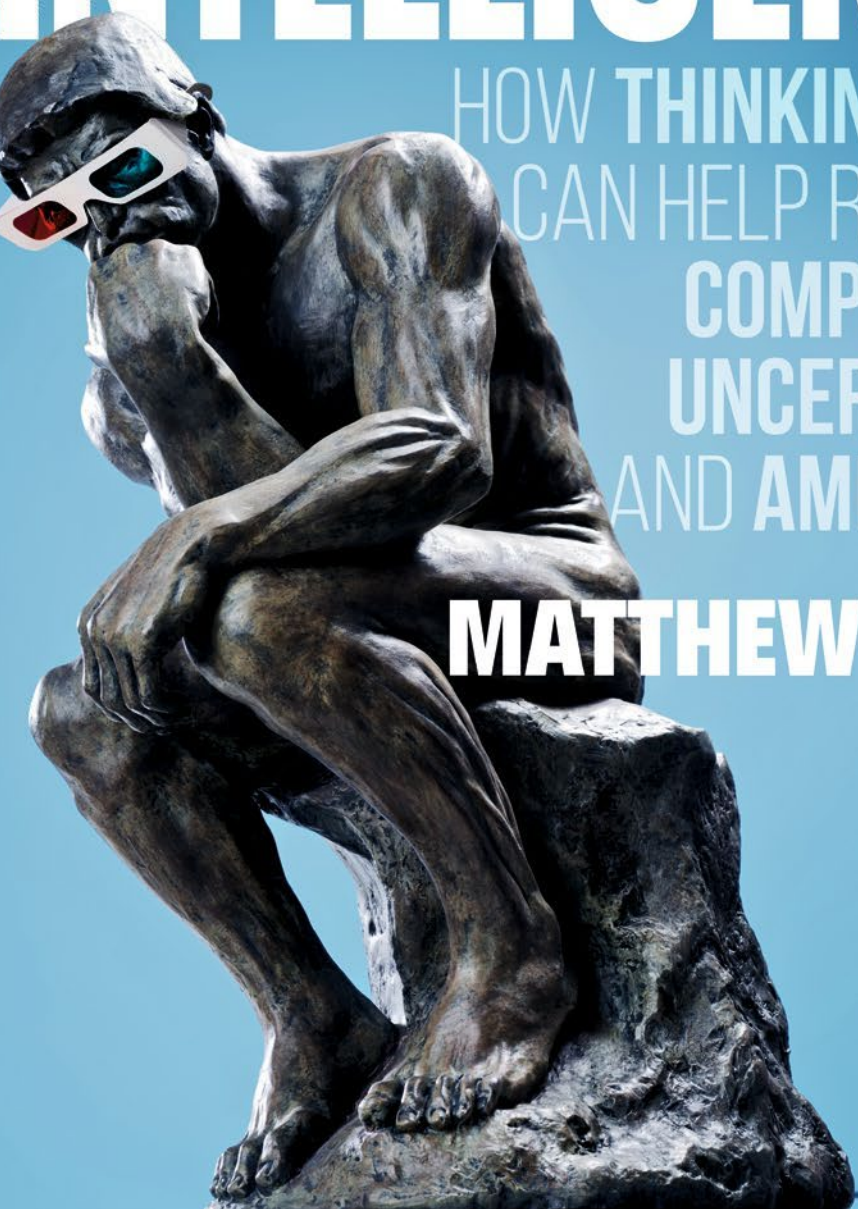


CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE

HOW THINKING IN 3D
CAN HELP RESOLVE
COMPLEXITY,
UNCERTAINTY
AND AMBIGUITY

MATTHEW KUTZ



Contextual Intelligence

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How Thinking in 3D Can Help Resolve Complexity,
Uncertainty and Ambiguity

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-44997-5 ISBN 978-3-319-44998-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44998-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016957718

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Cover illustration: © Joecicak/E+/Getty and © MBI / Alamy Stock Photo

Cover design by Oscar Spigolon

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Note to the Reader: Palgrave Edition

Since the initial release of my contextual intelligence white paper in 2011 I have directed dozens of Contextual Intelligence Workshops™ around the world and across many different industries. This has allowed me to have many conversations about contextual intelligence that have proven to be a rich source of feedback. These conversations have been extremely valuable in terms of how I approached the topic in this book.

It is my hope that this new edition strikes a balance between the rigor necessary for a book like this and a relaxed writing style. That is not always easy; therefore, as you read this book it may be necessary to pause and let some of the ideas sink in. At times the concepts require some reflection in order to conceptualize how they apply to your specific situation.

This is not a book to rush through. I encourage you to wrestle with the ideas, ask questions about what you just read, and think of examples or scenarios where the ideas being presented fit with what you are doing.

