"Some books simply stand out from the rest because they grab your attention the moment you see the title. And then there are the very, very few that also keep you riveted page after page. *50 Ideas that Changed the World of Work* is a fitting testimony to the shoulders on whom we can stand to see better. A book whose time has come."
Sudhanshu Palsule, leadership philosopher, educator, coach and speaker

"An insightful and practical compendium of the key ideas shaping workplace practices over the past half-century or so. It is essential reading for anyone wishing to bring best practice to their organisation."
Andy Haldane, Chief Executive, Royal Society of Arts (RSA)

"In turbulence, you want a solid guide. This collection of 50 key concepts supports clear thinking with simplicity and direction."
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"A wonderful toolkit that will save you years of reading and workshops. It not only summarises each idea in a very easy read, but specifies how to put the idea into practice and poses questions you will need to ask yourself to place the idea into your own context. I'm keeping this one in my rucksack wherever I go!"
Adam Kingl, author, keynote speaker, educator

"A terrific book; a fantastic collection of essential models and theories from great thinkers, presented in an accessible and bite-sized way that says, 'read me'."
Jerome Goodluck, Senior Business Manager, The Institute of Leadership

"A cornucopia of inspirational resources for leaders of all levels."
Russell Beck, Managing Director, ImagineThinkDo Ltd and author of *The World of Work to 2030*

"In a world where leaders are looking for a silver bullet, it is refreshing to find a book bold enough to look back at the tremendous research and work done over many years. I applaud the authors for their willingness to admit that much great work has already been created – and we run the risk of ignoring it if we only look at the shiny new books on the shelf. I encourage any leader or aspiring leader to dive into this book to identify many golden nuggets to support your growth."
Roger Minton, former Head of Leadership Development, Anglo American

"An incredible compendium of ideas, presented in an engaging way so you can immediately put them into practice. From timeless classics to recent breakthroughs, the ideas in this book will help you to think more strategically, transform your culture, reset priorities, boost relationships and understand yourself better. All the most important insights together in one easy-to-read book. Highly recommended."
Mark Williamson, CEO of Action for Happiness

"I wish I'd had this book through my entire professional career. How much time and stress I would have saved. It should be recommended reading for every business professional, no matter their function or level."
Pepe González Tejera, executive education expert and former VP Global Marketing and Business Development, Tetra Pak

"As a transformational expert, I understand the challenges of navigating a fast-changing world – from technological disruption and geopolitical instability to climate action and hybrid working. This book provides invaluable insights into the ideas that have shaped the modern workplace and offers practical inspiration for leading transformation."
Araceli Canedo Bebbington, executive coach and board member, The European Coaching and Mentoring Council

50 Ideas that Changed the World of Work

The essential guide to the best business thinking

Jeremy Kourdi and Jonathan Besser

The Economist

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With thanks to the brilliant thinkers, past
and present, whose bold and insightful work
continues to support and inspire us all.

Thanks as well to the readers who apply these ideas –
shaping and improving what we do and how we do it.

About the authors

Jeremy Kourdi is a business writer, executive coach, educator and founder of Expert Leader. He was formerly Senior Vice President of *The Economist*, Managing Director of Duke Corporate Education, and Head of Publishing and Research at the UK's Chartered Management Institute. Jeremy's experience includes coaching, leadership development and thought leadership with a wide range of market-leading organisations and business schools. He is the author of 30 books, translated into 17 languages, and has in-depth expertise in the fields of leadership, coaching, innovation and the forces shaping the future for business and society.

Jonathan Besser is an internationally experienced learning and development expert, as well as a coach, mentor and facilitator. He is the founder of Intrepid Leadership Consulting and works with clients across a wide range of industries – from engineering, finance and fast-moving consumer goods to professional services, media, advertising and manufacturing. Jonathan believes in collaborative partnership and puts it at the heart of everything he does. His work embraces the evolving nature of learning and technology, and he is experienced in a wide range of learning interventions and tools. He has worked with market-leading business schools and consultancies around the world, providing leadership development and getting involved in all aspects of client work, including programme design, diagnostics, development and delivery.

