradoxes — 49
References — 50

### Part II: Navigating leadership paradox in practice

Chapter 4 Phase 1: Choosing and shaping your focus area - paradox choice and qualification — 59
Case 4.1: Not everything keeping you up at night is a paradox — 61
Tool 4.1: The Paradox Springboard61
Case 4.2: From a cultural conflict to a division of labor paradox — 62
Case 4.3: Unfolding your paradox. Getting inspiration in your network — $63$
Tool 4.2: Use a Lifeline! Three game-plans for finding outside
inspiration — 63
Case 4.4: The leadership team kick-starts their paradox by reading a
management book together 65
Tool 4.3: Paradox Exhibition - tell us about your paradox65
Case 4.5: Managers identifying relevant paradoxes with the assistance of
HR and top management — 66
Tool 4.4: The Paradox Quiz: Pick something relevant - and have
something at stake — 67

Five learning coordinates for the first phase of paradox navigation - choosing and qualifying your paradox —  $\mathbf{68}$ 

### Chapter 5

### Phase 2: Know your paradox - paradox investigation - 70

Tool 5.1: The Paradox Quadrant - a paradox has two sides, each with positive and negative aspects — 72
Paradox Quadrant safety check - vertical and diagonal analysis — 74
Case 5.1: Up close and personal with the paradox - Tony is filling in the Paradox Quadrant — 75
One paradox - different managers — 77
Case 5.2: Same paradox, individual perspectives — 78
Case 5.3: Two managers in owner-led organizations - same paradox, individual perspectives — 79
Tool 5.2: The Paradox Kaleidoscope - uncovering related paradoxes — 80
Case 5.4: Diana's paradox knot - one paradox rarely comes alone------81
Case 5.5: A collective leadership challenge - a paradox mix — 83
Five learning coordinates for the second phase of paradox navigation - paradox investigation — 84
References — 85

### Chapter 6

# Phase 3: Charting a course of action - identifying and choosing appropriate actions — 86

Case 6.1: Breaking away from your existing self-image as a manager - 88 Tool 6.1: Paradox Reflection for Action - "Step by step" - 88 Case 6.2: Coping with paradox - head wind or tail wind? - 92 Tool 6.2: The Caricature Cabinet - the development of personal strategies for dealing with leadership paradoxes - 93 Becoming aware of your own unconscious reactions and action preferences - 94 Challenge A: How do you usually react when you experience a paradox? - 94 Presentation of the Caricature Cabinet's action strategies - 94 How to develop alternative action strategies - 96 Challenge B: Could you react in a more productive way when you experience a paradox?----- 96 Case 6.3: From ostrich to action-hero? - 97 Five learning coordinates for the third phase of paradox navigation identifying and choosing appropriate actions - 98 References - 98

XVIII - Contents

### Chapter 7

Phase 4: Action in practice - grasping and handling your paradox — 99

Tool 7.1: The 3D Cube Model - clarify task, methods, and stakeholders —100
To balance the known and unknown overtime —102
Case 7.1: The paradoxical job description - what does the boss need to do now?----- 103
Case 7.2: Accounting for performance with passion - financial accountability with an eye for passion —105
Case 7.3: Paradox-synergies in leadership teams —107
Tool 7.2: The Reflective Team - the team as a development tool —108
Case 7.4: Hot seat challenge----- 109

Five learning coordinates for the fourth phase of paradox navigation - grasping and handling your paradox —110
References —110

### **Chapter 8**

Phase 5: Evaluation and follow-up - keeping track of your balancing act -112 Case 8.1: When top management asks for an update -114 Tool 8.1: Keeping Track of Paradox Performance —114 Case 8.2: Key performance indicators - without "deparadoxing paradox" -116 Tool 8.2: Self Test of Paradox Preferences - A, B, C----- 116 Tool 8.2.1: Self-assessment variant A: "Traffic light" - assessment of the bright sides of your paradox -117 Case 8.3: Building a quick-test tool for your leadership paradox -118 Tool 8.2.2: Self-assessment variant B: Balancing points - where is your emphasis right now? -119 Tool 8.2.3: Self-assessment variant C: Dialog tool - ask your employees, your manager, and your management colleagues -122 Case 8.4: Setting leadership objectives for a CEO -122 Tool 8.3: Paradox Pitstop - taking stock of your development -123 Five learning coordinates for the fifth phase of paradox navigation - keeping track of your balancing act -125 References----- 125

### Chapter 9

## The Paradox Pathway - 25 learning coordinates for paradox leadership in practice-----126

A paradox GPS - 25 learning coordinates------ 127

Phase 1: Choosing and shaping your focus area - paradox choice and qualification -127

Phase 2: Know your paradox - paradox investigation -128

Contents ----- XIX

Phase 3: Charting a course of action - identifying and choosing appropriate actions —130
Phase 4: Action in practice - grasping and handling your paradox —130
Phase 5: Evaluation and follow-up - keeping track of your balancing act-----131
Coming full circle - the Paradox Pathway —132
Working conditions for paradox navigation: Coping with paradoxes in context-----133
Paradox - for others and for you? —133
The role of different leadership roles —134
The ups and downs —135

# Part III: Paradox navigation 2.0 - working through paradox with stakeholders

### Chapter 10

Paradox navigation as a team sport: Inter- and intra-organizational collaboration on paradox —143 Paradox navigation - from individual challenge to collective change —143 Case 10.1: "Glocal" governance model: Inter-function navigation of the local-global paradox in practice —145 Case 10.2: Paradox navigation crossing hierarchical lines —147 Paradox sharing - learning from collaborative paradox navigation in practice —149 References----- 152

### Chapter 11

# Let's talk about paradox! Communicating consistently inconsistent about paradox with stakeholders —154

Admitting to uncertainty is part of paradoxical leadership communication —155 Engaging demands for clarity/compliance as well as professional creativity and empowerment —156

The value of inconsistent communication for paradox navigation —157 The dark and the bright sides of paradoxical communication —158 References —161

### Chapter 12

Facilitating productive interactions with paradox - the role of facilitators, peers, and professional helpers —165

Assisting others - experiences from HR professionals as paradox navigators by proxy-----165

XX — Contents

Tool 12.1: EFFE - Explanation, Facilitation, Feedback and Experiment---- Five thresholds in facilitation of paradox work------ Threshold #1: Onboarding - choosing a point of departure------ Threshold #2: Making room for paradox - considering interaction with existing change and development initiatives —Threshold #3: Avoiding "deparadoxification" of paradox —Threshold #4: Consciously privileging paradox —Threshold #5: Staying with the paradox —Facilitator paradox readiness —References —

### Chapter 13

### Concluding the never-ending story of paradox navigation —180 Get to (paradox) work! —181 If only we had all the information ... —182 Vicious and virtuous circles of paradox navigation —183 Leading, longing, and dancing with paradox —185 References —186

Bibliography -189

List of cases -199

List of tools - 201

List of figures - 203

About the authors — 205

About the series editor - 207

Index — 209