

FINDING CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Jeff Boss

Of the 200 plus missions I went on as a Navy SEAL, not one went according to plan.

Not one.

Each mission demanded new information faster than before. A pivot. A new direction. Each mission warranted the collective awareness from each team member as to what that new purpose was so we could make decisions that served:

1. The mission
2. The team
3. Each other
4. Ourselves

In order to execute at each level—optimally—we needed three things. We needed to be able to perform as individuals and as a team; we needed to be able to adapt to new information and change on the fly; and we needed to be able to lead—ourselves and each other—through uncertain situations by making decisions and sharing them with the group.

Sound familiar? It should, because business is no different.

Think about it. If you replace “battlefield” and “enemies” with “boardroom” and “competitors” then you can see that the means by which you, your team, and your company stay competitive are exactly the same no matter whether you carry a rifle or a briefcase. Yes, the end results are different but the means by which those results are attained remain equal. Everybody needs focus. Everybody needs fulfillment. Everybody needs to know what effective thinking entails so they can dig themselves out of the self-inflicted ruts of chaos that intervene everyday at the most inopportune time.

Did you know that most organizations are so accustomed to chaos that they don’t even recognize it? Did you know that Chaos is the number one saboteur of workplace engagement? And did you know that there is a method to the madness to mitigating chaos? Believe it or not, the strategies I used as a Navy SEAL and business consultant to be effective translate perfectly in all walks of life. When you understand the elements of chaos that you, personally, can affect, you feel more secure, less stress and self actualized, which means so too does everyone around you.

And that’s a component of productivity that goes unnoticed—the fact that how you “show up” is everything.

Many senior executives admit to feeling complacent in the workplace; they lost their passion for what they do. With this complacency comes a drop in performance and supports the Gallup poll statistic that 60 percent of employees not engaged. And then what happens? Organizational chaos ensues. Welcome to what I call the 5Cs of Chaos.

The 5Cs Of Chaos

Balance is the byproduct of competence. When somebody is balanced, for instance, he or she is fulfilled in every domain of life—professionally and personally, as a spouse, parent, sibling, and friend. In other words, there is no internal conflict because that person has honed the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual competencies to manage the outer conflict of the day (unexpected office “fires,” deadlines, excessive meetings, stress) that incite the inner conflict (stress, frustration, anger, jealousy).

The abilities to withstand such uncertainty aren’t reserved to a select few. They’re available for the taking and they can be learned.

The elements of human performance that wield results—in any job—span four domains, and the industry in which we (people) fulfill these domains is agnostic to the fulfillment itself. In other words, while the end state of “success” varies from industry to industry, the means by which we arrive there are the same. Being successful—by any definition—in one industry requires the same mental focus, self-confidence, stress tolerance, decision-making and communication, for example, as in any other industry—perhaps not the exact same level of dedication or focus, but the capacities to do so nonetheless.

Most organizations are so accustomed to chaos that they don’t even recognize it.

Whether it's one's life or livelihood, the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capacities that drive performance are indifferent to accomplishing the task itself.

The word “performance” means different things to different people, but in this context it refers to the human performance elements that effectuate results—results wielded from the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capacities that define our human composition, or “being.”

Performance is role agnostic, meaning, that to perform means to fulfill a task. Now, to carry out said task you must not only be physically capable of executing it but also mentally apt, emotionally tolerant and spiritually guided such that the task aligns with your personal values and beliefs. When we perform tasks that clash with our beliefs or values (spiritual), we feel conflicted, our heart rate increases, etc... Stress (emotion) snowballs and negatively impacts our focus (mental) and health (physical).

As you can see, performance is systemic in that one capacity never acts alone; each one affects the input and output of the others. Here's a practical example:

Grab two identical drinking glasses. Label one glass “work” and the other glass “life.” These represent two main roles you fulfill on any given day. Next, take a pitcher of water and fill one glass to the very top but don't let it overflow. That water represents you and all your being; it is your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual make-up.

That glass you filled (let's just say it was the “life” glass) to the top represents all the stress, pressure, frustration and every other negative influence on your life; it could be kids demanding your attention, not having enough time with your spouse, not getting the “me” time you need. In other words, you are maxed out and about to explode.

The next morning finally arrives and it's time to go to work. Now, pour water from your “life” glass into your “work” glass. But, don't let any water spill.
What happens?

With your “life” glass being so full, you can't help but spill “water” out as you show up to “work,” so what happens is you arrive at work less than who you are.

To sustain performance requires balance in all four areas—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual; it requires a willingness to adapt to change and make difficult choices, as well as communicate those choices through an authentic display of self-expression that creates value for others, known as leadership.