Contents

Introduction

As we hurtle through the third decade of the 21st century it would be fair to say that the challenges facing organisations appear to be relentless and unprecedented: pandemics, conflict, technological change, political and economic upheaval, and more. But spare a thought for Kongō Gumi, a Japanese construction company that can trace its origins back to 578 AD. That's over 1,400 years of change and turmoil. In the Western world we have many global businesses that have been trading for well over 100 years including IBM, Merck, Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Kraft, Harley-Davidson and Rolls-Royce. These are businesses that have succeeded and survived with experience and resilience, often influencing (and being influenced by) the thinking, models and techniques that have informed what, how and why we do what we do at work today.

Although the challenges we face today might feel new to us, they might not be new to the world of business. That's why, for this book, we've chosen to look back, researching and studying 50 ideas that have changed the world of work for the better. These are ideas and initiatives that have been created to address problems at a moment in time and have proved so useful that we still use them today in their original or adapted form.

This thinking has a long history. Frederick Winslow Taylor wrote his ground-breaking book *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911, producing a work that was hugely influential for everyone from Henry Ford to Peter Drucker – people who were themselves great influencers.

As a starting point, it's interesting to consider Taylor's original four principles.

1. Replace approximation, guesswork and intuition with a fact-based approach based on a scientific study of the work to be completed.
2. Carefully invest in selecting, training, developing and promoting employees, rather than allowing them to learn, train and improve themselves passively.
3. Ensure that each individual employee receives detailed, coordinated instruction and supervision of their work.
4. Plan and divide work fairly and in the most operationally effective way, particularly between managers and workers, and work together to complete the necessary tasks.

More than 110 years later, few would disagree with Taylor's observations and recommendations.

In a world where thousands of new business books are published every year, it may seem counterintuitive to look back. But, as we have discovered, much of what we do in our organisations today can be directly linked to models that were created decades ago.

There are, of course, many more than 50 ideas that have changed the world of work. We have chosen 50 of the most interesting, potent, popular or practical. Some are newer ideas; some are older foundational ideas; all are relevant today and will remain relevant into the future. You might think of the book as a business thinking equivalent of an anthology of poetry, a companion and guide designed to whet your appetite for delving deeper.

We have designed each entry to be clear and succinct, distilling the essence of each idea: what it means and why it matters. Crucially, we have taken a practical approach so that these ideas can be applied as quickly and easily as possible. That is what lies behind the "In practice" section and the questions posed in each chapter's "Thought starters".

We encourage you to use these insights to strengthen your capabilities and develop your thinking about the world of work and to create the sustained, positive change that makes for better organisations.

Jeremy Kourdi and Jonathan Besser

1
Thinking, fast and slow

Understanding the science of decision making

The big picture

In his 2011 book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Israeli-American Nobel laureate and psychologist Daniel Kahneman explored how we make decisions. In doing so he provided practical insights into neuroscience and how our brains work, bringing to life the concept of fast and slow thinking as two parallel systems of thought that operate in the human mind. Kahneman defined System 1 thinking as automatic, intuitive and emotional; System 2 thinking as slower, more deliberate and logical. By understanding these two systems you can become more aware of how you make decisions and how you can improve your decision-making processes.

Kahneman's work has affected many people's understanding of decision-making, neuroscience and behavioural psychology. This includes greater awareness of the role of intuition, the limitations of judgements based on hindsight, and the impact of money and other subtle influences and biases on decision-making.

About the idea

Fast and slow thinking refers to the idea that there are two parallel systems of thought that operate in the human mind.

