AMPLIFY

Wisdom

A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING TECHNICAL EXPERTS INTO EFFECTIVE LEADERS

-shifting knowledge and content to insights and wisdom.

Ideal for STEMM Professionals

aberrant

"We are living in a strange, paradoxical time where the massively increasing complexity around us could lead us to grow faster and more compassionately and more together, or it could lead us to get more defensive, closed, hard, and smaller."

Jennifer Garvey Berger

Why does wisdom matter?

The old ideas of what constitutes effective leadership are alive and unwell.

Now more than ever, in the rapidly changing environment of both commercial and government enterprises, our collective fate rests in the hands of leaders having to make operational and moral decisions in the face of unprecedented complexity. A leader's expertise, intelligence, and experience are no longer sufficient to enable constructive decisions in this world of permanent incompleteness.

The ultimate consequences of maintaining an obsolete view of leadership are now too great to ignore. What is needed is a way to bring adaptability, compassion, and creativity together to facilitate performance.

The way to do this is through the intentional activation of individual and collective wisdom.
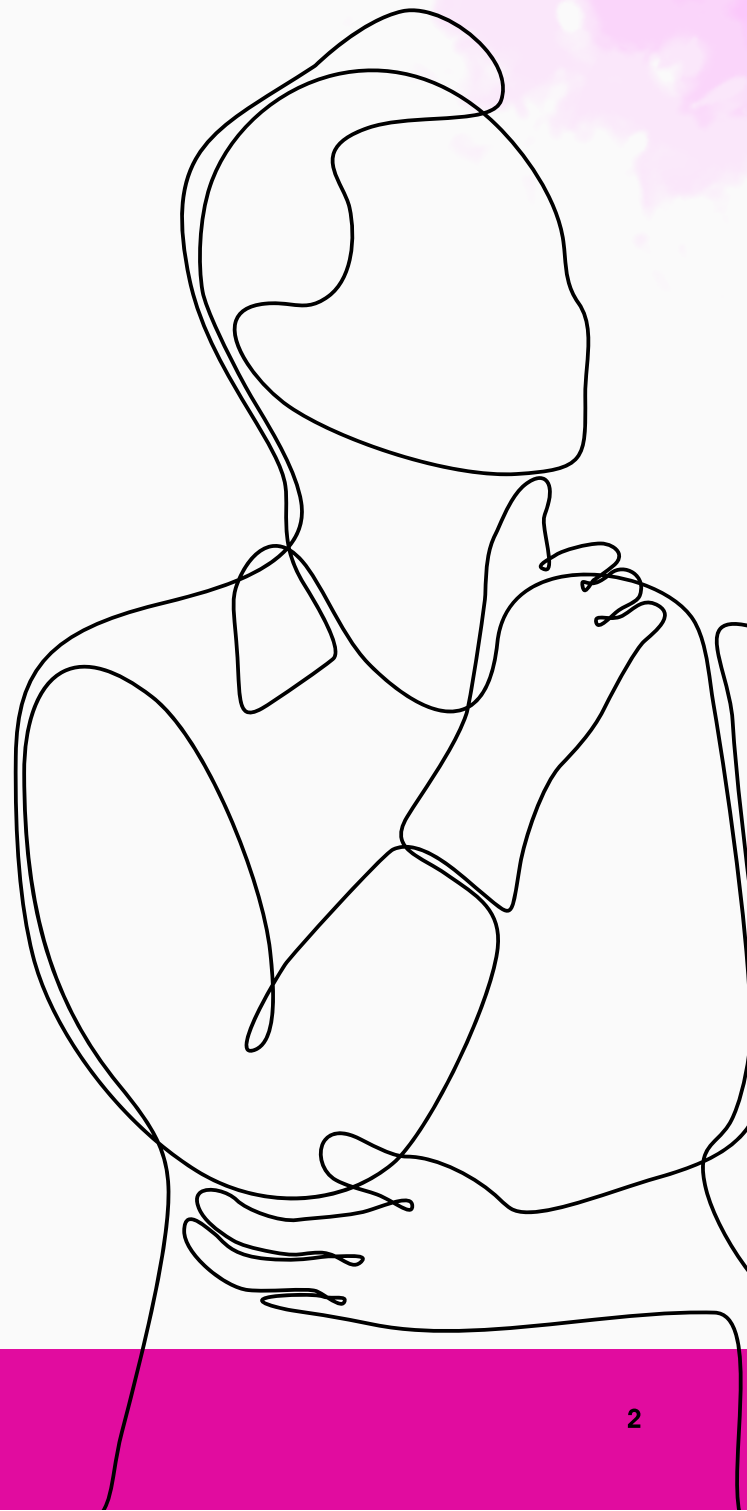
THE CHALLENGES:
COMPLEXITY
CONTEXT
CHANGE

