



Conference Abstract

# "Uncertainty and fragility, I love you" artists' words

Stephane Ginocchio ‡

‡ Ascencia Business School, Paris, France

Corresponding author: Stephane Ginocchio ([stephane.ginocchio@phylaxia.net](mailto:stephane.ginocchio@phylaxia.net))

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## Abstract

"We are leaving the risk society to enter the society of shocks, ruptures and catastrophes, systemic phenomena". As early as the 5th century BC, the recognition of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (a VUCA world) served as a paradigm guiding the governance of the Chinese Emperors. What has changed since then is the speed at which progress accelerates, and the ability to adapt to it. Today, the organization of work aims to reduce time to immediate results that the market or technology will disrupt. In an ever-changing world, to remain competitive and attractive, companies must constantly reinvent themselves and adapt at breakneck speed, learning to play the balancing act like real acrobats in the face of paradoxical demands (Panczuk and Point 2008). In *The Innovator's Dilemma*, Christensen and Raynor (2003) asks: Why do well-managed companies fail? His conclusion is that they often fail because the management practices that have enabled them to become industry leaders also make it extremely difficult to innovate and develop the disruptive behaviors that ultimately lose them their markets in a volatile and fragile world. For an organization, the question is how to reinforce its anti-fragility. The crises we have experienced have made us aware of our vulnerability, and have shown us that we need to keep readjusting in order to make anti-fragility our own. But referring back to our pre-VUCA experiences, we believe that it's simply a matter of trusting our intelligence to learn how to overcome obstacles and make these paths practicable by harnessing a capacity for individual resilience capable of building a path of collective intelligence in the face of the storms of a VUCA world. By adopting an attitude of calculated risk-taking, a culture of resilience and using disruption to innovate (Frimousse and Peretti 2021),

companies believe they can become stronger and more resilient in the face of future challenges, i.e. survive shocks and quickly return to their previous state (Cyrulnik and Jorland 2012). And yet, we find that, conversely, the more mature, multifaceted and successful a company becomes, the more complicated it becomes for employees to engage collectively in innovation. So how can neuroscience enlighten managers to build the anti-fragility necessary for survival in a VUCA business world?

We will demonstrate:

That it is inevitable that companies will be unable to manage uncertainty if they rely solely on human rationality, It's the very workings of our brains that mislead us (Kahneman et al. 1991). Our rationality has been challenged by neuroscientists studying decision-making, who have focused on the biases affecting our choices (Sacre 2018). There is therefore a significant risk that our prediction, based on biased information or reasoning, will not come true, and that the strategy will collapse like a house of cards.

That by conforming to this approach, we necessarily experience the unpredictability of the business as a source of insecurity. The fragile needs a highly detailed forecasting approach, while conversely, forecasting systems bring fragility (Taleb 2011) and the anxiety linked to the paradoxical search for solutions in a VUCA world, self-fed by the insecurity generated, mechanically limits innovation capacities (Brosschot et al. 2018), which is one of the conditions of the resilience initially sought (Fig. 1).

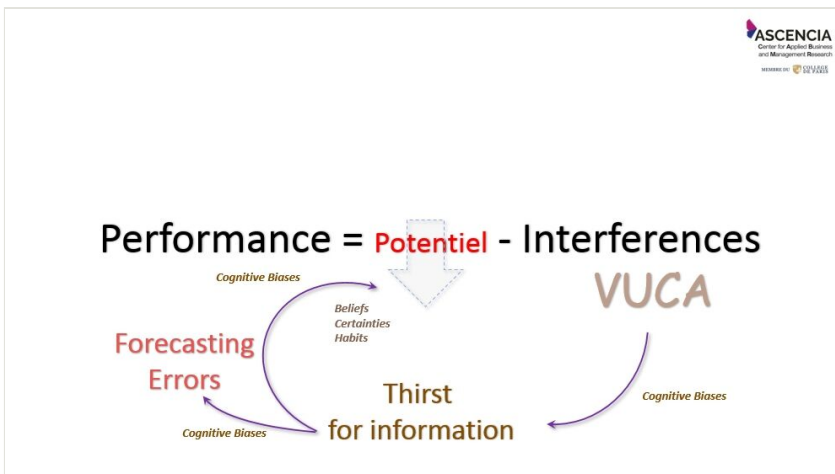


Figure 1. [doi](#)

Our cognitive biases lead to an overconfidence that the system is the right one, and sediment beliefs, despite growing forecasting errors certainties and habits. When forecasting is prevented because the past is no longer enough to think about the future, we realize just how vulnerable we are (S GINOCCHIO 2024).

As a result, companies have no choice but to change their mindset towards anti-fragility. We need to get away from our illusion of control over events and nature, and reinforce our

appetite for risk. The challenge is to create the necessary conditions to enable employees to project themselves into discomfort without feeling in danger.

Our fragilities, if not channeled, condemn us to anxiety in a BANI world, but recognized and used, they can become a strength in a VUCA world. Fragility is the path to creation and doubt (Fig. 2). It allows us to question ourselves constantly, which keeps us innovative. The issue, then, is not what to learn, but how to instill in the collective the apprenticeship of transformation, in order to face the challenges of the VUCA world. It's a question of accepting that information doesn't yet exist when the uncertain phenomenon arrives (Silberzahan 2017). The openness of possibility stems from the acceptance of the impossible. "It's not being a project of the world that makes me me; it's the way I welcome and endure the event, and the way I'm put in abyss by it, made to exist in the fragmented instant (concept of transpassibility) (Runel 2012).

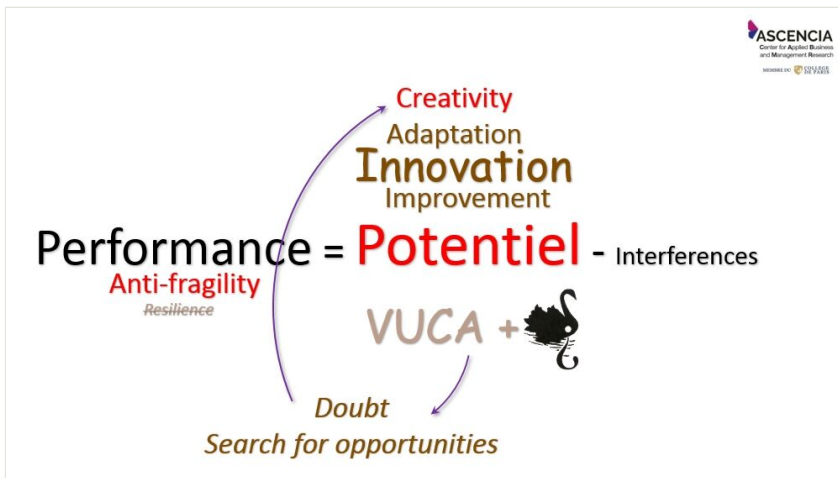


Figure 2. [doi](#)

Companies have no choice but to change their mindset towards anti-fragility, abandoning absolute forecasting, abandoning any desire to return to the previous situation (S GINOCCHIO 2024).

Companies also need to use a neuroscientific approach to integrate this new cultural paradigm. Management in a VUCA world is definitely something that relates to human beings. We may want to change, but find it hard to let go of our behaviors... what if instead of "fighting against", we learned to "deal with" with neuroscience?

Opening question : what about the efficient and/or ethical use of NLP or nudges?

## Keywords

Management, Anti-fragility, VUCA, BANI

## Presenting author

Stephane Ginocchio

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## Grant title

How neuroscience can help managers build the anti-fragility they need to survive in a corporate world that has become BANI.

## Hosting institution

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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