Fast thinking

Fast thinking, or System 1, involves automatic and intuitive thinking that occurs without much effort. It is responsible for things like

perception, attention, and basic cognitive tasks such as knowing how to tie our shoelaces or being able to do simple arithmetic, like 2+2. System 1 thinking is often automatic and is the source of our gut reactions and snap judgements. It works very well for many of the decisions that need to be made "in the moment" and every moment of every day. If people were to engage System 2, or slow thinking, for every decision made, it would be cognitively overwhelming and time consuming.

The key is to know when to slow down, to take a breath, and engage System 2 in your processing.

Slow thinking

Slow thinking, or System 2, involves more deliberate, reflective and logical thinking requiring effort and concentration. It is responsible for things like problem-solving, decision-making and higher-order thinking. System 2 thinking is more considered and is used when there is a need to override the intuitive System 1 responses or when faced with complex problems. If you were asked, for example, to multiply 17 by 24, you would struggle to come up with an answer using only System 1 thinking.

People can learn to recognise when they are relying too much on fast, intuitive System 1 thinking and not using slower, more deliberate System 2 thinking enough. You can also learn to identify situations where you need to override System 1 responses and engage System 2 thinking to make more thoughtful and reasoned decisions.

Understanding fast and slow thinking can help you to become a more intentional and effective decision-maker, helping you to acknowledge and understand when going with your instinct might not lead to the best outcomes or how bias might affect the decisions you make. Kahneman's work provides a valuable focus for enhanced self-awareness and his concepts are often reflected in training programmes, coaching discussions, and simply in the way that people work.

In practice

There are several ways to apply Kahneman's concept of fast and slow thinking.

Take time to reflect on how you make key decisions

When faced with a tricky or complex decision, try to slow down and take time to engage your slower, more deliberate System 2 thinking. Ask yourself questions like: what are the options and their pros and cons? What is the goal or priority? What are the potential long-term consequences of this decision (or of not making a decision)?

Be careful, however, not to overthink decisions, perhaps because of an excess of caution or "paralysis by analysis". If you're facing a System 1 decision, the best approach is to get on with making it happen.

Be aware of your biases and mental shortcuts

Everyone has biases and shortcuts that influence their thinking and decisions. These might be a tendency towards stereotyping or being overly influenced by recent events (recency bias). By being aware of these you can make decisions that are more objective, balanced and informed.

Practise mindfulness

One way to engage your slower, more reflective System 2 thinking is through mindfulness practices such as meditation or writing down your feelings. These practices can help you become more aware of your thoughts and emotions and develop a more balanced and rational perspective.

Seek out diverse perspectives

When faced with a complex problem, try to gather input from people with different backgrounds, experiences, expertise and viewpoints. This can help you to see the problem from different angles and produce more creative solutions.

Take breaks and rest

When feeling overwhelmed or tired it can be difficult to engage your slower, more reflective System 2 thinking. Taking breaks and getting enough rest can help you to recharge and be more effective in your problem-solving and decision-making.

Thought starters

- When and how often does your automatic System 1 thinking influence your decisions and actions? Can you remember occasions when your gut reactions led you astray?
- In what situations do you tend to rely more on your slower, more deliberate System 2 thinking?
- Consider how you can make the time and space to engage more thoughtful System 2 thinking.
- How aware are you of your cognitive biases?
- How can you apply the concept of fast and slow thinking to problem-solving? What more can you do to engage your slower, more reflective System 2 thinking when faced with complex problems?

What next?

Read *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman.

2
Emotional intelligence

How to manage and deploy emotions effectively

The big picture

Psychologist Daniel Goleman popularised the concept of emotional intelligence in his 1995 bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Building on the work of Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey and John Mayer, Goleman highlighted the fact that recognising, understanding and deploying emotions effectively is a precursor to personal and organisational success, and can be especially important in times of change, pressure or crisis. For example, we may all feel anger, but emotional intelligence helps us deploy that anger (or not) to achieve the best outcome.

The rise in popularity and impact of emotional intelligence reflects the embrace of psychology in the world of work as well as another, closely related phenomenon: the recognition that understanding and getting the best from people holds the key to many of the most challenging tasks confronting people at work.