A new kind of normal - characterised by burnout, quiet quitting and suboptimal performance - has emerged. Jobs are overwhelming and organisational systems inadequate. Complex, context specific challenges are increasingly emerging.

Leaders are struggling to drive business results as they use many of the tools, habits and techniques that got them to where they are while at the same time coming to the realisation that their problem solving mindset is insufficient for leading people, teams or complex projects.

As shared vision and purposefulness falls away, empathy gets removed when it is most needed. This results in teams and colleagues feeling undervalued, underestimated and undermined.

What is needed is a shift in focus from trying to perform better within organisational systems that prevent flourishing towards shifting the systems themselves.
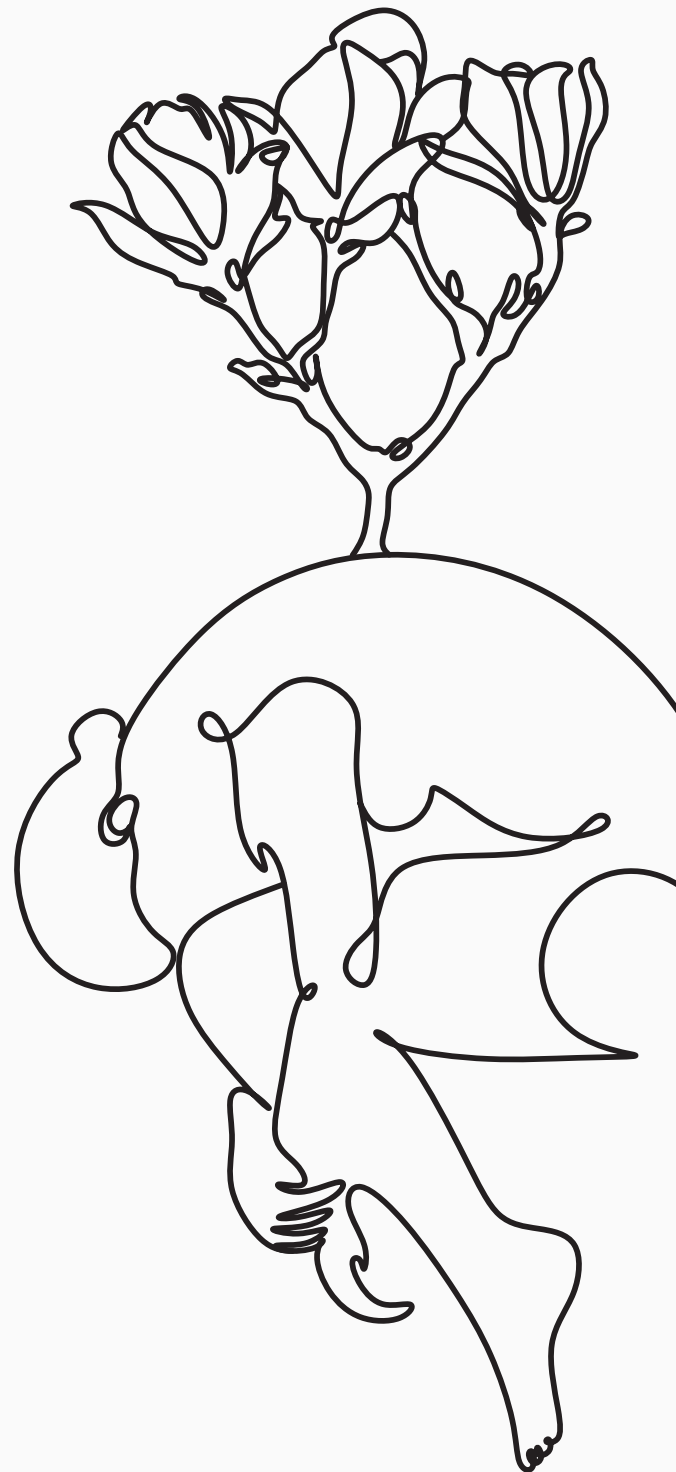
Adult Development

We can see adult development most easily in how people make sense of what they know.