The ideas, concepts, and models presented in this book are intended to spark questions and dialogue about how your decisions are made and leadership is practiced. If you are diligent in applying the concepts and behaviors of the contextual intelligence model you will begin to have a different perspective, which will enable you to demonstrate higher levels of performance.

I am confident—even if you don't agree with me—that you will find this book to be intellectually stimulating and compelling. What you will find in this revised edition is reordered content that has a more logical flow, take-away objectives before each chapter that highlight what you are expected to glean from that chapter, new anecdotes and examples, and case study questions to help you practically understand the content from each section. Enjoy.

Acknowledgments

No body of work, regardless of length, is completed in isolation. There are so many people I need to thank and acknowledge for their help and support over the many years that I have been contemplating and developing this contextual intelligence model.

The first person that I must thank is my best friend and wife, Angie. She has been my biggest fan and greatest support. Without her input, graciousness in letting me stay up late hours and miss family meals to complete it, and her valuable critiques I would not have been able to even put together a coherent thought. I love you.

To my mom and dad who supported me and encouraged me in every phase of my life—and who were never afraid to discipline me, I say thank you. That discipline was the best thing that you could have ever done for me, and taught me as much or more about contextual intelligence than any studying ever could. Without a doubt I owe you both the largest debt of gratitude. You both instructed and modeled for me the most necessary skills to be successful: humility, respect, and servanthood. But beyond that you instilled in me the greatest and most rewarding thing of all, a love and passion for Jesus Christ.

To Nathan and Jonathan you are the reason why leadership is even important to me. You are a big part of what motivates me. I know you both will be great leaders—even as young men you already are! I hope and trust that you learn these principles and use them to do well in everything you put your hand to.

To my friends, many of my ideas I have shamelessly stolen from you, your brilliant teachings, and our exhilarating dialogues. I cannot say thank you enough for your time, friendship, encouragement, thoughtful critiques, and support. You make my life richer.

To George Barrett, you have been a true sage to me. A wise leader and mentor who has never been afraid to tell me how it is. You have been a mentor, so much of any good thing I have I owe to you and your guidance.

To my professional mentors I say thank you. Joan Scialli, John Cipolla, Jack Ransone, and Steve Risinger—you all have been instrumental in how I came to contextualize the contextual intelligence model. Your teachings, examples, support and encouragement especially during my formative years, have been inspiring.

To my professional colleagues you have challenged me, challenged my ideas, and asked me the hard questions, thank you. Brian Campbell, Bobby Hill, Gretchen Carroll, Debra Ball—you all are the best. Each of you brings to life an element of contextual intelligence that I would not have seen except for your leadership.

To the team at Palgrave Macmillan—thank you for your tireless editing and creative and insightful ideas to help make this academic diatribe at least a little more readable.

To my readers, I say thank you. I hope these ideas encourage you to pursue the best of your leadership potential.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
	Part 1 Origins of the Contextual Intelligence Model	7
2	What Is Contextual Intelligence?	9
3	Using Contextual Intelligence at Work and in Life	21
4	Putting the Contextual Intelligence Model Together	31
	Part 2 Introduction to Part 2: Mental Models of Contextual Intelligence	53
5	Embracing Complexity	55
6	Reframing Experience	71
7	Leveraging Learning	79
	Part 3 Introduction to Part 3: 3D Thinking Framework	93
8	3D Thinking: A Different Orientation to Time	97

9 Decision-Making in a Variable-Rich Context	109
10 Implementing Contextual Intelligence	121
Part 4 Obstacles and Recommendations	129
11 Disruptors of 3D Thinking	131
12 Overcoming the Obstacles to Contextual Intelligence	139
13 Recommendations and Action Steps for Implementing Contextual Intelligence	149
Erratum to: 3D Thinking: A Different Orientation to Time	E1
Glossary	157
Index	161

About the Author

Matthew R. Kutz is a Fulbright Scholar, award-winning professor, textbook author, and leadership consultant. But the titles he most cherishes are husband, dad, and friend. He lives in Perrysburg, Ohio with the love of his life and best friend, Angie, and their two sons, Nathan and Jonathan. He is an Associate Professor at Bowling Green State University's College of Education and Human Development, is a popular conference speaker, has presented on the TEDx stage, and conducts seminars and workshops on Contextual Intelligence and many other leadership-related topics. He works with Fortune 500 companies, schools, hospitals, churches, professional associations, and other large profit and non-profit organizations. Some of his clients include Procter & Gamble, Airtel, Ltd, Marathon Petroleum Co., World Relief, and ProMedica Health Systems. Matthew earned his Ph.D. in Global Leadership from Lynn University in Boca Raton, FL, his M.S. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of Toledo, OH, and his bachelor's degree from Anderson University, IN. He is the author of the widely used text *Leadership and Management in Athletic Training: An Integrated Approach*. His research on leadership and sports medicine has been published in dozens of journals. He is Senior Associate Editor of the *Athletic Training Education Journal* and Founding Editor of the *Journal of Sports Medicine and Allied Health Science*. He has served as head athletic trainer for the US Track & Field's Team USA in international competitions in Seoul, South Korea, and Balneário Camboriú, Brazil. He is a US Track & Field Level II Coach Educator, and sports medicine consultant and educator to the Honduran and Rwandan Olympic Committees. In 2013 he was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Rwanda's College of Medicine and Health Science. In 2016 he was a Visiting Scholar to Gold Coast University Hospital and Griffith University in Gold Coast, Australia. Matthew's leadership philosophy is influenced by his faith. His personal philosophy on leadership comes from St. Paul's writing, "If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously" Romans 12:8 (NLT). Matthew subscribes to the belief that leadership is a serious responsibility that needs to be pursued and developed with diligence.

