

Leadership mindset – the big 4!

Mindset is one of the greatest predictors of success and one of the toughest turns to make as you become a leader.

Becoming a leader is not an instant process, nor is it solely attained through training courses. Leadership begins with a shift in mindset that takes place within the leader. However, measuring this mental shift can be difficult. Can we identify the skills that indicate a leader has adopted the required mindset for success? Shifting our mindset can influence our behaviours as a leader, and our behaviours can shape our mindset over time. The challenge is isolating the specific actions that successful leaders take when they embody a particular mindset, as actions speak louder than words.

The Big Four

Our thoughts shape our actions, which in turn determine our results and reinforce our beliefs. To achieve desired outcomes, it is crucial to cultivate both positive mindsets and effective actions. While a growth mindset is widely recognised, it is not the sole mindset that leaders need. Through our global experience, we have identified four critical mindsets for leaders: growth, inclusive, agile, and enterprise. These mindsets, when combined with effective actions, can lead to successful leadership.

- **Growth mindset** — skills and behaviours can be cultivated with effort; even setbacks are opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Inclusive mindset** — differences in how others think and behave are advantages to be leveraged.
- **Agile mindset** — success in a changing world requires flexibility, adaptation, and resilience.
- **Enterprise mindset** — success is maximised when the needs of the larger organisation are prioritised.

Unpacking Each Mindset

For behaviour change to be successful, leaders need to shift their mindset by increasing their self-awareness and trying new perspectives. Small mindset shifts, repeated over time, pave the way for more significant changes. By demonstrating new actions associated with the new mindset, leaders reinforce the new thinking. When individuals behave differently, it's evidence that a mindset shift has occurred and taken hold.

A Growth Mindset – a leader who coaches instils confidence in employees, allowing them to choose their own path to success with support along the way. Coaching and growth mindsets align with the belief that individuals are resourceful, and it's the coach's job to unleash potential.

An Inclusive Mindset – to benefit fully from collaboration, organisations need to intentionally create a safe place for diverse perspectives, ideologies, and approaches. Leaders who prioritise inclusion welcome others' perspectives, willingly share information and ideas, and weigh decisions' impact broadly.

An Agile Mindset - agile leaders adapt to workplace dynamics and rebound from challenges. They are comfortable with moving forward with partial information or an incomplete plan and adjust it based on new conditions. However, leaders need a flexible environment to be agile, and their biggest challenges often involve cumbersome organisational structures and a culture that punishes failures.

An Enterprise Mindset - the best enterprise-thinking leaders link team performance to organisational outcomes, providing clarity around goals to foster an enterprise mindset. When leaders help employees connect their work to a larger purpose, they draw connections between day-to-day activities and the company's goals.

Leadership change

Leaders may encounter difficulties in adapting to new career stages or changes in the business world due to a mindset that no longer serves them. While skill sets are vital, mindsets are what enable them. A constrained mindset limits the potential of skill sets, acting as a bottleneck that prevents necessary changes from happening.

For a leader, mindset affects every aspect of how they show up at work:

- interacting with colleagues,
- how they approach problems and decisions,
- it can influence their ability to innovate, adapt and change, and influence their team

For example, a leader with a fixed mindset may resist change and feel threatened by new ideas, this could be driven from negative experiences, such as failures or rejections, which can reinforce a fixed mindset. Whereas a leader with a growth mindset may see change as an opportunity for growth and improvement. Similarly, a leader with an inclusive mindset may prioritise diversity and collaboration, while a leader with a narrow perspective may overlook valuable input from team members.

Leaders can shift their mindset by accessing learning and development opportunities, such as coaching or training programmes, which provide them with fresh skills and perspectives. Various strategies can also be employed to unlock a mindset, including self-reflection, seeking new perspectives, being receptive to feedback, questioning assumptions and beliefs, and embracing change. Additionally, it is crucial to cultivate a mindset that prioritises learning and constant improvement. Collaborating with a mentor or coach can aid in unlocking and shifting mindset. Ultimately, shifting a mindset necessitates being introspective, adaptable, and open to novel concepts and ways of thinking.

Time to reflect

When it comes to becoming a leader, it's crucial to acknowledge that leadership is not a static role. Leaders are continually challenged to expand their skill sets and adapt to new circumstances, which can be a challenging process. Upon reviewing the four essential elements of leadership mindset, you may have identified behaviours, practices, and tendencies that resonate with your style, as well as aspects of your mindset that may conflict with these concepts.

Maybe you're thinking, how do I change my mindset? The following suggestions will help you get started:

- Believe in your ability to change your mindset.
- Seek new experiences.
- Step outside your comfort zone.
- Seek to leave behind the safe and familiar for the unknown.
- Take small steps each day - don't overwhelm yourself.
- Seek self-awareness and make time to reflect on who you are as a leader.

To the last point: we all have an image in our head of who we are as a professional and what that means to us.

Consider whether the story you are telling yourself:

- Is serving you well now and into the future?
- Is your image of yourself as a leader outdated?
- Is it going to hold you back?

Answering these thought-provoking questions may not be an immediate task, but reflecting on them is a crucial step in developing your mindset.

Ultimately, shifting mindset is a personal journey that does not follow a clear-cut path. As you engage in this process, you may discover a new way of seeing yourself and the world around you, which can shape your sense of purpose, priorities, behaviours, and actions.

Partner with us to change your mindset and reap the benefits of a personal development programme.

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