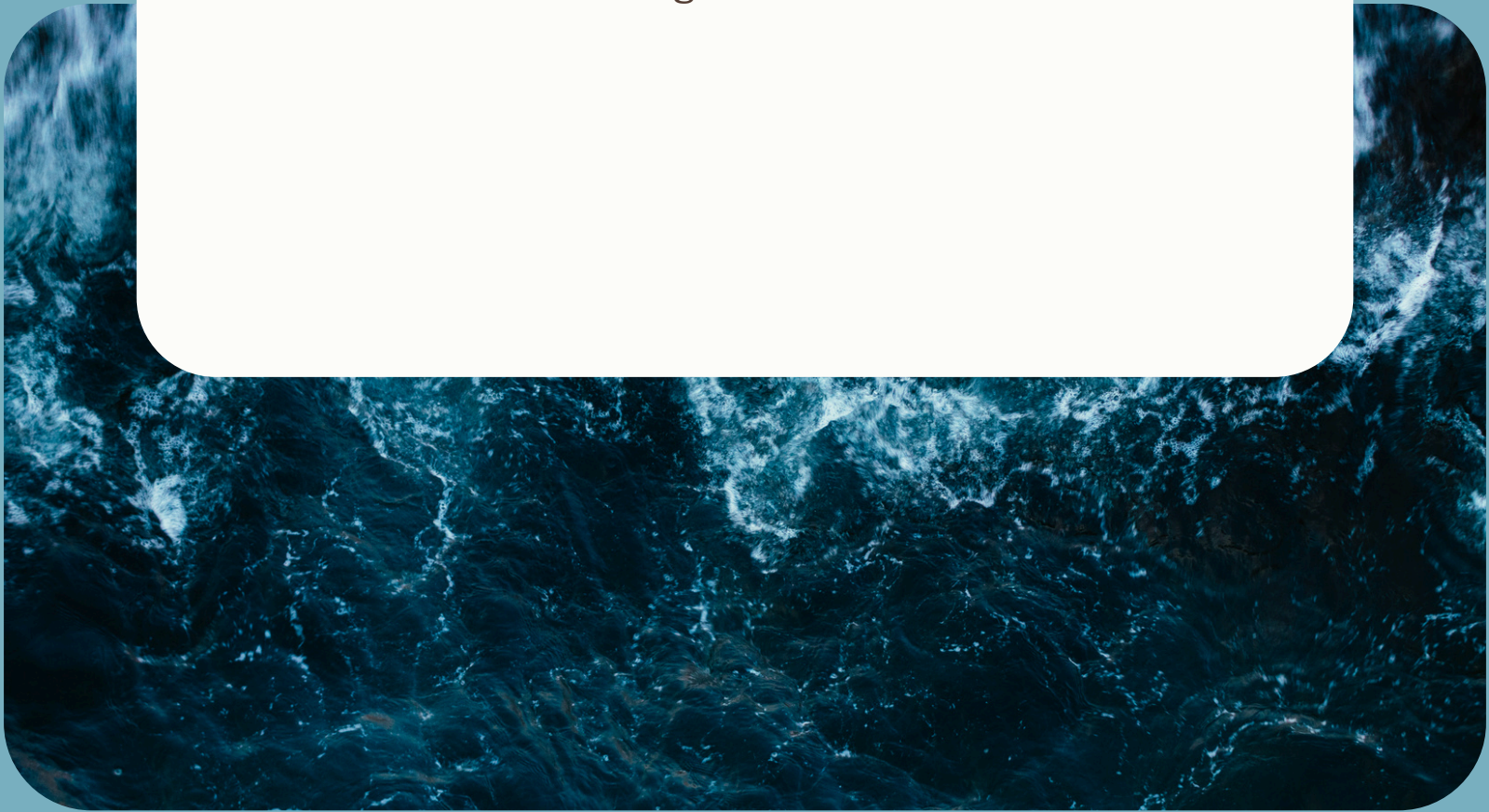


WORKBOOK

Controlling the Uncontrollable

5 Small Shifts To Make A Big Difference in Uncertain Times



Controlling the Uncontrollable



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The Ripple Effect of Uncertainty

