

The chaos disciplines

To respond to chaos, leaders must:

1. Gain control by letting go and developing more trust in the ability of the system or group of people to self-organise. This is where orchestra conductors throw away the sheet music and baton and where the jamming begins.
2. Use power elegantly. Elegance is a vital part of getting the results you really desire. This means using the minimum type, level and polarity of power necessary to achieve results and the means of getting them, rather than relying on submission or encouraging rebellion in order to reach your goals. Power type, level and polarity are defined as:
 - **Types of power** – You get power from your *position* or from your ability to control *resources*, human, financial and technical. These forms of power are mostly given to you. Power also comes in forms that must be earned: *social* (networking) power; *expertise* in a discipline; *personal* power or charisma; and the power that comes from having and using *information*.
 - **Level** refers to the degree of leverage necessary and whether power is used overtly or covertly.
 - **Polarity** refers to how power is used positively or negatively. We looked at negative uses of power in the form of some of the political games people play under 'Dialogue 1: Sex' (see pages 78-81).



All this adds up to a completely different and more socially responsible use of power. It also needs what Prince would call a new kind of 'New Power Generation' to cope with this responsibility. Are you ready for this?



What business gurus say about chaos as a paradox

We are fundamentally pulled in two directions, one expanding and the other converging. How can we profit from this paradox by synthesising contradictions rather than fighting for an either/or resolution?

What the Academy of Rock says about the paradox

You gotta roll with it ...

So a useful question becomes:

How can I meet the need for novelty, while at the same time building a firm foundation for my business?

Dialogue 3: *Rock'n'Roll* – Rock on ... High Performance

Become more comfortable with paradoxes and try to synthesise apparent opposites using *and/also*, rather than trying to make *either/or* judgements. For example: How do we reward individuals and teams? How do we retain customers by setting them free? and so on.

3. Try to *resolve* complex problems rather than solve them. A tactical solution to a swamplike problem, which is inherently complex and ambiguous and has many different viewpoints, often makes the problem worse in the whole system. A good example of a swamplike problem would be 'fixing transport in London, Mumbai or Bangkok'.
4. Tolerate subcultures and conflict over ideas rather than insisting on a slavish adherence to a mission. Hire argumentative people.
5. Present ambiguous challenges rather than sticking to specific objectives and other convergent approaches to management.
6. Encourage staff to challenge organisational practices, myths and views from above, for example by the implementation of a well-thought-out suggestions scheme.
7. Allow the business to face risky environments that put its innovation talents to the test in order to stay ahead of the game.
8. Develop people's skills in what business guru Peter Senge calls systems thinking, so they can recognise vicious and virtuous circles, see both the wood and the trees and devise elegant interventions at critical break points.
9. Value intuition at least as strongly as analytical thinking, possibly more so in cultures that are biased in favour of analysis over feel. Be cautious about the trap of relying solely on gut feeling, as with the Cornflake Girl story earlier. Back up your intuitions with reasoned argument.
10. Replace forecasts with dress rehearsals for alternative future scenarios. (Dresses may be worn if required, but are not essential to success.) At a grand level, dress rehearsals can be formalised as scenario planning. At a personal level this involves a great deal of mental what-iffing.

Symbols, signs and sex

Love him or hate him, the musician Prince is a master of improvisation, and many of his performances are loosely coupled jams. Yet, to achieve this seamless level of performance, Prince uses significant elements of structure. He leads the band using a series of codes that signal musical changes that the whole band understands. For example, when he says 'on the one, bass', the whole band stops playing except the bass player on the first beat of the next bar. This allows the band to change direction at extremely short notice within the piece, and yet to the casual observer it looks completely rehearsed. Leaders need to be adept at developing and utilising shared symbols, signs and codes.

Compared with most businesses, this is a remarkable achievement. Imagine what would happen if the drummer had to send the guitarist a memo to request a change in tempo or direction within the performance. Imagine also what would happen if they had to hold a focus group to seek approval from the bass player and their family before asking the other members about the set list.