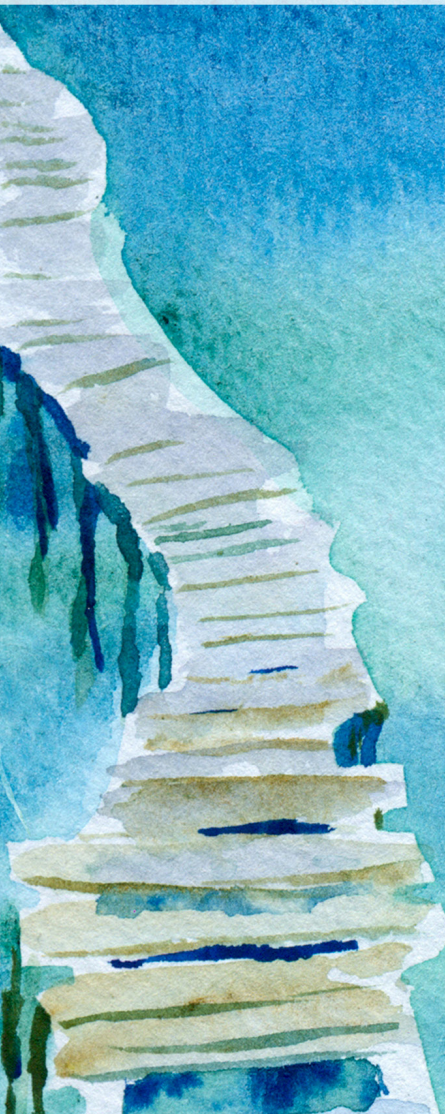


INSPIRING LEADERSHIP CONVERSATIONS

INNOVATION



INNOVATIVE
CONNECTIONS



THE POWER OF CONVERSATIONS

The journey you are about to embark upon will **illuminate the power of conversations**.

Consider the conversations in your meeting rooms, at your kitchen table, on your neighborhood walk or at your favorite coffee shop. These rich conversations are generated by different perspectives, curiosity, and questions that matter. They become our catalyst for sharing our collective personal experiences that shape our future while supporting our human nature to stay in relationship with one another.

This module ignites meaningful conversations. Capture the richness of sharing perspectives and insights as you explore these conversations inside your organizations and throughout your community. Challenge yourself to use these conversations to propel your growth as an individual, leader, and/or leadership team.

Rules for these conversations? There are none. This concept is built on the assumption that people are naturally creative, resourceful, and whole. The answers are within each of us.

This activity is intended to widen your lens with additional perspective. As you talk with others or think about your experiences, capture your thoughts and reflections in the

space provided. Feel free to circle, highlight, or underline anything you are curious about or those words which resonate with you.

Next, find a partner, teammate, colleague, family member, friend, or leader to share your thoughts with and discuss your key takeaways. If possible, move the conversations to small groups/teams and then on to larger groups/teams. The format provides a consistent process for expanding your conversations and capturing what is on everyone's mind.

Enjoy!

As you engage in your conversations, please remember to:

- Listen deeply.
- Speak from your voice.
- Take a risk.
- Put it out there.
- Encourage contributions.
- Connect diverse perspectives.
- Listen together for patterns and insights.
- Capture the conversation with words, illustrations, symbols, or any other device possible.





INNOVATION

Innovation is all about solving problems and synergizing changes—to stay relevant and at the front of the line. Right? On the surface, this seems to be so, but there appears to be several different interpretations of innovation in the workplace.

While some organizations see innovation as a process of **generating new ideas and solutions**. Other organizations see innovation as expeditiously and **efficiently meeting different performance expectations**. Either try faster and adjust or fail fast and fix it. And then there are organizations who see innovation **as a way of thinking and being**. These organizations attempt to establish a safe environment that spontaneously unleashes creativity and is constantly freshening up.

There is no one right way to innovate. In fact, it is in an organization's best interest to be flexible in their approach to strategic innovation and the conversations that synthesize new ideas towards innovation.

In our current work environments, allowing for innovation can seem like a daunting task. **Constant change and ambiguity can thwart even the best intentions** to set a course and stick to it. This chaotic environment is often referred to as a VUCA environment.

VUCA is a term coined by the US Military in the late 1990's. It is an acronym created which reflects the rise in disruptions, shifts, speed, and globalization in the world today. It has become popular in recent years as a new approach to leading in challenging environments. While an environment of this type can be the most challenging to work through while continuing to thrive, **it can also be a catalyst for your people to find new ways to innovate.** VUCA combines four distinct types of challenges that demand four distinct types of responses.

VUCA is an acronym for:

Volatility



In volatile environments, the speed of change is high with unexpected and unstable situations. The environment is turbulent and can be difficult to predict. The environment demands you react quickly to ongoing changes that appear out of your control.