For example, if you want to appeal to new and existing customers and employees, learn and adapt to changing circumstances, thrive in times of crisis, innovate, work effectively in teams, make the most effective decisions, then a positive environment with people working effectively together is indispensable. People are essentially social animals; harnessing this socialisation is the real benefit of emotional intelligence.

About the idea

In his book, Daniel Goleman developed a framework of five elements that define emotional intelligence.

Understanding one's emotions and being self-aware

Although people's moods often influence their thoughts, people only occasionally pay attention to the way they feel. This is significant because previous emotional experiences provide a context for decisions and actions. Being aware of your feelings and being able to manage them affects impulse control, personal development, confidence and self-belief. People with high emotional intelligence are typically self-aware: they are better able to avoid blind spots and can understand (and mitigate) their biases. (See Chapter 8.)

Managing emotions: self-regulation and control

Emotionally intelligent people know or learn how to control their impulses and emotions, especially the big three: anger, anxiety and sadness. This emotional resilience enables people to perform consistently in a range of situations, even when under pressure, and to adapt their behaviour as needed. Self-control means they are able to avoid impulsive, careless decisions. Characteristics of self-regulation include thoughtfulness, being comfortable with ambiguity and change, displaying integrity and being able to say no.

Motivating yourself

Emotionally intelligent people are usually motivated and understand what gives them focus, energy and enjoyment. Motivated people typically defer immediate results for longer-term success and are productive, resilient and effective at overcoming challenges. This in turn puts them in a better position to motivate others – for example, by sharing their own motivations and by providing examples of the benefits of motivation.

Displaying empathy and recognising emotions

Self-awareness is sometimes seen as the most important component of emotional intelligence, but empathy is a close second. People with empathy can sense and recognise the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious. As a result, they are successful at building relationships by actively listening and finding sincere ways to relate to others. This then provides a strong foundation for a range of other work activities, from teamworking to selling. Crucially people with a high degree of empathy avoid stereotyping and judging others too quickly, and are open, honest and effective relationship-builders.

Developing social skills and building relationships

Goleman makes the point that personal emotions are contagious and that there is an invisible transaction between individuals in every interaction, making them feel either better or worse. Goleman refers to this as a "secret economy" and believes it holds the key to building better relationships at work. Individuals who excel in this area typically focus on the success of others before themselves, making them great team players, coaches and managers. They are adept at resolving disputes, communicating, influencing and engaging people, and the relationships they build tend to endure.

In practice

Emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened by focusing on Goleman's five domains.

Develop self-awareness

To increase self-awareness, spend time understanding and decoding your emotions and how you typically feel and behave. For example, when do you get upset? What triggers you? How do you typically react?

It also helps to observe how you react to other people, and how well you understand their emotional states. Consider your

work environment and what would be helpful in that context. For example, would you benefit from more or less humility; greater confidence or more controlled confidence; or an enhanced ability to work with others?

Manage emotions

Emotional resilience can be achieved in several ways. First, name the emotions that are dominant for you, and note when you use them. Next, consider and, if possible, discuss the emotional qualities you would like to develop. Naming emotions – being clear and explicit about what they are as well as how and when they manifest for you – is vital for understanding and deploying them effectively.

Other actions that can help build emotional resilience include evaluating your strengths and areas for development; assessing how you react to stressful situations and how this could improve; understanding how effectively you take responsibility for your actions, especially when you make mistakes; and being honest about how your behaviour affects others.

Motivate yourself and others

Significantly, the ability to motivate and engage others starts with self-motivation. To enhance personal motivation, therefore, consider what gives you energy and enjoyment, and what causes you despondency, frustration or anger. What situations and people bring out the best in you, and when are you at your most vulnerable or ineffective?

It also helps to understand what would improve your ability to balance short- and long-term goals, and to stay the course in the face of challenges or setbacks. How can you increase your confidence, resilience and likelihood of success?

