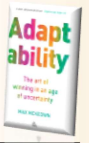




# ADAPTABILITY: The Art of Winning in an Age of Uncertainty

by Max McKeown



## Overview

Adaptability is one of the most important traits to cultivate. It is transcending the current situation, and actively removing self-imposed constraints from the past. This book describes why adaptation is crucial, how to do it, and provides personal and business examples. You must always believe that no matter what happened yesterday, today is a fresh opportunity to adapt and rise about your current situation.

*"The future is made today.*

*It is always the beginning, no matter  
how many times you have failed or succeeded."*

## Introduction

Adaptability is a skill which can be developed. The foundation of adaptability is the belief that the rules of life can be changed and thus improved. It requires not only the necessities of survival – blood, sweat, and tears – but also better ideas. Threats and opportunities require speedy responses with intelligence and imagination. Success or failure are often determined by how quickly the right decisions are made.

Imagination is required to accept the complexity of this "messy, interconnected and ambiguous reality". Attempting to control the uncontrollable is futile, and the only way to thrive is to adapt. The following are the 3 steps to becoming more adaptable:

1. **Recognize the need for adaptation.** Luck cannot be relied upon. Wasting effort doing the familiar thing is counterproductive; all effort should be directed towards improving the system.
2. **Understand that adaptation is required.** Too many people recognize problems without knowing what to do about them. Look beyond the ideas that are not working towards "unacceptable wisdom."
3. **Necessary adaptation is made.** Often an organization will know what needs to be changed,

but will do nothing. You can create a habit of seeing your situation (good or bad) as perpetually unstable and open to change and improvement.

There are 4 specific levels of adaptations:

1. **Collapsing.** The group falls apart (e.g. mass immigration, bankruptcy, anarchy, death).
2. **Surviving.** The group is surviving miserably, without prosperity, happiness, or hope.
3. **Thriving.** The group starts to enjoy success, and the good begins to outweigh the bad. People experience satisfaction, progress, and pride.
4. **Transcending.** The group rises above the constraints of its current situation.

## PART 1. RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO ADAPT

*"If you are getting whipped playing by the existing rules, get used to losing or change the game."*

### Rule 1. Win Your Own Game

Resilient people are termed "High Adaptability, High Achievement" people (HAHAs), since they laugh in the face of uncertainty. Difficulties can either drive people to their breaking point or push them to their making point. In mythology, Hercules was the only hero to defeat Hydra because he adapted to the monster's ability to regrow its heads. When one was decapitated, he seared the creature's headless neck with a torch. Adapting-to-win means changing the rules of the game, compared to simply coping for survival. If there is a motivated player left, victory is still up for grabs.

### Rule 2. All Failure Is Failure To Adapt

Systems fail when they do not adapt. For example, the United States Postal Service (USPS) is only half as good as UPS because it has failed to adapt with the changing times compared to the profit-driven corporation. Discover what adaptations are needed, understand what has stopped the system from making these changes already, and learn to surpass these barriers.

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