Uncertainty



In uncertain environments, there is a lack of predictability and a high probability of surprise. We are often unfamiliar with many aspects and it is common to have more unknowns than knowns for decision-making. The environment requires you to act without certainty.

Complexity



In complex environments, there is a multitude of factors at work creating confusion reducing our cause-and-effect rationale. Diverse variables create many interdependencies. The environment is dynamic and easily creates inefficiencies and duplicity.

Ambiguity



In ambiguous environments, there are multiple perspectives and interpretations at play. Casual relationships are unclear. This environment is often called "hazy or cloudy" referring to the difficulty seeing the reality of situations and decisions.

*"If you always do what you always did,
you will always get what you always got."*

~ Albert Einstein

Examples of VUCA elements are listed below. Think about your environment. Can you relate to some of these situations?

- Expanding business into new markets
- Adding products/services to your business
- Supply chain disruptions
- Technology changes
- Culture conflict and confusion
- Significant organizational changes restructures, mergers, acquisitions

Leading in VUCA environments requires us to consider which element(s) we are experiencing and adjust our strategic approach accordingly. Because our previous approaches to problem-solving rarely work in these ever-changing situations, we usually benefit from assuming a different mindset. Some strategies include:

- Devoting resources to preparation
- Holding the broad vision and allowing yourself to flex on the specific action steps
- Investing in information and intelligence of your issues to increase understanding
- Restructuring as needed to meet volatile environments
- Developing specialists/specialties
- Building resources
- Experimenting and broadly applying lessons learned

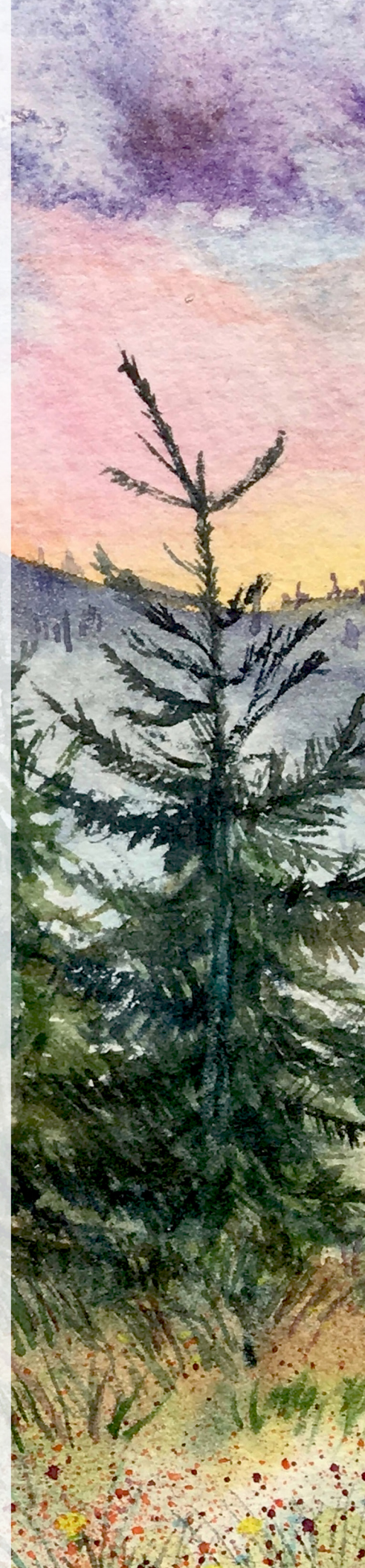
Based on the VUCA acronym descriptions, take a minute and rate your environment: How do you see your organization? What is your sense of the level of VUCA? Please circle the number that best reflects your rating with 1 being very low to 10 being very high.

V—Volatility	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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U—Uncertainty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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C—Complexity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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A—Ambiguity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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REFLECT

What do you want to pay attention to? Where do you get stuck? Where do you feel you want to innovate?

How does innovation occur for you? Do you plan for it? What makes it easy or difficult?

Think about an innovation in your organization. Did it help or hinder any of the VUCA elements that may have existed in your environment?





Because it appears that VUCA environments are the new normal, and that the work landscape will remain uncertain and become increasingly complex, many leaders are counting on innovation to address challenges and solve never seen before problems. However, this is only a good strategy if we can understand two important components of innovation.

First, we must be able to reframe our mental models—the unconscious framework or lens we use to understand our world. Without challenging our implicit beliefs, we too easily stay in familiar operations without innovating anything.

Our mental models (stories, judgements, biases, and assumptions) are deeply engrained views that influence how we understand the world and the way we take action. They are influenced by our upbringing, experiences, culture, etc. Intertwined in our mental models are invariably implicit biases that affect our decisions and our willingness to take risks. In order to innovate, we need to be able to move beyond these potential barriers.

