

Are You Ready for the Future?

What can you do to prepare yourself for the VUCA world of the future? VUCA stands for **Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous**.

Bob Johansen, a long-time futurist, former president of the Institute for the Future (IFF) and author, insists that forecasts and predictions are not immutable outcomes. He insists that leaders — if they have the right skills — can make the future.

In the extensively updated edition of [*Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World*](#), Johansen describes the forces that IFF says will shape the world in the next 10 years. He argues that leaders will need new skills to manage those forces. The final chapter is devoted to the individual leader who asks, *what can I do to develop my future leadership skills?* Here's a short version of Johansen's recommendations:

1. **Rate your readiness.** How ready are you to lead in a future that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous? What [future trends](#) can you relate to now? What seems entirely foreign? How could you start to learn the [10 future leadership skills](#)? What do you need to better understand, learn and practice? Johansen includes questions for reflection as well as a simple self-assessment (co-created with CCL's Sylvester Taylor) in the book. An [online version](#) of the assessment is available from the publisher, complete with results graphs, interpretation and follow-up questions to consider based on your scores.
2. **Immerse yourself in the future.** Preparing for the future requires immersive learning experiences. This gives you the chance to operate in situations that don't fully make sense and in which old models, behaviors or skills aren't enough to succeed. You'll want to seek out experiences that place you in unfamiliar, often uncomfortable, situations — and that push you to learn something that you have identified as necessary to face the future. Use a learner's mindset to get the most out of these experiences.
3. **Reflect back on your own leadership journey.** Even as you look forward, Johansen advocates looking back at your life. What experiences and choices have influenced your leadership ability and style? What from your background could you revisit or bring forward to address the future? Perhaps you tried something that failed, but might work now. Or a long-forgotten past experience or connection may offer insight into future directions for you or your organization.
4. **Return to the present.** You will gain great insight and develop new skills by immersing yourself in the future. Wisdom comes from where you have been in the past. But you must return to the present. Take what you have learned, says Johansen, and apply it today to make a better future.

Leaders will make the future, but they won't make it all at once and they can't make it alone. This will be a make-it-ourselves future.