84%

of executives feel underprepared for current uncertainties

[World Economic Forum](#)

63%

of executives ranked economic uncertainty as the top threat to their organization's well-being

[Russell Reynolds](#)

83%

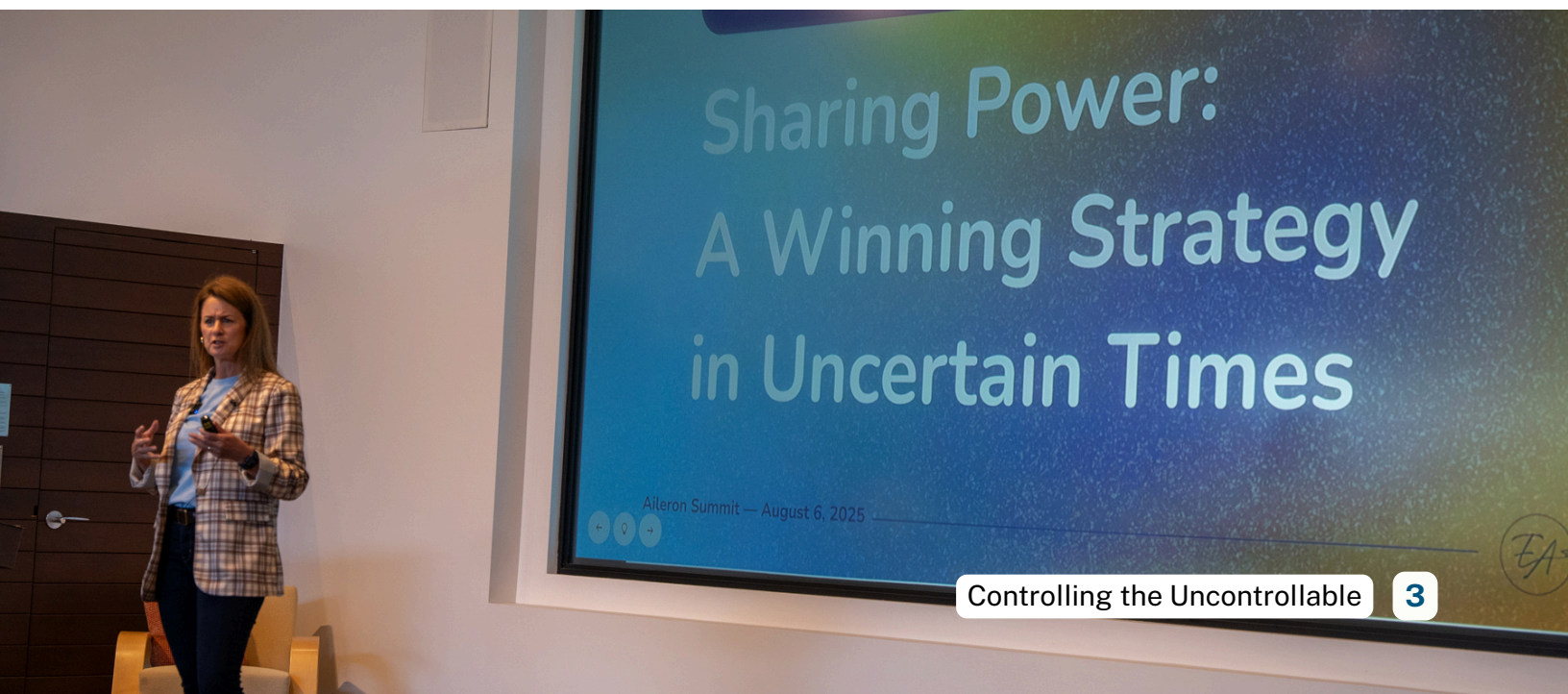
of business leaders believe current geopolitical and economic uncertainties will limit their company's growth plans

[Russell Reynolds](#)

Business leaders are overwhelmingly feeling out of control, and when leadership feels uncertainty, it can trickle down to affect culture, profits and future plans, shifting organizations out of growth mode and setting them on a trajectory of self-sabotage.