Biases affect the way we process information, problem-solve, and assimilate information, and interact in the world. Whether we want to admit it or not, we all have biases. Now, bias-in and of itself-is not bad. It is quite simply a preference for one thing over another. For example, you may have a bias toward strawberry ice cream over chocolate. The problem comes in when our biases are running the show in our subconscious mind and we're not even aware that it's happening. This is what the term unconscious bias, or implicit bias means.



Becoming aware of our implicit biases gives us the power to reframe them, allowing us to stretch our boundaries and freeing us to pull in different perspectives when we innovate.

The second important component of innovation is figuring out if we are faced with a problem or if it is a polarity. Typically, a problem, has a solution, and it is up to us and our teams to find it. Polarities, on the other hand, are typically contradictions that exist in our environment that are ongoing, adversarial and involve seemingly opposing positions. Do you recognize some of the polarities we are faced with every day?

- Growth vs Consolidation
- Short term vs Long term
- Change vs Stability
- Mission vs Margin
- Task vs Relationship
- Tension vs Rest

As leaders, it can be easy to think of the world in black and white, to think that we must be one way or the other; either this or that. However, there are many situations where it can be beneficial to operate in the 'gray'. This can allow us to see more than one perspective and assess how various points of view can be right at the same time.

Understanding that the answer doesn't have to be either/or, but can be both/and can be very powerful. It can open a door to creative problem-solving, introduce a multitude of new and unique solutions, and increase the effectiveness of the solution. Ultimately, increasing our team's ability to innovate. It can also be used in conjunction with VUCA environments and can allow us to remain open to different solutions, especially in times when the problem is evolving, changing, or volatile.

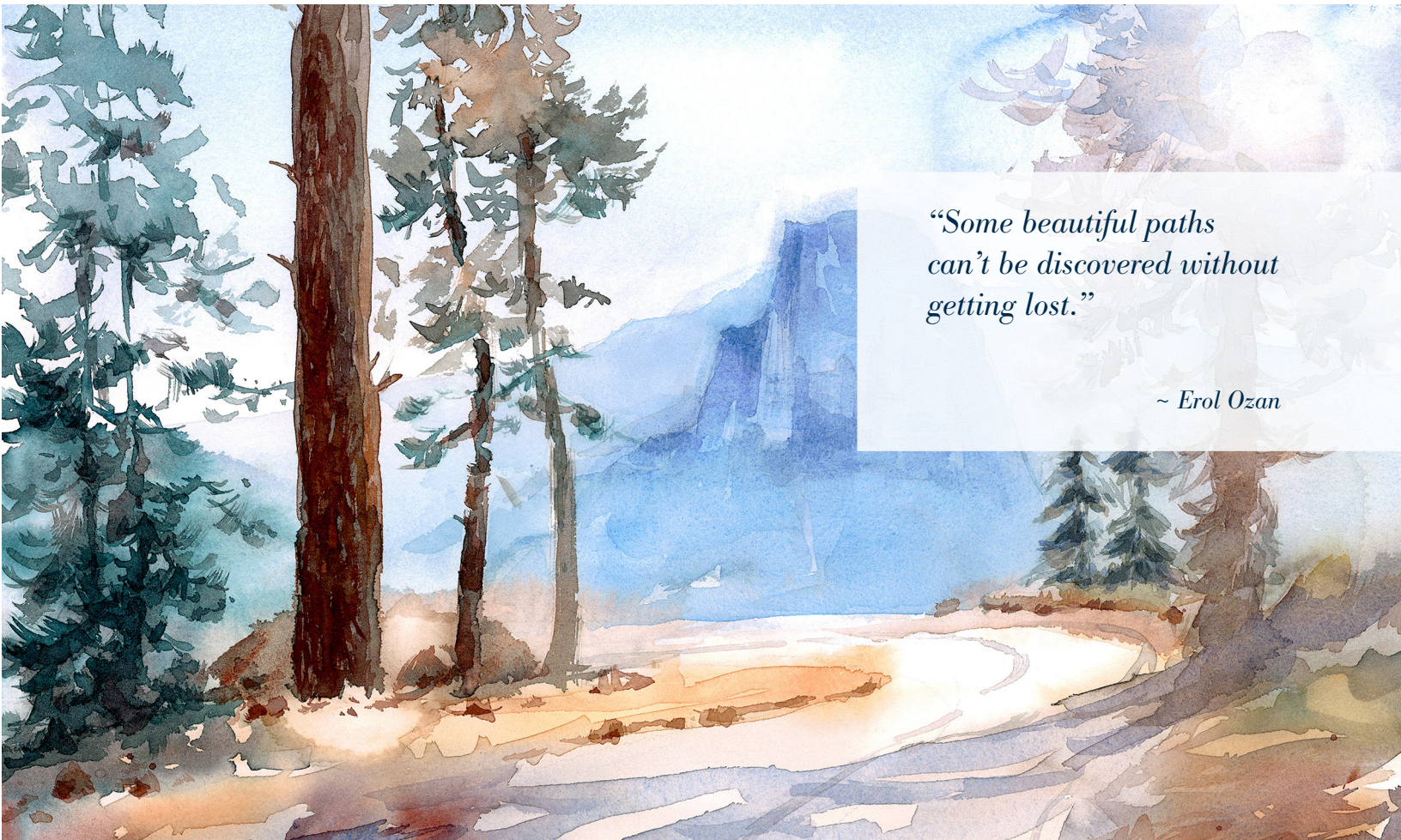
REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER CONVERSATIONS:

What is your reaction to these polarities?