Over the past 50 years, researchers have provided considerable insight into how adults grow, mature and learn in ways that have significant implications for leadership development.

For most people adulthood is what happens as we get older. However, if we want to be an effective leader, becoming an 'adult' means developing the independent sense of self that leads to wisdom and social maturity.

Development is not inevitable: we may grow to a certain point and then stop. Going further requires time, self-awareness, and the willingness to discover and examine our hidden beliefs. It also requires humility.

Theories of adult development offer a map of the terrain where our growth potential plays out. They tell us that our time on the planet doesn't just change us physically; it also changes our "forms of mind"—in other words, our emotional and mental shape.

Growing Up: forms of mind

Harvard developmental psychologist Dr. Robert Kegan describes adult development like this:

Our lives go through an impulsive First Stage (Childhood) and a self-centred Second Stage (Adolescence). A few adults can get stuck in Stage 2, but most will arrive and remain at Stage 3 for the rest of their lives.

Stage Three (Socialised Mind) is where we ask, "What does society expect of me?" It becomes important in Stage 3 to align ourselves with the norms, beliefs and expectations of our social groups.

Stage Four (The Self-Authoring Mind), is where we discover more autonomy, self-determination and meaning. This is where we can understand and take control of our own emotional state. We develop an internal sense of direction and shape our lives in a way that is based on our own views and beliefs, not those of others. Essentially, we define who we are and build our lives around that.

Stage Five (The Self-Transforming Mind), is where we can take in different thoughts, opinions, and beliefs while still being able to form our own. Very few people operate at this level.

Adult developmental growth occurs sequentially, much as a tree grows new rings. And like tree rings, the ways that leaders make sense of the world changes over time. Our younger perceptions do not vanish but remain within us as our smaller selves, where they may, occasionally and unbidden, shape our behaviour.
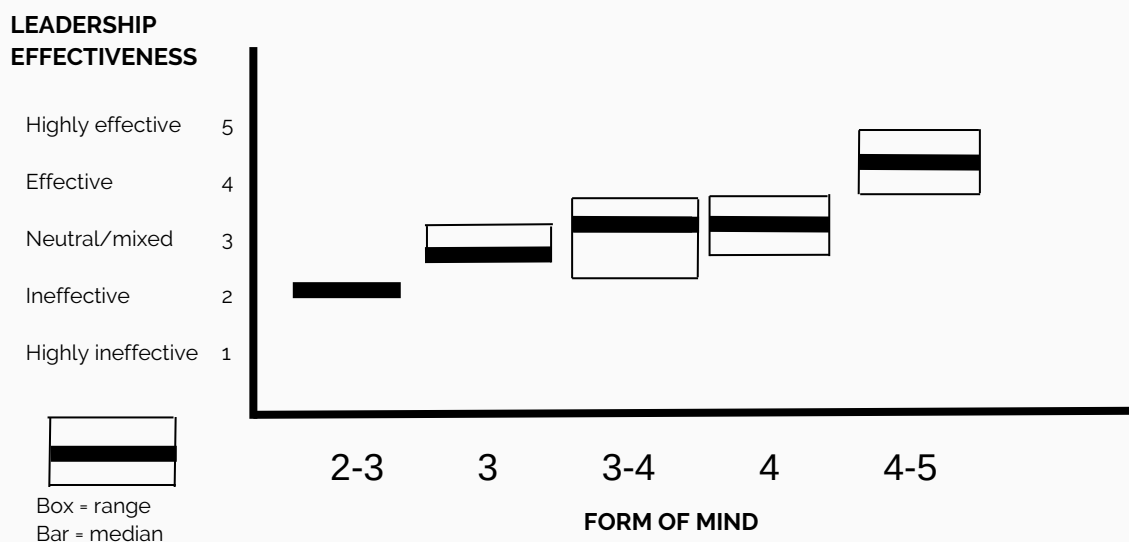
Self-esteem, and our ability to be vulnerable and courageous about different things changes with each form of mind.
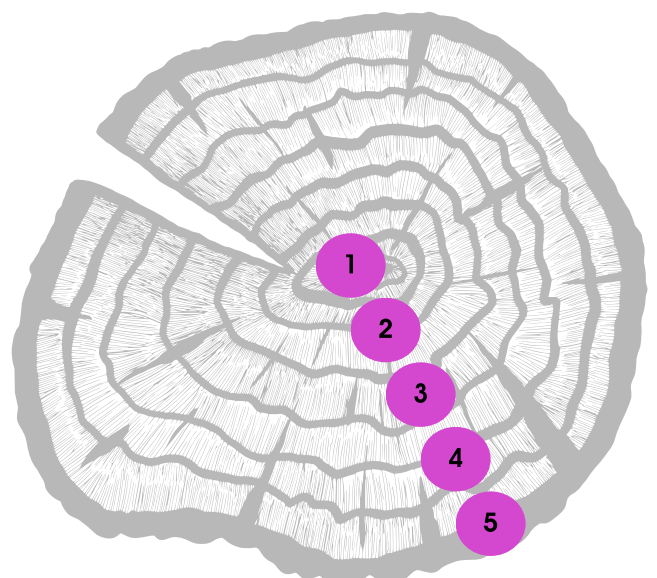
Matching Mental Complexity (form of mind) to Leadership Effectiveness

