# So what exactly is an Uncomfortable CEO?

By *José Ignacio Sordo* – Feb 11, 2015 (*)

It's one that has strong curiosity, the ability to face reality, drives for results and never settles. Strong words. Especially in a time of uncertainty. I would like to quote a key learning obtained from three memorable IT meetings during my consulting experience. The first one was actually a question.

A key vendor turned to me and asked: "What's your comfort level with this idea?" The second was a statement by an associate in my own firm: "I know this is a powerful idea, but I feel a little uncomfortable with it." The third one was from a project manager planning to implement a new work process. She simply said: "I'm just not comfortable".

Those three separate observations, uttered in three separate meetings, had two things in common:

1) They were all centered on the notion of comfort, and how important it is to be comfortable with an idea before you go ahead with it.
2) Each one of those remarks turned out to be dead-end roads for an idea that just might have been a great one.

In our business lives, we are going to have to choose between comfort and progress. What differentiates a below average performance from an average or exceptional one? The strongest CEOs do approach work in a very consistent fashion: they get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

They are interested in *what* is right, rather than *who* is right; they have a general dissatisfaction with the status quo, and always looking for ways to explore new boundaries. They all share the following virtues:

- **Strong curiosity**. Leaders with a high level of innate curiosity discover invigorating opportunities; those without it find those same opportunities exhausting…
- **The ability to face reality.** They have the courage to act. In a nutshell, these leaders are able to make difficult decisions that are neither pleasant nor popular…
- **Drive for results**. These leaders develop far-reaching objectives and standards for their organization that go beyond those, which might be adopted by the average person…
- **Never settle.** They speak their mind on an issue, whether their view is popular or unpopular. They always strive to learn more, do more and be more, even if this means being single...

In particular, we do live in a VUCA world ... a Volatile, Uncertain, Challenging and Ambiguous world, the CEO, uncomfortable as they are, must ally themselves with the CIO to address many kinds of risk, which are enumerated in the book. Which then includes a statement of what this kind of resilience looks like, and is followed by a case study.

On my book "The Uncomfortable CEO", we describe how to bring it all together, with a good check list of issues to be considered. A good book to use in a training or collaboration session with your C-level people or with a board. Check my website www.TheUncomfortableCEO.com