Levels of motivation are typically enhanced with action in several areas – for example, by working with people who are highly motivated, setting realistic but challenging targets, and taking time to acknowledge progress and success. Progress is a great motivator, along with recognition and reward.

Develop greater empathy

Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs and viewpoints of those around you. It can be enhanced simply by getting into the habit of asking yourself how you would feel in the same situation. You can also build empathy by developing the habit of asking people for their views and actively listening by giving them your full attention and exploring with them what they say and why. Another valuable habit is taking time to reflect on how someone is saying something, why they are saying it that way, and what they are not saying.

Build relationships

Goleman emphasises the value of developing strong, warm relationships at work and elsewhere. Without the connection, openness and understanding that comes from emotional intelligence you are more likely to encounter misunderstanding, fear, blame or isolation. Several actions and habits can help. These include being open and sharing a little of yourself – for example, how you feel, what you intend, how you can help.

Take the time to build rapport. Genuinely enquiring how someone feels or what is going on in their life can go a long way to building a connection and showing your positive intent. Rapport matters, because the connection that it provides gives you the foundation on which to build a relationship, to challenge, for example, or to influence. Open, constructive questioning will generate understanding and lead to relationships that are deeper and more robust.

Thought starters

- What are your dominant emotions, and what impact might they have on your decisions and actions?
- Think about who in your organisation is good at demonstrating empathy. How do they show it?

- What motivates you? What can you do to build your levels of energy and motivation?
- Are you always sufficiently sensitive to others? How could you improve your understanding of other people?
- Do you take time to build rapport and relationships? Are you sufficiently open and ready to engage with others? What more could you do to build relationships?

What next?

Read *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* by Daniel Goleman.

3

Neuro-linguistic programming

The connections between language, thought and behaviour

The big picture

Developed in the 1970s from extensive studies by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is a psychological approach that helps people understand the relationship between language, behaviour and thought; how they can be used to support effective communication and personal change, and to achieve specific goals.

One of the key principles of NLP is the idea that individuals have the power to change their own thoughts and behaviours. By understanding and consciously modifying these patterns they can improve their communication and influence, achieve personal and professional goals, and create the life they want.

As a result, NLP techniques are often used in coaching, training and development as well as therapy, and are designed to help individuals identify and change negative thoughts and behaviours that may be holding them back.

About the idea

NLP uses a variety of techniques.

- *Language patterns* to influence how others perceive and respond to a message.
- *Reframing* – changing the way people think about or interpret a situation to see it in a more positive and productive light.

- *Anchoring* or creating a physical or emotional trigger that can be used to access a desired state or behaviour.
- *Modelling* – by analysing and replicating the behaviour and language patterns of successful individuals to achieve similar results.
- *Visualisation* – using mental imagery to help people see themselves achieving their goals and stay motivated.
- *Goal setting* – identifying and setting clear, achievable goals using techniques such as visualisation and anchoring to help stay focused and motivated.
- *Time management* strategies and ways of setting priorities.

At work, NLP techniques are used to improve communication skills, overcome problems and barriers, achieve goals and improve relationships with colleagues and clients.

There are concerns that NLP lacks a robust scientific underpinning or could be used to manipulate people. Despite this, it has endured and succeeded in a wide range of settings since the 1970s, such as reframing situations to help individuals see them in a more positive and productive light, and building trust and rapport through effective communication.

In practice

NLP helps people change the way they think and act in several ways: focusing on the words and phrases being used (for example, avoiding jargon), changing the way people respond to events, and helping them learn new habits.

It typically starts with identifying the specific goal you would like to achieve. This may be an end goal such as attaining a promotion, or a performance goal – for example, improving communication skills.

Depending on your goal, choose and apply the most appropriate NLP technique.

For example, you may want to work in another department or function but lack the confidence to apply for a role. Using

visualisation techniques to imagine what the role would be like and how you would fulfil your new responsibilities might help to demystify it. You might also use anchoring techniques to overcome any anxiety related to lack of confidence. Together, these NLP techniques can help you to reframe the situation as an achievable goal, rather than seeing it as being beyond your reach.