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	Contextual intelligence taxonomy	18
Fig. 2.2	Contextual Intelligence Circumplex™	19
Fig. 5.1	Double-loop learning	62
Fig. 7.1	Iceberg illustration of explicit and tacit knowledge	80
Fig. 1	Time orientation	94
Fig. 8.1	Insight formula	98
Fig. 8.2	Time orientations	99
Fig. 11.1	Modified agreement–trust matrix	137

List of Tables

Table 5.1	Complicated versus complex ways of thinking	67
Table 7.1	Tacit knowledge versus explicit knowledge	81
Table 10.1	Sample questions to help you diagnose your context	126

1

Introduction

Today's leadership landscape is far more challenging than it has ever been. Everything is constantly changing. Globalization is becoming universalization. Market drivers constantly reshuffle. Performance indicators are a moving target. Demographics are shifting—sometimes radically. Regulatory policies are always evolving. Information and data are flying at us at unprecedented speeds and in extraordinary amounts. For example, almost any search on Google®, Bing®, or Yahoo® can generate millions of hits. Organizing and making sense of that much information can be overwhelming and even frustrating. In addition to this, global and local environments seem to be continuously recalibrating, which means the political, religious, business, and civic landscape can be hard to recognize. In short, the world is different today than yesterday and will be even more different tomorrow than it is today. To help resolve this a new perspective is needed, one that embraces uncertainty and appreciates volatility. Leading with contextual intelligence provides one such perspective.

Despite all these factors, organizations and individuals are expected to perform well for their employers, create value in their communities, provide and plan for retirement, solve the world's and other people's problems before they think about solving their own, and still generate high levels of and sustained profitability.

As a result, what were once bedrock principles of business leadership are now much less relevant (they might even verge on being irrelevant). Traditional theories and assumptions about leadership simply cannot respond to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) that face us all regardless of our setting(s) when operating in a global knowledge economy.

It doesn't matter whether your organization is in the public or private sector; whether it's for-profit or non-profit; or whether it's a religious institution or a Fortune 500 company; the VUCA reality of our world will impact how you lead, make decisions, and do business. And, the context in which that business operates must be accurately diagnosed in order to thrive.

Ironically, many of the business mantras that still prevail rely on models, theories, and assumptions that may have been adequate in the not-too-distant past, but now have little usefulness in these constantly changing conditions. Stability is no longer the norm. Therefore, mantras based on the rules of engagement from a former era need to be closely evaluated for relevance.

For instance, businesses still routinely use performance evaluations that are based on standard job descriptions and linear thinking. Resources are still treated the way they were a century ago—as if they are never going to diminish. Hiring criteria and social status are still based on scholastic assessment and achievement—instead of adaptability, resiliency, and agility. Intelligence, data, information, and knowledge, while viewed as different concepts than they once were, are nevertheless measured and treated in the same old way—that is, as if they were all useful and the more we have the better the decisions we make.

The education of leaders and the use of leadership models in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s were based on paradigms rooted in patterns of behavior that were mechanical, predictable, and linear. Work was more easily separated from personal life. Office politics were left at the office, and rarely competed with family or personal time. Family, work, religious, and community values were compartmentalized and as such rarely conflicted. Market share, too, was easier to calculate and presented fewer variables. In those days a good vision statement could make everything “bad” disappear. This reality has long vanished, but remnant paradigms still persist.

To use a familiar metaphor, the world was flat but turned round overnight. Ironically, the same change-averse phenomenon that occurred after the realization that the world was no longer flat but round is happening right now. Back then, no one wanted to risk a long seafaring voyage for fear of falling off the edge of the world. Similarly, few in the present want to jettison the comfortable business paradigms that have long governed leadership practices. Successful leaders have long been praised for embracing new ways of thinking—I am charging you to not just innovate around products and services, but to also innovate around paradigms, ways, and models of thinking, and an even how you might view experience.

