

BRAINFOOD

BIG IDEA

VUCA

Sorry, but yet again we are the victims of corpobabble: business journalists have hijacked this military acronym to conjure a four-dimensional portrait of the challenges of our era: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, even though the world has always been full of them. Picture a hunter-gatherer considering how a sudden change (volatility) toward unpredictable weather (uncertainty) has caused a rash of difficult survival-related problems (complexity), leaving the tribe pondering what it'll need to do (ambiguity) to secure its existence. This is meat and drink for management consultants, who love to invent problems they can solve. They can tell companies that what they need is a smarter combination of talents (complexity), more slack (volatility), some question-answering experiments (ambiguity) and more data (uncertainty). But perhaps what we need is choice, organisation, mastery and awareness. That would give us Coma – blessed relief from VUCA anxiety.

➔ To see Nigel Nicholson's book, *The 'I' of Leadership: Strategies for seeing, being and doing* (Jossey-Bass, £18.99), go to iofleadership.com