NLP at work can also help you in other practical ways.

Improve communication skills

NLP techniques such as being more aware of language patterns and framing can help people communicate more effectively. This might involve improving active listening, using appropriate body language (and possibly mirroring the other person's body language), and using language that is clear, concise and easy to engage with.

Overcome challenges

People can identify and overcome challenges or obstacles that are holding them back by using NLP techniques like identifying negative thoughts and the triggers or situations that prompt them, as well as the behaviours that are contributing to the challenge, and then developing new strategies for dealing with them. This requires good self-awareness (see Chapter 2) to understand your emotions and behaviour in particular circumstances, and how they affect your self-confidence and behaviours.

Achieve goals

NLP can help people set and achieve goals. This is achieved by encouraging visualisation: developing a clear vision of what needs to be accomplished, what it would mean, why it matters, how it would feel to achieve the goal, and the actions needed to ensure success. Techniques such as anchoring and reframing can help maintain focus and motivation.

Improve relationships

Learning how to communicate more effectively, developing empathy and connection, and building trust and rapport can help you to improve relationships with colleagues, clients and other stakeholders.

For example, you might consider using storytelling techniques in presentations. Instead of delivering dry, factual information – essentially talking "at" people – it is much better to share a story that will both deliver the key message and be engaging for the audience.

Thought starters

- Consider whether your language, behaviour or thoughts sometimes hold you back from achieving a goal. What could you change?
- What elements of NLP could you use to overcome perceived obstacles?
- What new habits could you adopt? How could you improve your influence within your organisation?
- How could visualisation and reframing help to improve the performance of your team?

What next?

Read *Reframing: Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the Transformation of Meaning* by Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

4
Growth mindset

Finding the upside of challenge and change

The big picture

Carol Dweck, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, is known for her thinking about the importance of what she calls *growth mindset* – the belief that talent and capability can be developed through curiosity, learning and input from others. Dweck distinguishes this approach from a *fixed mindset* held by people who believe that people are innately gifted and talented (or not) and are therefore less open to opportunities to develop themselves.

Dweck's ideas gained significance and popularity with the publication in 2006 of her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Driving this has been a widespread need for new ways to think about uncertainty, unfamiliar challenges and constant change manifested since then by examples as wide ranging as the covid-19 pandemic, economic volatility and the impact of climate change.

The 21st century has delivered volatile, unfamiliar and shocking black swan events (see Chapter 11), often with challenging and largely unknowable consequences. It is against this backdrop of volatility that individuals and organisations have increasingly come to view a g*rowth mindset* as a route to progress or, at least, as an indispensable tool for survival.

About the idea

Central to the concept of a growth mindset is the idea that people's

approach to life and work – their mindset – is either fixed, with intelligence remaining static (at best); or is dynamic and growth-oriented, rooted in the belief that intelligence can be developed.

The difference between the two mindsets can be seen most clearly in five key areas:

- when facing challenges
- encountering obstacles
- deciding how much effort to apply
- handling criticism
- responding to the success of others.

Fixed mindset

People with a fixed mindset typically view the current version of themselves as being the best, the finished article. This static approach leads to a desire or need to be regarded as intelligent. As a result, people with a fixed mindset are more likely to avoid challenges, give up in the face of obstacles, see effort as pointless, reject criticism, and feel threatened by the success of others. The inevitable outcome is that they plateau, fail to progress and achieve less than their potential.

Growth mindset

People with a growth mindset believe that intelligence and skills can and should be developed. This leads to a fundamental desire to learn and improve, which results in a desire to embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, see effort as necessary to progress and improvement, learn from criticism, and find lessons and inspiration from the success of others. As a direct consequence of a growth mindset, they are better placed to make progress and achieve success in a fast-changing world.