Research clearly shows the relationship between mental complexity (form of mind) and leadership effectiveness:

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AND FORM OF MIND

*2 = Self sovereign; 3 = socialised mind; 4 = self-authoring mind; 5 = self-transforming mind
Source: K. Eigel, "Leader Effectiveness" (PhD dissertation, University of Georgia, 1998).

"…we are asking more and more workers who could once perform their work successfully with socialised minds – good soldiers – to shift to self-authoring minds.

And we are asking more and more leaders who could once lead successfully with self-authoring minds – sure and certain captains – to develop self-transforming minds.

In short, we are asking for a quantum shift in individual mental complexity across the board."

Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 27

Developmental Growth

While training is still important for learning that helps us perform tasks that require technical expertise, it is now a strategic imperative for organisations to support their leaders in ways that address complex challenges. This requires programs designed to support 'forms of mind' development and delivered by coaches/facilitators who are themselves developmentally advanced.

TRAINING / LEARNING = More information, skills, competencies

DEVELOPMENT = More complex and sophisticated ways of thinking

When leaders are properly supported in their developmental growth, they:

- become more self-aware and in control of their behaviour
- are better able to manage relationships
- increase their ability to make sense of complexity and see a bigger picture - the systems at play
- are aware of patterns of self-esteem, confidence, vulnerability and self-respect
- develop the capability to take multiple perspectives
- make constant progress
- understand that complex problems cannot be solved

Developmental growth can be thought of as akin to upgrading the operating system of your smart phone, which makes it possible to run more and more complex and cutting-edge apps.

In contrast, traditional leadership training, is analogous to adding more apps to your phone – adding more and more knowledge, skills, and abilities, but not shifting or elevating mindsets.

Ellison, S. (2020), Understanding Vertical Development, Ellison Consulting Group.
Petrie, N. (2014), Vertical Leadership Development-Part 1: developing leaders for a complex world, Center for Creative Leadership.

The Urgency

There is an urgent need to support leaders and emerging leaders manage the complex challenges they face. However, choosing programs and coaches capable of supporting developmental growth is a challenge in itself.

What gets in the way?

A different approach to leadership requires a different approach to leadership development. Unfortunately, many programs fail to meet the needs of participants or the organisation because they suffer from one or more of the following:

1. Wrong focus: Too much information and content and not enough on personal development.

2. Emphasis on problem solving: While problems can be solved, complex challenges are met by amplifying actions that move things in a direction you want to go and dampening actions that move you away.

3. Learning in isolation: Program content is disconnected from the leader's "real" world. Learning needs to take place at work, and with others at work, rather than on an isolated course.

4. Programs are too short: Programs are designed as events rather than as processes over time. Programs give leaders a short-term boost in knowledge but do not establish new thinking and behaviours into new habits without support.

PROGRESS IS MADE WHEN THERE IS SCAFFOLDING THAT SIMULTANEOUSLY SUPPORTS BOTH TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT.

Change that requires more than learning new information can be hard. For example, when cardiac patients are told by their doctors they could die if they don't change their lifestyle, very few succeed in making the necessary changes. They may have the knowledge of how to get well, but have not developed an identity that supports getting well.

