



**ATTRACTORS**  
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Every month **Attractors** shares tips and tools from human systems dynamics. In this month's edition, Glenda Eoyang reflects on

***ADAPTIVE ACTION, ARTFUL PERCEPTION***

What does it mean to lead in these days of rapid and unpredictable change? In the past, we thought leaders should:

- Speak softly and carry a big stick
- Be in front of the curve
- Drive toward a compelling vision
- Keep the troops in line

This isn't bad advice, but it will not sustain productive work in complex situations like the ones most of us confront on a day-to-day basis. Today, leaders work in situations that are open to many outside forces beyond prediction or control. They support change from the tops, middles, and bottoms of organizations and communities. They have to think about a wide array of factors that influence success. They recognize that their actions may have unintended consequences, and that their followers will be challenged to be creative and innovative. They must see and respond to surprise while helping others hold onto a stable core of identity and action. In short, they have to be prepared for adaptive action and artful perception.

Three groups of HSD colleagues not only demonstrate these leadership characteristics, they also help others build their artful and adaptive capacities. Their stories, and the stories they tell, can inform your leadership practice as you cope with your own chaos.

The Authentic Leadership In Action (ALIA) Institute brings together mindfulness, creative process, and leadership action in their annual Shambhala Institute experience. For five days (June 6-12, 2010) a diverse group comes together to explore innovative leadership theories and practices. In this creative space, leaders of all kinds find new ways to see emerging patterns and take effective action to shape individual and collective futures. Wendy Morris and I will be leading one of the modules this year. We call it *Adaptive Action, Artful Perception*, and its goal is to help people see and influence the future of organizations. You can find out more about the Shambhala Institute at [www.aliainstitute.org](http://www.aliainstitute.org).

The HSD Institute is also collaborating with ALIA to present a Human Systems Dynamics Professional certification course in Ottawa in the fall. This experience will be co-hosted by Wendy Morris, and will integrate experiential and somatic perspectives with traditional HSD theory, models, methods, and tools. For more information, go to [www.hsdinstitute.org/hmdp](http://www.hsdinstitute.org/hmdp).

The CEO of ALIA Institute, Susan Szpakowski, has written a lovely book called *Little Book of Practice for Authentic Leadership in Action*. It unfolds the many threads of insight and relationship that have emerged from the Shambhala Institute over the past decade. You can get more information about the book at [www.aliainstitute.org](http://www.aliainstitute.org).

Kristine Quade and Royce Holladay have been leading and talking about leadership for decades. They bring their shared insights together with HSD tools and models in their new book, *Dynamical Leadership*. It is an exciting and accessible journey into the variety of perspectives and behaviors that empower and enlighten the leaders of tomorrow. They also share their work through webinars, public speaking, and experiential classes in the Dynamical Leadership Academy. You can find out more about their work at [www.dynamicalleadership.com](http://www.dynamicalleadership.com).

Brenda Fake and Larry Solow take on one of the major challenges of business today—how do you make internal processes more predictable while adapting to unpredictable changes in the market? They are masters of Six Sigma and Lean Enterprise, and they recognize the limitations of these approaches in complex and emergent times. The title of their new book says it all: *What Works for GE May Not Work for You: Using Human Systems Dynamics to Build a Culture of Process Improvement*. The book is practical and easy to read, and they are providing free sample chapters at [www.whatworksforgemaynotworkforyou.com](http://www.whatworksforgemaynotworkforyou.com).

Each of these colleagues and collaborations rises to the leadership challenge of today and provides practical answers to our question: What does it mean to lead in these days of rapid and unpredictable change? They draw on different traditions and practices. *ALIA* is grounded in mindfulness practice and creative process. *Dynamical Leadership* draws from interviews with more than 30 emerging leaders. *What's Good for GE* delves into the lived experience of two effective leaders. Their sources and stories are quite distinct, but their message is the same.

Effective leaders for today and tomorrow observe the world around them with open eyes and generous hearts. They draw from a wide array of creative options, they take courageous action, and they adapt quickly as those actions shape and reshape their environments.

I invite you to reflect on your own experience as an adaptive leader and to draw inspiration and information from these innovative partners. Please share your thoughts about leadership in complex times by joining us in conversation at <http://humansystemsdynamicsinstitute.ning.com>.

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