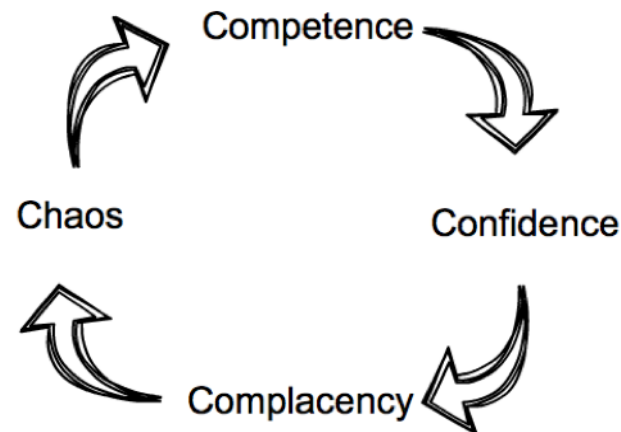
In short, who we are and what we stand for are drivers to what we ultimately do, how we behave and how we react, and the value we create for others—positively or negatively, but still value. That's competence.

Who we are and what we stand for are
drivers to what we ultimately do,
how we behave and how we react, and the
value we create for others ...

Everything we do entails elements from each the three areas of performance, adaptability, and leadership, and the degree to which we're effective determines just how confident we feel. It's when we have too much confidence that problems arise.

Overconfidence is a precursor to complacency, and it's not long thereafter that chaos sticks its ugly head in and overwhelms your world.

The 5Cs of Chaos works like this:



Let's first look at this through the optic of shooting. While I had some experience with firearms before entering SEAL training, it was in the Teams that I developed the level of proficiency in shooting that enabled me to rise to the highest level of the SEAL Teams. I learned to shoot the way that anyone learns any new skill; patiently and methodically, slowly becoming a better shot through repetition, perpetual learning, and application. As competence grew, so too did my confidence--and with increased confidence came increased risk (and responsibility).

There is nothing as dangerous as becoming overconfident, whether it be on the shooting range or elsewhere. If your competence and confidence are so high that you're no longer challenged, then what happens? Complacency sets in. You begin taking safety for granted. You start taking riskier shots that challenge you but place other peoples' lives at stake. Then it happens. Chaos arrives and you either shoot yourself or, even worse, somebody you didn't intend to. When that happens, back to the drawing board of competence you go, and the cycle continues.

Generally speaking, the pattern is this: greater competence leads to more confidence; confidence builds character; and from there, you come to a crossroads. You have to choose for yourself what comes next. Will it be complacency? Or, will it be the fifth "C"—the one "C" that can quell uncertainty (you didn't think I forgot, did you?)?

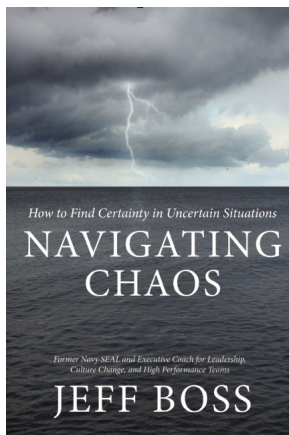
The one certainty of chaos is that it is, by its very nature, uncertain. While finding success in a chaotic situation may seem to be at best an improbability and at worst an impossibility, I learned through my 13 years as a Navy SEAL that there is a method to this madness. As SEALs in training and on combat missions, we were thrown into every challenging situation imaginable; never knowing what to expect, and under pressure from ongoing change, we learned quickly to be ready for anything at a moment's notice. To bear the brunt of such an undefined workload requires the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual faculties that either help or hinder success. More than anything, it requires balance among them all.

Without the emotional tolerance for stress and the mental capacity to solve problems under duress, it's more likely that your next large-scale negotiation or board presentation will be subpar.

This is exactly why navigating uncertainty requires balance, because the more intangibles at your disposal the wider your knowledge base to create certainty—or something that creates value for you. 📖



Info



Ready to dig deeper into this idea? Buy a copy of *Navigating Chaos*.

Want copies for your organization or for an event?

We can help:

customerservice@800ceoread.com 800-236-7323

About the author

Jeff Boss served thirteen years in SEAL Teams across eight deployments, receiving four Bronze Stars with Valor and two Purple Hearts. He now works as a leadership coach and business performance coach. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Learn more at www.chaosadvantage.com.

800
CEO
read

Powered by the love
and tender care
of 800-CEO-READ,
ChangeThis is a

vehicle for big ideas to spread.
Keep up with the latest
developments in business
books and ideas at
800ceoread.com

This document was created
on June 14, 2017 and is
based on the best information
available at that time.

The copyright of this work
belongs to the author,
who is solely responsible for
the content. This work is
licensed under the Creative
Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-NoDerivs
License. To view a copy
of this license, visit Creative
Commons. Cover image
from Adobe Stock.

Share this

Pass along a copy
of this manifesto
to others.



Subscribe

Sign up for e-news
to learn when
our latest manifestos
are available.