For example, if much of what we are experiencing is new then by definition no one has relevant prerequisite experience. Simply stated, how can

someone have experience of something that has never before happened? This dramatically impacts the usefulness of experience and at the very least forces us to reconsider what experience is and how long it takes to acquire it. Like never before we, our organizations, and the world need contextual intelligence. We need a way of correctly responding to the environment when it shifts.

Ironically, many of the changes we are seeing were first forecast in the 1960s, if not before. So while no one is surprised that the leadership landscape has changed, the gradual creep of that change lulled many into a false sense of security. They believed that change would be easy to outrun and were busy attending to other things that had to come first. Now, however, waking up to the fact that they're out of touch with the present, they either deny it or further entrench themselves in their old behaviors—hoping, perhaps, to will things back to that bygone era when there was stability and predictability. Unfortunately, going back is not possible.

Therefore, a new model is needed—one that acknowledges the value of well-researched leadership behaviors, but is rooted in a framework that embraces the unpredictable, non-mechanistic, and non-linear VUCA world in which we now live and work.

This book proposes just that. A model of contextual intelligence which can help leaders, managers, and decision-makers take a practical approach to leading in dynamic, complex, enigmatic, rapid, and nuanced contexts. It reveals how hindsight, insight, and foresight (what I call “3D Thinking”) can help you solve problems, and help you as a leader fit into understand, and contribute to what is going on around you regardless of the context. Contextual intelligence is not a silver bullet with magical powers to solve complex problems easily or accelerate the acquisition of needed experience, but it can move us in a direction where complexity is seen as an asset and where experiences that provide wisdom are broadened.

Contextual Intelligence has been defined by other authors in different industries and in the pages of this book we will introduce and discuss many of them. However, it is necessary to point out early on that my definition of contextual intelligence differs. They are not synonymous. This should not be construed as an incongruity or even a contradiction, but a fresh perspective.

This is not *just* a book for executives or organizational leaders; it can add value to your influence in everyday life. If you are a leader in a Fortune 500

company, an entrepreneur, a church, the head of a household, or all of them together, understanding contextual intelligence will help. This book teaches you how to apply the mental models and behaviors of contextual intelligence in any situation you find yourself in.

Contexts can change for several reasons. Some are deliberate, that is because you want them to change, while others happen whether you want them to or not. Basically, there are three general contributors (each with offshoots) to changes in context:

1. A change in geography
2. A change in personnel
3. A change in external influences

You may find yourself needing to move between different geographical locations. This may entail going from one place to another, either different countries, cities, businesses, or even local communities. Second, contexts change when people change. You may have been at the same job or within the same industry for an entire career, but every time there are new team members, new management, a new CEO, a new neighbor or committee member, or even a reduction in staff the context changes. Third, sometimes outside influences alter the environment enough to force a change which disrupts the status quo. The people, geography, and organization may all stay the same, but new policies, new federal regulations, or a new product may alter the context you are in. Sometimes all three happen at once. Regardless of the reason, contexts can shift quickly and they can change often. These changes while seemingly harmful can actually be beneficial. Contextual intelligence can help you transition between any of these contextual shifts. Learning contextual intelligence can help you acquire and sustain influence with anyone—anytime, anywhere.

This book has a couple of unique features to help you navigate the concepts in these pages. Each chapter begins with a short list of learning objectives (or take-away points) so that you know what is coming. At the end of each chapter there are contemplation and critical thinking questions that will help you integrate what was just discussed. The book is divided into four parts and after each part are case study questions that tie together the main concepts of the previous chapters. As mentioned in the Note to the Reader the best advice I can give you is to wrestle with the content and be willing to think deeply and ask questions about how the concepts and ideas apply to your situation.

Part 1 outlines contextual intelligence, defines important terminology, and describes how to assemble the contextual intelligence model. Part 2 describes three distinct mental models that are important to fully understand and apply contextual intelligence. Those mental models are:

1. **Embracing complexity**, or what I refer to as non-Newtonian thinking. This includes learning to enjoy the fact that much of what we see and experience is intricately connected, most probably in ways we have not given much attention to.
2. **Reframing experience**, or what is technically called synchronicity. This is a term coined by noted psychotherapist Dr. Carl Jung and includes the understanding of how our experiences may be connected and meaningful in ways outside of the obvious.
3. **Leveraging learning**, which is closely tied to how we use tacit knowledge. This includes taking a critical look at where our fundamental beliefs and models come from.

In Part 3, I introduce the 3D Thinking framework™ and describe how you can organize your time orientation (that is, past, present, and future) by demonstrating hindsight, insight, and foresight. It is within the 3D Thinking framework that the 12 contextual intelligence behaviors are applied. Finally, Part 4 describes several obstacles to contextual intelligence and offers recommendations to overcome these obstacles as well as action steps for implementation. We are about to begin; I hope that you will see leadership and decision-making from a new and fresh perspective.