In the shadow of uncertainty, leaders have an opportunity to foster stability within their teams by making small shifts that can not only help them feel a little more control over the uncontrollable, but also instill a sense of stability throughout their entire organization. The good news? There's no crystal ball required. Instead, taking time to pause, reflect and implement ideas that protect against the unknown can have lasting effects that protect both you and your company from spiraling out of control.

Research indicates that when task uncertainty is high, team members often feel perplexed about which tasks to prioritize and how to proceed. By creating deliberate shifts, leaders can transform uncertainty into a catalyst for focus, alignment, and resilience.



1 Recognize What's In Your Control

Before you can stabilize a team or business, clarity is key. Many leaders spend energy on things they cannot influence. Start by mapping control.

Exercise 1

Column A	Column B
What is in your control	What is outside your control
Example: decisions, priorities, communication, mindset	Example: economy, competitors, regulations, customer behavior

Results and Reflection

Seeing these side by side can immediately reduce overwhelm and highlight where your efforts matter most. Sometimes, when we think about the idea of things that are weighing on us, they can seem bigger or scarier than they actually are. By writing them out and naming them, we can see that maybe there aren't as many things conspiring against us as we previously thought. Or, even if there are a lot of things, it becomes easier to see how we might start to attack the things we can control and reduce the total list, even when the things out of our control seem too large to comprehend.

How did you feel after seeing them all written out? Did it help to see the list of what you can control next to the things outside of your control? When you see them that way, does it help you feel like you can make progress against the total list by attacking the quick wins from Column A?

2 Identify Your External Challenges

Understanding external pressures gives context for where small shifts can have a lasting impact. By separating out the items causing stress and strain on your business that you cannot control and were not the cause of, you can free up the business from that additional strain to solve the problems you can, or prepare for future external challenges.

External factors are those that act on your business without you personally having made choices that lead to those factors. An example might be something cultural or political that makes it difficult for you to do business.

Let's say your company does business in a country that has recently banned part of your product, or new regulations come out that limit your ability to use your primary component. While these things can cause major stress and strain on your business, they are out of your control. You did not cause them, and you cannot change them.

The economy or political unrest is another example. While you can get involved in your community or politics, you do not have a direct ability to change these factors, and so they are external—acting upon your business.



2 Identify Your External Challenges Cont.

Exercise 2

List 2–3 external challenges your business is navigating that you cannot directly control.

Example: sudden shifts in customer demand, changes in supplier reliability, or regulatory updates.

State the challenge.	How is this affecting your team?	Where is stress or uncertainty showing up most visibly?

Results and Reflection

Listing out your external factors doesn't make them go away or immediately resolve the stress, but it can help to shift the inclination to respond to them directly or try to control, change or prevent things that you do not have influence on. Although we cannot control these outside influences, there are often things that happen in our businesses as a result of them, which we can control, thereby taking out the charge and building resiliency in our teams. For example, we may not be able to control the economy, but if our employees are feeling stressed by the state of the economy and bringing that stress into our culture, perhaps we can help ease the stress, even when we can't fix the stressor.

When you wrote out the effects of the uncontrollable influences, did it help you to zero in on what you can control about uncontrollable situations? Did it make you feel like maybe you have a little more control than you thought you did? What pathways do you have to control the impacts of the uncontrollable that can positively impact your business?

3 Map Your Controllable Levers

Now, focus on leverage. How can what you can control influence outcomes for what you cannot?

While you cannot control new regulations, the economy, or political unrest, you can control how you prepare for or respond to external factors with internal processes. Using the same example, or doing business in a country that has banned or regulated one of your primary components, you can create processes that give you a path forward when something unexpected happens.

One option, in this example, might be to innovate alternatives. Another might be to abandon the product line and put resources behind other products.

Having plans in place does not help to negate the uncontrollable external influence, but it does give you the ability to internally control how your business responds.



3 Map Your Controllable Levers Cont.

Exercise 3

For each uncontrollable challenge, identify 1–2 actions within your control that can mitigate the impact.

Challenges

What are some actions within your control?

Example: Cash flow uncertainty



- tighten internal budgeting
- explore short-term financing options.



3 Map Your Controllable Levers Cont.

Exercise 3 Cont.

This builds a proactive posture. You're not controlling the uncontrollable, but you are shaping how your business responds. You use what you can control to guard against, or take some of the energy away from what you cannot.