Are there any other polarities you experience that you would like to add?

How can this type of thinking help you reframe and innovate differently?

How do you and/or your leaders restore balance, minimize confusion, and maintain focus and accountability in your organization in the midst of innovating?



*“Some beautiful paths
can’t be discovered without
getting lost.”*

~ Erol Ozan

Where are there areas that seem like they could especially benefit from innovation?

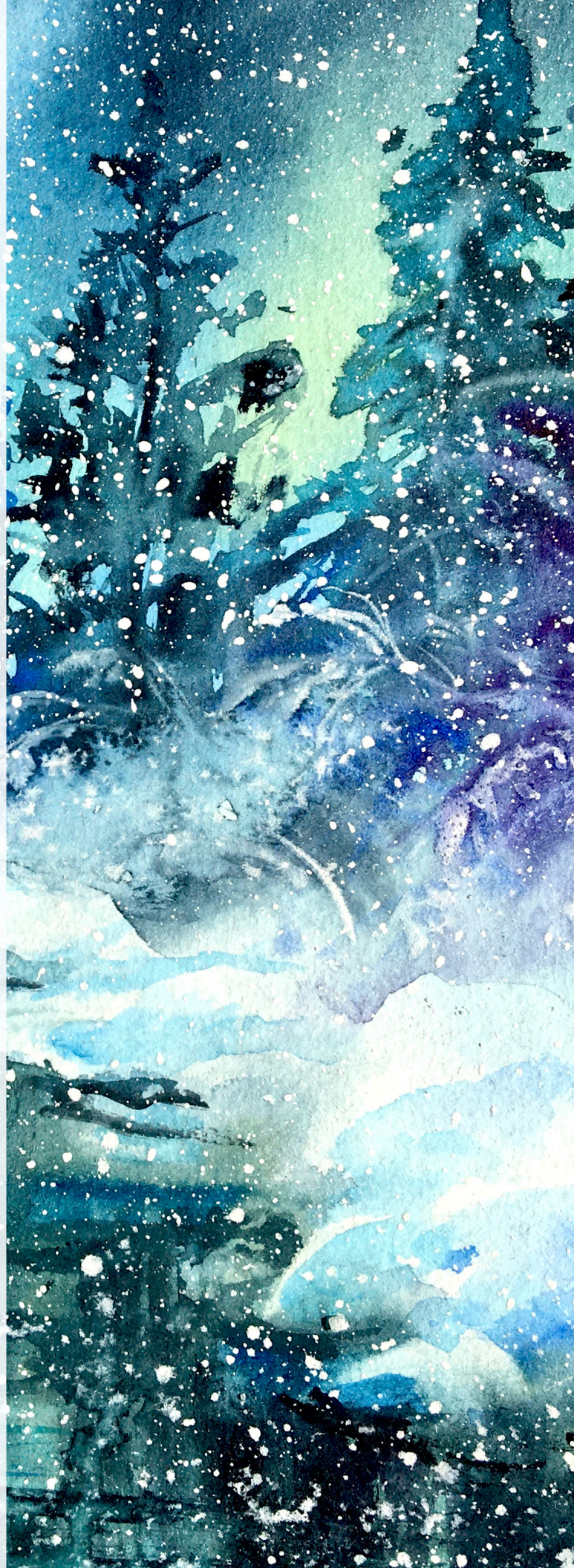
What do you think we should be paying attention to now?

What's one concrete step we can take to innovate (e.g., our team, organization, etc.)?

TAKEAWAYS

What new insights did you get from having your conversations?

What is one takeaway you want to remember from your conversations?



NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE YOUR MOVE

If you are experiencing difficulty achieving strategic outcomes, disharmony or fear among employees, poor team dynamics, trouble recruiting the right talent, or other team or organizational issues, we will help you unleash new possibilities and potential that result in sustainable change.

Through our processes and programs you will find your voice, see your vision, and imagine what the right action for the future could be for you, your team, and your organization.

You will realize profound, sustainable transformation—both individually and organizationally—that starts now, and remains for years to come.



We invite you to discover our programs, which are designed to help you realize profound, sustainable transformation—both individually and organizationally—that starts now, and remains for years to come.

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