Bob Johansen's responses to questions
The New Leadership Literacies
(Berrett-Koehler, 2017)

What are the new leadership literacies you describe?

1. The new literacy of **looking backwards from the future**.
2. The new literacy of **voluntary fear engagement**.
3. The new literacy of **leadership for shape-shifting organizations**.
4. The new literacy of **being there when you're not there**.
5. The new literacy of **creating and sustaining positive energy**.

It's too late for today's leaders to catch up.

What do you mean by shape-shifting organizations?

Shape-shifting organizations have no center and they can't be controlled. Hierarchies will come and go as they are needed. Hierarchies will become less common since they are more rigid.
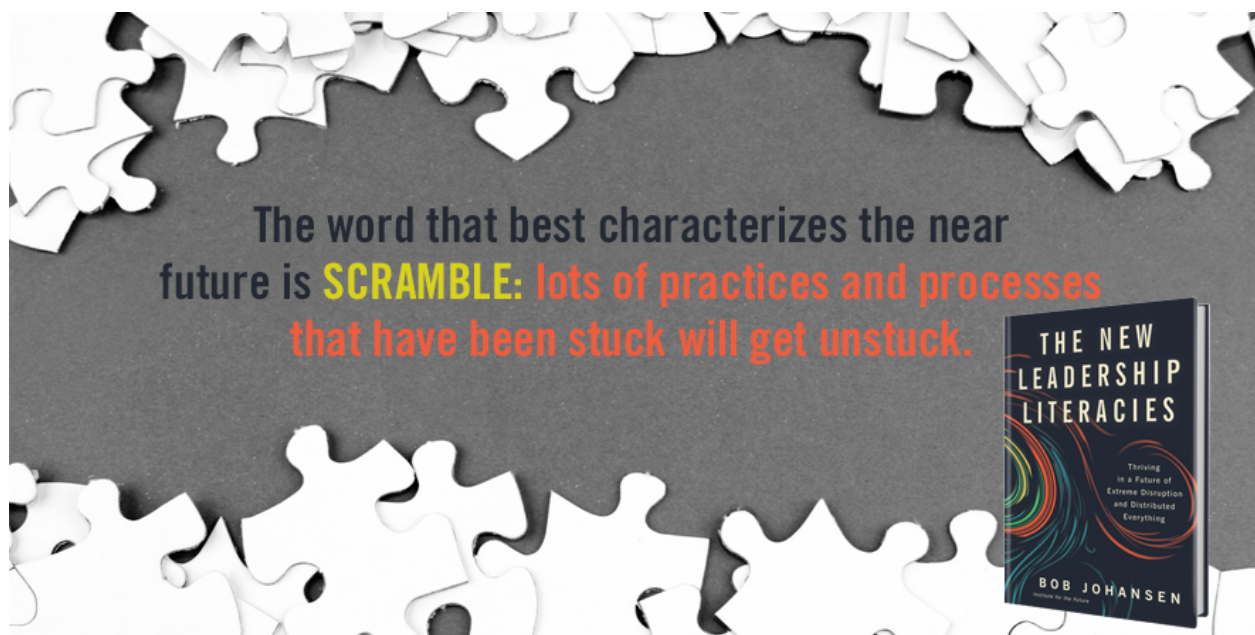
Anything that can be distributed will be distributed.

Shape-shifting organizations grow from the edges—and it is at the edges **where diversity and innovation thrive.**

Are you forecasting a chaotic world?

It will be a VUCA World—Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous—and it will get even worse over the next decade. On the other hand, it will be possible to succeed, make the world a better place, and even thrive in the VUCA World. These new literacies will allow you to thrive, not just survive.

We think we are connected today, but the next 10 years will be a period of explosive connectivity and asymmetric upheaval. In this future world of dramatically amplified digital connectivity, anything that can be distributed will be distributed.

The word that best characterizes the near future is SCRAMBLE: lots of practices and processes that have been stuck will get unstuck.

The *SCRAMBLE* of the next decade will be a ripe time for innovation, if leaders are ready. Those who are unsticking things are not likely to be as good at putting them back together again.

Will gaming and gamification be parts of our average workday? How?

I like to think of it as gameful engagement and immersive learning. Kids will be much better prepared than adults for this world, since so many of them grew up with video gaming—where digital interfaces and far better than typical office systems. Gameful engagement is mostly entertainment today—often too sexual and too violent, in my opinion—but what we call "gaming" today will evolve into the most powerful learning medium in history.

Younger leaders will be better prepared for this future than older leaders because many of them are already in a blended-reality world, with constant mobile online filters for the physical world. They are on online, unless they are off. For most adult leaders, we are offline—unless we are on.

With so much change, how can a leader be effective?

Successful leaders will be those who can provide a clear vision for the organization (goals, objectives, success, etc.) while offering a flexible path to achieve those goals. They will have to be "backcasters," not forecasters. Successful leaders will be able to inspire hope in their organizations and provide clarity through every type of medium – in person and digitally, whether they are "there" in person with employees or not.

By inspiring hope for their organization's vision, a leader's teams will be able to confidently and creatively develop positive solutions to market disruptions and new opportunities.

Leaders will need to be very clear about where they are going, but very flexible about how they get there.

What can I start doing now to leapfrog as you say and be a leader for the future you forecast?

As William Gibson said so eloquently, "the future is already here, it's just unevenly distributed." At Institute for the Future, we look for signals that reveal that unevenly distributed future. Most signals fail, but they tend to fail in interesting ways. Teach yourself to identify the signals and distinguish them from the noise of the present. Immerse your self in the future that is already here.

Perhaps the most powerful way to learn about the future is reverse mentoring. Those young people who are 21 or less in 2017 are "digital natives," and the younger they are, the stronger the effect. Learn from them, even as you offer your own wisdom. Go there with them into the rich world of video gaming and learn from them.

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