

Mind-sets, Learning and Leadership

Why do some students thrive on challenges while others, just as bright and competent, withdraw or deteriorate under the same circumstances? Carol Dweck, PhD, developmental psychologist and author of the book *MINDSET: The New Psychology of Success* has spent over two decades researching this very topic and her discoveries are changing the way schools view learning, and businesses regard leadership. She finds that the answers to the questions in the Mind-set quiz do indeed influence approaches to learning, reactions to failure and even the bottom line. Dweck presents research showing that many succeed or fail based on how they think about intelligence, talents and abilities.

Dweck finds that people have one of two mind-sets on the subject—fixed and growth. People with a **FIXED** mind-set believe that intelligence (along with talents and abilities) is fixed and can't be changed. People with **GROWTH** mind-sets believe our brains—intelligence—can be developed, like a muscle. The real-world implications of these two mind sets are enormous. The two groups differ in three significant ways—their goals, their beliefs about effort and their reaction to failure. (See box to right)



Mind-sets in Business

According to Dweck, when business leaders have a growth mind-set, companies thrive. The type of leader who continually ask questions; is always trying to improve and believes that mistakes help people learn, lead companies into greatness. When CEOs believe the company is only a platform for their brilliance, the organization frequently ends up being sacrificed. Leaders with a growth mind-set encourage their employees to look at, not hide their mistakes, and to use feedback to alter their strategies. These companies have extensive mentoring and employee development programs.

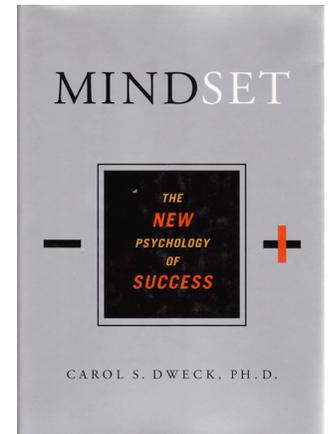
Dweck uses contemporary examples to illustrate her findings. The leaders of Enron, for example, thought of themselves as the “smartest guys in the room”. They became obsessed with talent, and didn't cultivate a culture of learning and growth. With this fixed mind-

Mind-set quiz

1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't really change.
2. Anyone, no matter who they are, can substantially change their intelligence.
3. Are good leaders born or made?
4. Might your point of view on these questions make you a better or worse leader?

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“MINDSET is a book that belongs on every business manager's bookshelf.”
Chip and Dan Heath, Fast Company



Mind-sets in Education

1. GOALS:

Growth mind-set students view learning as the most important goal. While they care about grades, they think it is more important to learn the material than to test well.

Fixed mind-set students think the most important thing is to look good and avoid mistakes.

2. EFFORT:

Growth mind-set students believe that the harder they work at something, the better they will get. While not everyone can be an Einstein, they think that even geniuses have to work hard to reach their goals.

Fixed mind-set students, many of whom have gone through years of school with high grades and little effort, believe that if you have ability, you don't need effort. In fact, these students viewed the need for effort as a condemnation of their intelligence.

3. REACTION TO FAILURE:

Growth mind-set students are resilient in response to failure. They developed strategies to improve.

Fixed mind-set students believe that if you have ability, you don't need effort. Working hard implies a lack of intelligence, so when things get harder as they move through school, they have a choice. They can work hard and feel dumb, risking their special status and easy perfection, or they can retire, finding it more acceptable to fail through lack of effort rather than revealing a less than optimal intelligence. Some students, and even parents, pull themselves out of challenging classes rather than risk a lower grade point average.

set, the Enron environment discouraged people from admitting or correcting mistakes. Jack Welch, the CEO of GE and one of the most highly regarded executives in business, had a growth mindset. He was devoted to staff growth and made a point seeking out insights from front-line workers.

Do you work in a growth mind-set or fixed mind-set organization? What is YOUR mind-set?