

# The VUCA of Politics

By Tom O'Shea, CMC Organizational Agility Practice Leader

## **Volatile. Uncertain. Complex. Ambiguous.**



VUCA is that descriptive term coined more than 10 years ago by US Army War College to describe the operating environment military leaders have been facing and for which they must be prepared. I think VUCA is a pretty good descriptive phrase for what we have seen in the 2016 Presidential political campaign and what lies ahead.

I have no interest in getting into the relative merits or de-merits of any particular candidate in this race – I only

serve it up as a timely example for 21st Century decision process as hopefully many millions of Americans express their right to vote today and join those of us who have taken advantage of early voting. Making choices can become very hard when the VUCA index is very high and blurry.

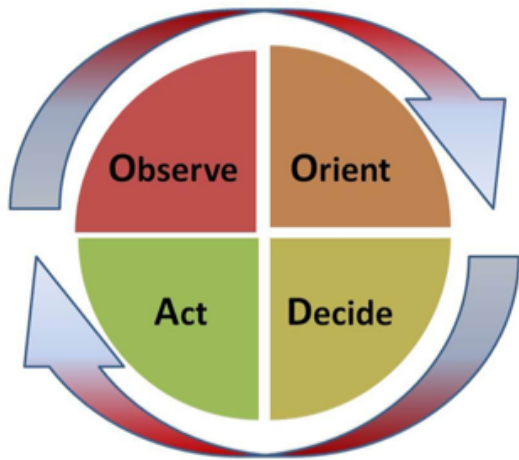
To a large extent, we look to leaders in all of our organizations to generate confidence in how we can face and overcome the VUCA that surrounds us. I suppose that might become the bottom line even in elections like this ... which leader do you believe will deliver on that proposition for you?

In most organizations, our leaders have this same charge but able to operate with greater freedom to act with fewer key stakeholders and complexity. Nevertheless, everyday decision-making can sometimes feel as daunting and thick as a polarized political election. The relative good news in politics is that there is a defined “election day” to make your choice and for the results to be tabulated.

In business and every day life, we sometimes keep grinding to find the complete and “perfect” solution only to discover that months have gone by without any conclusions. It can be a bi-product of our VUCA world where the collateral damage of increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity may be our capacity to make better and faster choices and decisions.

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Also posted at: <http://agilityconsulting.com/your-agility-advantage/the-vuca-of-politics/>



Our experience tells us that we need to build stronger counterweights to VUCA such as disciplines and methods in decision-making and problem solving – guides and tools that operate as lifelines to hold onto as we pull ourselves out of the VUCA quicksand and muck. The OODA Loop was first developed by Colonel John Boyd, USAF jet pilot back in Korean War days, to help accelerate the speed of making decisions in battle. The Navy SEALs continue to use the OODA methodology today.

It seems that I use the OODA Loop with various clients almost every day as the scaffolding to problem solving and framework to guide us to those better and faster outcomes. That is what agility is all about – being focused, fast and flexible to navigate through this VUCA world.

Maybe we can each use the OODA method to help process making the right choice for you in today's election. I look forward to your feedback and perspectives.



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