

BRITTLE SYSTEMS, ANXIOUS LEADERS: CASES FOR THE BANI ERA

**DR. REKHA KHOSLA
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BRITTLE, ANXIOUS, NON-LINEAR, INCOMPREHENSIBLE

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Preface

The current epoch of global business is defined by a relentless pace of change, an intricate web of interdependencies, and a persistent state of disruption. The traditional model of management education, centered exclusively on didactic lectures and theoretical exposition, is no longer sufficient to forge leaders capable of navigating such volatility. This book, a meticulously curated collection of contemporary and classic management cases, is born from the conviction that judgment is not taught—it is forged. It is forged in the crucible of analysis, debate, and the high-stakes simulation of real-world decision-making.

The genesis of this book lies in a profound need to bridge the chasm between academic theory and practical execution. A manager cannot simply memorize a checklist of best practices and expect success. True managerial competence requires the capacity to synthesize disparate information, identify root causes obscured by symptoms, manage trade-offs, and commit to action despite informational ambiguity. Case studies serve as the essential, risk-free laboratory where this cognitive and emotional maturity is developed. By stepping into the shoes of the protagonist—be it a CEO facing a crisis, a startup founder pivoting their model, or a middle manager struggling with organizational friction—the reader engages in a process of active, experiential learning that transcends passive absorption. This book is, therefore, not merely a text; it is a gymnasium for the managerial mind, designed to build the intellectual and ethical muscle required for leadership.

The cases compiled within this book are intentionally positioned against the backdrop of the most challenging business contexts of our time. For decades, the framework of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) served as the dominant descriptor of the business environment. However, the speed of modern change now demands recognition of an even more challenging environment, sometimes characterized by the acronym BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, Incomprehensible). This collection deliberately includes cases that push the boundaries of even the VUCA concept:

- **Brittle Systems:** Cases exploring systemic failures—financial crashes, severe cybersecurity breaches, or critical supply chain breakdowns—where small inputs lead to catastrophic, non-recoverable outcomes.

- **Anxious Leadership:** Scenarios that force the protagonist to make public, visible, and ethically charged decisions in the age of instant social media scrutiny, where the anxiety of decision-making itself becomes a leadership challenge.
- **Non-linear Outcomes:** Cases demonstrating how marginal changes in customer behavior, political decisions, or technology adoption can cascade into disproportionate, non-proportional market transformations.
- **Incomprehensible Events:** Situations where traditional causal logic fails, forcing managers to adopt abductive reasoning, focusing on what could be true, rather than what historical data suggests should be true.

The case method is more than a teaching tool; it is a philosophy of learning. It represents a fundamental departure from the traditional academic contract, shifting the responsibility for learning from the instructor to the student. In a case discussion, there is no single, prescribed solution presented at the outset. Instead, the learning happens through a structured, Socratic process of peer-to-peer inquiry.

This management case collection is designed not as a passive reference, but as an active, cornerstone resource whose maximum utility is achieved through deliberate engagement from three core audiences: students, instructors, and practitioners.

For Students (across undergraduate, graduate, and executive programs), the book demands a rigorous, professional approach. Readers must move beyond merely summarizing facts to executing deep, quantitative analysis, formulating explicit alternative solutions, and articulating a clear, actionable recommendation. The critical learning outcome is not the final answer chosen, but the intellectual and communicative process—the ability to defend a reasoned conclusion against critique and pressure.

Instructors and Facilitators are encouraged to leverage the case materials for maximum pedagogical flexibility. The accompanying teaching notes serve as a guide for potential discussion questions and analytical frameworks, but the ultimate goal is to stimulate vibrant debate and harness the intellectual energy of the cohort. Instructors should facilitate discovery, rather than deliver lectures, and are encouraged to utilize role-playing exercises to bring the complex emotional and political dimensions of real-world managerial dilemmas to the forefront.

Finally, for Practitioners and Business Leaders, the collection provides a vital platform for reflective practice. Experienced managers should use these cases as mirrors to rigorously test their current mental models and leadership assumptions in unfamiliar industry contexts. The material is an ideal tool for internal team training, preparing for high-stakes strategic planning sessions, and ongoing professional development, compelling leaders to identify and confront the blind spots they might share with the protagonists in the case studies.

This volume is the culmination of years of intensive collaborative effort, involving extensive research, writing, and refinement, anchored by the thousands of hours spent observing the case method in practice. The authors extend deep gratitude to the companies and individuals whose generosity in sharing their complex stories allowed for the development of high-integrity learning materials, and to the colleagues and students who rigorously piloted these cases and provided invaluable feedback. Finally, the book is offered to the reader as an invitation to embark on a rigorous, challenging, yet highly rewarding journey of intellectual growth, transforming them from passive readers into active participants preparing to practice leadership. The ultimate aim is for these cases to inspire critical thought and lively debate, thereby forging the next generation of resilient, ethical, and effective global leaders, urging the reader to step into the crucible, confront the decision, and lead.

Acknowledgement

“The world becomes a better place because of those who choose to inspire, guide, and uplift others. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all who have generously shared their time, wisdom, and encouragement—embodying the true spirit of leadership, a continuous cycle much like the circle of life.

We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who has influenced our journey in meaningful ways. Whether as leaders, collaborators, followers, or thoughtful observers, each of you has enriched the perspectives and insights that culminate in this book, *Brittle Systems, Anxious Leaders: Cases for the BANI Era*.

We are especially thankful to our colleagues, research scholars, and students at Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus, whose support, intellectual engagement, and constructive dialogues provided the foundation for shaping our analytical and writing abilities.

Transforming an idea into a book is a demanding yet fulfilling process. We owe deep gratitude to our families and friends, whose unwavering support, insightful feedback, and constant encouragement made this endeavor possible.

To all of you—thank you for your invaluable contributions and for being an integral part of this journey.”

Dr. Rekha Khosla

Dr. Azra Ishrat

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Dr. Rekha Khosla is an accomplished academician and Associate Professor at Amity Business School, Amity University, Lucknow Campus. With over 20+ years of rich experience spanning teaching, research, and corporate exposure in Human Resource Management, she brings a dynamic blend of scholarly insight and practical expertise to her work.

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Dr. Khosla has presented more than 100 research papers at national and international conferences and has published over 65 scholarly articles in national and international books and journals. She has successfully conducted 40 Management Development Programs and participated in 50 workshops and Faculty Development Programs further enhancing her pedagogical depth and professional expertise.

A passionate and forward-thinking educator, Dr. Khosla is known for her scholarly rigor, leadership, and contribution to knowledge creation. Dr. Khosla consistently inspires students, colleagues, and the wider professional community through her research, mentorship, and steadfast devotion to the field of Human Resource Management & entrepreneurship.



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A dedicated mentor, Dr. Ishrat has actively mentored and successfully guided several Ph.D. candidates. Her primary research interests focus on key areas within modern management and social science, namely Gender Studies, Employee Well-being, and Organizational Psychology.



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