The same pattern repeats itself in leadership training. Smart, ambitious leaders know that what they are doing isn't working. So they get taught new techniques, discover new tools, and seek to understand new models. Then, when their program is completed and they commit to making big changes back at work, they return to their job and fall into the same old habits they had before. They have new information, skills and competencies. However, they haven't developed their ability to make sense of complexity.
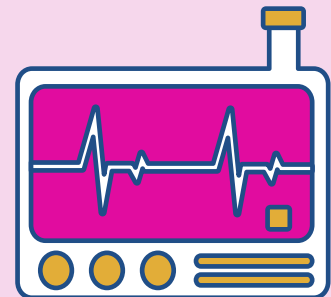
Operationalising Leadership Development

It is no easy thing to support someone as they develop their sense making capacity. It requires a sophisticated evidence-informed approach delivered by practitioners who are themselves developmentally advanced.

Focus
Change focus to more on development, less on content.

Connect
Create strong developmental networks at work.

Emphasise skills
Make progress by developing the often-counterintuitive skills needed to face complex challenges.

Bridge Gaps
Close knowing/doing gap: Make the development and work inseparable.

Process
Make leadership development a process, not an event.

Operationalising Leadership Development

Emerging from extensive research (Lodwick, 2016) into how to support leadership development within a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) environment, Cohort Coaching provides accessible, actionable support at the time when it is needed.

Cohort Coaching™

- Brings people together to collectively make progress on challenges that individual leadership mastery alone cannot achieve
- Focuses on facing complex challenges as well as problem solving
- Establishes open communication and facilitates respect to harness the energy, ideas and innovation that often lie dormant
- Encourages the instinct of people to support each another

- Facilitates fragmented groups to becoming highly engaged, and effective through collaborative perception, insight and self-determination
- Introduces social learning and increases the intensity of learning experiences
- Acknowledges individual cohort members while developing collaborative skills
- Allows an authenticity and integrity not typical within whole group workshops.
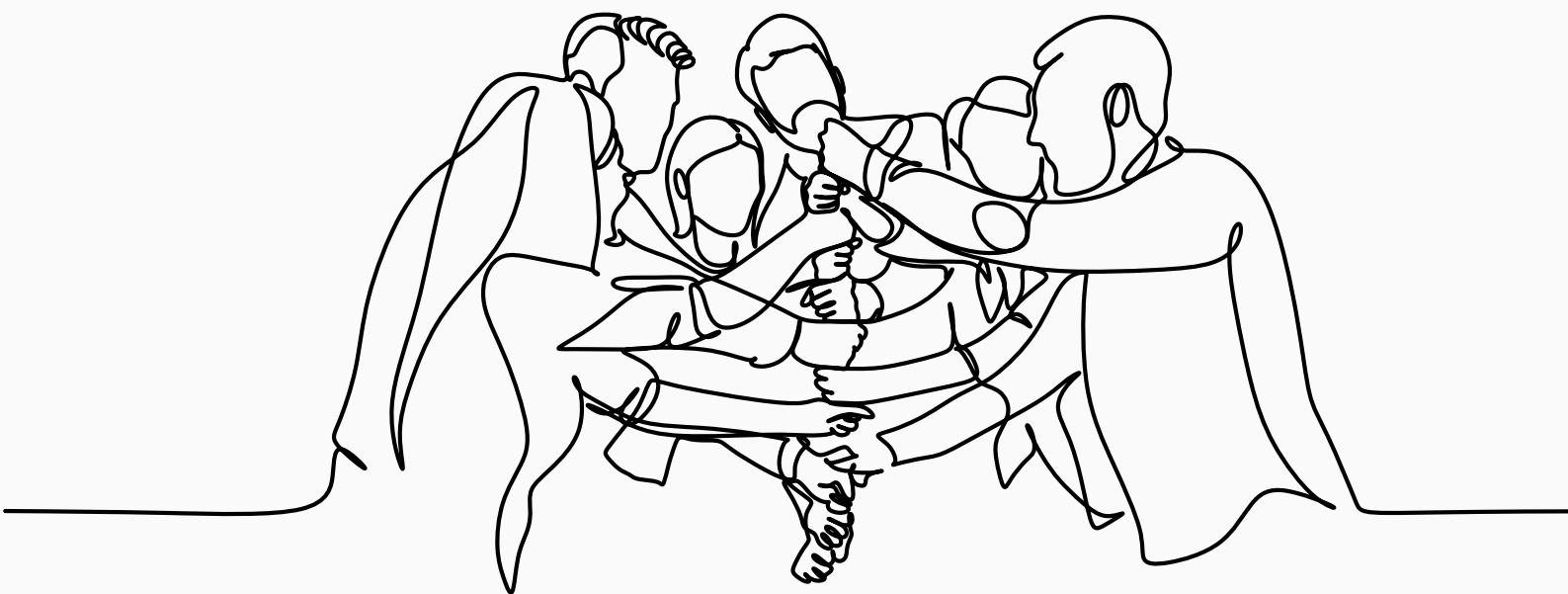
Every problem, every dilemma, every dead end we find ourselves facing in life, only appears unsolvable inside a particular frame or point of view.

