



**Siobhan Soraghan** BSc MBA MCIPD MCMI  
Director, Active Insight Consulting Ltd

### Is your WUCA pukka?

"Circumstances don't make you, they reveal who you are" - a great quote I recently heard, and although I believe that early circumstances in life help to shape us, perhaps in adulthood circumstances merely provide the stage on which we play out who we have become. Sometimes the "me" that manifests itself in a situation is a surprise to ourselves as well as those around us. And yet in another context that persona would have remained hidden. Think of Churchill - an outstanding leader in war, who failed to perform in peacetime. The context had changed and no longer required what he had to offer.

So if circumstances and context matter so much, do we do enough to choose or influence where we operate?

Some leaders do so far more than others. Those who do tend to have a greater sense of self-empowerment - in NLP terms they are more "at cause" than "at effect" in their lives. When working with my clients I help them distinguish between the "givens" around them and what they can influence to allow them to shine more. We work on actions they can take and deal with any inner limitations that were previously hidden. Circumstances, context, and the courage to influence them, is the C in WUCA.

When we think of great leaders and ask why they were great there tends to be one consistent answer - people chose to follow them. Why? One of two reasons: fear of a threat that the leader promised to protect them from (think of Bush and the war against terror); or hope of something inspiring and motivating - something that tapped into people's aspirations and helped them build a bridge between the present and the future they wanted. Of the two, fear is the easy option. Psychologists tell us that most behaviour is driven by fear - our primeval desire to survive. But fear can make us do things that don't serve the greater good. And through the fight or flight response, it can drive us into the ground. So when I work with leaders I encourage them to work hard to be clear about the aspirations they wish to awaken in their people. Aspirations that align with a vision for a better organisation and that offer their followers the means to become more of who they are at their best. Aspiration is the A in WUCA.

People's capacity to access their aspirations is greatly affected by their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. I recall a line from the Desiderata: "many fears are born from fatigue and loneliness". When people are feeling low, tired, and have few sources of emotional support, then limiting beliefs gain strength and aspirations will be significantly dulled. Leaders need to understand this, appreciate what sustainable leadership means and requires, and pay attention to timing. And they need to maintain themselves in a state of wellbeing so that they remain positive and inspired about their own role as a leader. When working with leaders I pay a great deal of attention to their current level of health and to their inner sense of esteem. Where there are warning signs we agree a set of high priority self-care objectives. Wellbeing is the W in WUCA.

And finally, a leader's aspirations can appear insincere and unrealistic if not clearly grounded in their own personal values and sense of self. For a leader to have convincing aspirations that they can fulfil, those aspirations need to be congruent with, and rooted in, the leader's natural strengths, values and capabilities. A leader with a strong sense of genuine uniqueness has a head start. In marketing terms this is their Unique Selling Proposition. If a leader has an 'offer' that is a promise to deliver against expectations, then they need to "get" their own USP, and understand what it is about them that defines their personal brand of delivery. This helps them make intelligent choices about where to position themselves as they progress in their careers, and so links with context, above. USP is the U in WUCA.

So to conclude, effective leaders for tomorrow are intelligent about needs and sustainability, are self-aware and genuine, are proactive about being in the right place at the right time and tap aspirations rather than fears.

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So - is *your* WUCA pukka?

To find out contact me on [siobhan@active-insight.com](mailto:siobhan@active-insight.com). I can help you assess your strengths and vulnerabilities and have an unparalleled set of abilities and many unique tools to support you and your leaders to excel in all the above. Please feel free to get in touch to explore.

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