Results and Reflection

Strengthening the way your business responds to big influences with small changes can start to make you feel like you are gaining control back. It's not about trying to eliminate threats to your business; it's about refocusing your efforts and using threats to inspire changes that build resiliency.

When you looked at the uncontrollable influences this way, did it help you think about what areas of your business can adjust so that you are not as vulnerable to outside influences? What opportunities do you have to strengthen your business now because of these threats that might prepare you for future threats without needing to predict what's coming next?

Are you starting to feel the weight of the unknown lighten? Does knowing that you can shift your mindset and approach help you to feel less concerned about what you can't know is coming?

4

Transforming Chaos Triggers

Chaos triggers are those points of instability that create disproportionate stress. By addressing them intentionally, leaders create a stabilizing effect for their teams. Whether it is from internal or external sources, once an emotion or feeling is triggered, it can become pervasive and affect more areas of your organization. Identifying the pervasive feeling in your organization provides you an opportunity as a leader to strengthen instead.



Uncertainty

Is your team confused or feeling unsafe or unstable? Are they unsure about where they fit in, what comes next and where anything is going?

This might be an opportunity to strengthen your organization by providing purpose and clarity, which will build long-term confidence throughout.



Isolation

A common complaint in business is that individuals or teams can feel siloed. Does your team communicate across departments?

If this is an area your business struggles with, you may try increasing routine meetings or touchpoints to share across teams. This will build connection and collaboration in the end.



Overwhelm

Is your team feeling like there is too much on their plates? Or is everyone pulled in multiple directions?

This might be an opportunity to simplify processes and build momentum.



Emotional reactivity

Are emotions charged? Do conversations get reactive, defensive or heated?

By modeling a grounded emotional response, you can create stability and build trust, diffusing the situation and setting the team up for more calm communication in the future.

4 Transforming Chaos Triggers Cont.

Exercise 4 Cont.

Small shifts transform each trigger into stability. For example: implement weekly check-ins, create simple decision frameworks, or establish clear channels for updates. These controllable changes help to diffuse the vulnerability of uncertainty throughout your organization.

Results and Reflection

How did this exercise help you to zero in on the emotions running through your business because of uncertainty? Did it help to identify the core emotional response?

As you start to examine where your business needs additional support and reassurance, are you starting to see ways in which building stronger internal avenues to help build stability and resilience can protect you from future unknowns as well? What would happen if you added a fourth column and started to think about what fixing this core need now could protect against the future, and as you think about that, does it help you feel more in control and prepared for future unknowns?

5 Commit to One High-Impact Shift

Choose one change that will make the most difference in stabilizing your business or team today.

Exercise 5

Write it down

Determine one immediate action you can take this week to implement it.

Assign measurable signs of progress (increased alignment, reduced delays, improved morale).

5

Commit to One High-Impact Shift Cont.

The act of implementing this one small change will start to embed a sense of control tomorrow where there might not have been one yesterday.

Aileron provides tools and coaching to help leaders systematically implement these shifts. Through workshops, frameworks, and ongoing support, leaders learn to:

- ☒ **Identify controllable levers with clarity**
- ☒ **Reframe uncertainty as opportunity**
- ☒ **Model calm and intentional leadership**
- ☒ **Create systems that stabilize teams even amid external turbulence**

By integrating reflection exercises, actionable shifts, and structured support, leaders move from reactive stress to proactive stability.

Aileron can guide leaders through these exercises in depth, helping transform uncertainty into structured, confident action. For more information about how we can work with you to create transformational change throughout your organization, visit our website and consider scheduling a [Discovery call](#)

Results and Reflection

A lot of the charge of preparing for the unknown is in the vastness of the not knowing. As we review the work of these exercises, we can see that we are narrowing the sphere of guessing to a very small controllable list of action items. By taking our time, sorting, reacting and building stability, we can see the ways in which we are starting to build systems that can help us prepare for the unexpected ... without actually needing to know or guess at what the unexpected will be. We also build these system and complete these exercises so we know that when the unexpected happens, we have processes in place to react.

How does this make you feel? Do you feel more prepared? After running through these exercises, what is one small thing you can change now that takes the charge out of the threat of an unknowable future?



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