Enlarge the box, or create another frame around the data, and problems vanish, while new opportunities appear.

Zander & Zander

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GROW DEVELOPMENTALLY

Jennifer Garvey Berger encourages us to ask ourselves:

Why do I believe what I believe?

We often CONFUSE OUR BELIEFS WITH THE TRUTH and rarely question how we came to hold them.

How could I be wrong?

This question isn't meant to help you make your beliefs bulletproof but rather to open them up so that you RECOGNISE OTHER WAYS OF SEEING THE WORLD that might be helpful to you—and might be as true as your own vision.

Who do I want to be next?

This question is a beacon in the distance for all of us. We often consider what we want to do next or what we want our next career move to be, but we rarely consider WHO we will be next. If we have a sense of this new person we are growing into, it will be easier to spot—and avoid—the identity mind-trap and continue to walk our development path with grace.

> Will I be less reactive?
> Will I have a bigger view?
> Will I be less oriented to my achievements?

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

To learn more about how to support the kind of leadership development that makes a difference in this connected, complex and volatile world, talk to Dr Desley Lodwick GAICD from Aberrant Learning.

DR DESLEY LODWICK GAICD

For over 20 years, Desley has worked with executives, leaders, and managers as they dig into the specific challenges they're facing, uncover their strengths, and see where they might be holding themselves back. As a thought leader in coaching, leadership and adult development, she is a sought-after professional speaker with a history of inspiring, informing, and facilitating action based upon her ability to translate research into practical workplace actions.

Desley has been a computer programmer, educational leader, business developer during the dot.com era, Managing Director and founder of a global IT company and now co-founder of Aberrant Learning.

Some of the reasons people work with Desley is that they're experiencing:
- workplace frustrations
- problems that have no answers
- the chaos of a connected world and the ordinariness of having to get everyday things done.

Her clients establish a peace of mind that typically:
- supports their achievement of desired outcomes
- increases their ability to look at situations from the perspectives of others
- surfaces assumptions to gain new awareness, perception, practices, relationships and directions.

Publications: Lodwick, D. (2016) Contextualist coaching for complex times, University of Queensland.

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aberrant learning

Aberrant Learning is a contemporary company established by Dr Desley Lodwick and Jim Ilievski (2020) in response to an increasingly complex social landscape where many of our cultural norms are closely and careful scrutinised and have been found wanting.

Research indicates unambiguously that most leadership programs fail. Too often, and despite good intentions, they are designed with content as the main feature rather than critical thinking and the flexibility to meet emerging needs.

Instead, our programs bring wisdom and courage to life. Aligned to learning how to make progress amidst complexity, they are geared to increasing the individual and collective sense making capacity needed to address real-work problems and identify opportunities.

Our coaching and programs are suitable when knowledge and training are not enough, and it is development that is needed to make progress. The results of our work show up in improvements in working lives, collective leadership and organisational cultures that in turn promote healthy bottom lines.

In addition to in person programs, Aberrant has been delivering work virtually to clients around the world in our dedicated studio since our inception. We deliver webcasts, workshops, assessment debriefs, development sessions, individual coaching, and cohort coaching.

Aberrant's core team is global and eclectic — drawn from many backgrounds and cultures. We each are experienced in supporting people immersed in the challenges of work in ways that empower and expand wisdom and courage.

We help people tackle the big challenges, create the space for change to occur, and support personal and organisational growth.