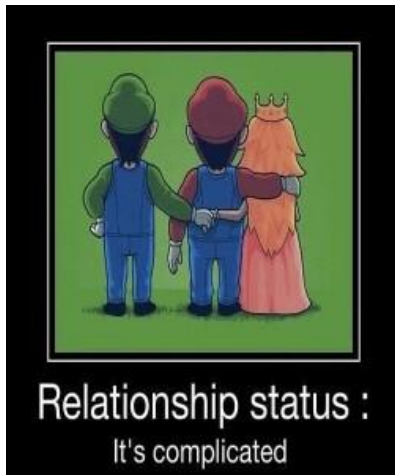


## **It's Complicated**



It's complicated. Something I used to see quite often on the status updates of people on Facebook. It seems that it was also a film about life, love and convoluted relationships. No wonder some people can say "I am my own Grandpa"!

Like it or not, we seem to have the habit of making things complicated as time goes on. Well, do leaders make things simple or explain things as they get complicated? Perhaps that's a measure of "entrepreneurship" and "intrapreneurship" versus "entropy-neurship". Which have you found yourself doing more of?

Intuitively, we would think that it would be best if leaders could make things plain and simple instead of conjuring up complicated processes and having us sit through lengthy explanations so that we can be "up to speed" on the new process, for example. But simplicity seems to leave us to struggle in perplexity in the wake of increasing complexity.

### **Do we like to complicate things?**

The short answer is yes. Just think about the use of jargon. Here, I am referring to the use of words, terms and/ or phrases that most people would not recognize during normal social intercourse.

There is a place for the use of words, terms or phrases that mean something specific in fields that created them. This is so in particularly the medical and engineering professions, although I am sure it is not exclusive to these two. For example, we might ask why a doctor has to say something like "gastroenteritis", when we would have called it a stomachache. Well, "gastroenteritis" refers to inflammation in the stomach and intestines and is one reason for pain. "Stomachache" is a pain in the abdomen which could be caused by inflammation, stones, intussusception (telescoping of one portion of the intestine into another), or any one of a whole range of conditions. So, jargon may actually be necessary in some fields of human endeavour, if only to enable greater specificity. You would not want your pituitary gland mistaken for your pineal gland, and vice versa!

No, here I am referring to using language that others could not reasonably be assumed to understand in order to give the impression of exclusiveness, or of being in the "in" group or other such popular banality. Have you ever belonged to such a group?

Language is not the only thing we like to complicate. Procedures and processes are another two that we seem to like making more and more complex. This seems to be the case in the HR and "back-end" units of many companies, and is a great affliction to all the rest. Is it because many companies have relegated such vital aspects of their business to the "back-end" that those who have to work in the bowels of such

companies feel unappreciated and therefore manufacture such unwieldy procedures to spite the rest? What do you think? I also think that if we are not able to explain our work or our ideas to others in layman terms, it indicates that we do not really understand what we are doing. Something to ponder on.

As a leader, are you able to simplify things for your people?

### **Simplicity is often undergirded by an amazing complexity.**

Do you agree? Let me illustrate. When you walk across the room, or anywhere else, do you think about walking? No, you just walk. Walking is so simple, we don't have to think about it. Well, that means that constructing and programming a robot to walk like a human being ought to be simple enough. Is it? Have you tried your hand at robotics? I haven't, but what I hear is that, while making a robot walk is relatively simple, getting a robot to duplicate how a human walks is another thing altogether. When we walk, there are literally trillions of nerve signals flashing back and forth, keeping us balanced, keeping us safe, keeping us focused even when we're not, and I'm sure that's not all!

What about "[fly-by-wire](#)"? This refers to enhancement of flight controls via an electronic interface. It simplifies flying the aircraft. In fact, flying a commercial jetliner these days has been made so simple that aircraft can literally take off, fly to their destinations and land on their own without the pilot having to do anything. The flying itself has been made simple. The supporting infrastructure is incredibly complex. Or just think about seeing with your eyes. Simple, isn't it? And yet our eyes are still making scientists dumbfounded as they discover more and more about it. The complexity is so great that some scientists have even said that the eye is wrongly wired to the brain!



As a leader, are you able and willing to grasp the vast complexities that come with the territory and making it simple for those you lead?

### **Irreducible complexity.**

"Irreducible complexity" describes a system in which the removal of any single component would render the system inoperable. In other words, you cannot simplify the system any more, otherwise it will not work. A simple lever system needs a load, a rigid beam, a force and a fulcrum. Take away any of those components and you do not have a working lever. Of course, the fulcrum needs something to stand on, and that something is usually the planet we live on. Sometimes, we need to understand that certain complex things may not be able to be simplified further. What we can do is to explain things to our people in ways that make it easy for them to grasp.

### **Is it complicated?**

Well, you be the judge of that. Challenge yourself! Find something complicated and unwieldy and set your hand to simplifying it for the benefit of everyone. Make sure it's within your [bailiwick](#). And if you don't know what "[bailiwick](#)" means, look it up. It's not complicated. On the contrary, it's simplicated!