The growth mindset resonates with people in a wide range of situations. Examples include the businesses who used the covid-19 pandemic as a way to increase innovation and flexibility, and individuals unsuccessful in job applications who react positively

by reframing the setback as an opportunity to do something else. In sport, players can adapt their style to suit new opponents and tactics. Architects learn from nature and science to overcome engineering challenges. In politics, when Winston Churchill was working to form the United Nations after the Second World War, he famously said: "Never let a good crisis go to waste." All are examples of a growth mindset.

In practice

Carol Dweck emphasises two significant points for anyone looking to develop a growth mindset. First, nobody has a 100% fixed or a 100% growth mindset at any point. People are somewhere along this continuum and your approach might change depending on the situation you face. Second, you can change your mindset if you pay attention and choose growth.

Dweck also acknowledges that mindset can be negatively shaped by those in authority, such as teachers, parents and managers, who might tell you that you are not capable of learning or developing. But whatever others might think, your mindset is your own and you can actively choose to take steps to develop and deploy a growth mindset more frequently.

Here are some things to consider.

Acknowledge your imperfections

Acknowledging and embracing your imperfections and those of others will enable you to see which of your weaknesses you might want to improve – and to understand that everyone is a work in progress.

Face your challenges and help your colleagues to face theirs

If you or somebody in your team feels daunted by a new challenge, try to reframe it positively and look for the inherent opportunity – for example, the opportunity to learn, or to succeed with a challenge in a new area. The key is to step outside your comfort zone, experiment, and discover abilities you didn't know you had.

Stop seeking approval

Trying to measure up to the expectations of others doesn't help to build a growth mindset. Instead, focus on the task, the skills you need, and your own and your team's needs. The approval of others is of limited use and can provide a complicated distraction.

Use feedback constructively and give it thoughtfully

Be open to the suggestions and views of others, recognising that people with a different perspective may be a valuable source of input and guidance.

The Stanford method of giving feedback is a useful tool and a great example of a growth mindset in action. It adopts the "I like, I wish, what if" approach.

For example:

- "I like how passionate you were during this morning's product presentation."
- "I wish you had focused more on the benefits of the product that you know so much about."
- "What if you went through the presentation to check where you could save some time, so you have more time for the Q&A at our next presentation?"

See also chapters 44 and 45 which also address giving feedback.

Value the process as well as the end result

Clearly, results count. However, acknowledging yourself or somebody for trying different strategies to make things happen, consulting others, being bold and creative can all be causes for celebration. Dweck's view is that adopting this way of working may lead to better results next time. Conversely, failing to value the process will make learning, progress (and boldness) much harder to achieve.

"Not yet" is OK

When you or one of your colleagues is struggling with a task, remind yourself that it has not been mastered "yet". If you stick with it, time and practice will lead to improvement.

Thought starters

- Reflect on whether you tend towards more of a fixed or a growth mindset. When is your mindset more fixed?
- How do you try to build on strengths and improve? How well do you list and prioritise your challenges?
- To what extent are you able to reframe effectively, and view challenges as opportunities?
- How often and how well do you step outside your comfort zone?
- How effectively do you give and receive constructive feedback?

What next?

Watch "Developing a growth mindset" by Carol Dweck on YouTube.

5

Psychological safety

Why a safe working environment is the key to better learning and performance

The big picture

When Google wanted to understand what made its best teams tick, it embarked on a large-scale internal research project – Project Aristotle – designed to answer a simple question: "What makes a team effective at Google?" After some suitably sophisticated data modelling, the results were clear: high performance was less about *who* was on the team, and more about *how* the team worked together. The researchers identified five key factors that improved those team dynamics. Number one on that list, by far the most important, was *psychological safety*. Teams where members felt they would be supported, rather than punished or humiliated, for speaking up, admitting a mistake, asking a question or offering a new idea were more likely to harness the power of diverse ideas, bring in more revenue and generally be more effective.

The concept of psychological safety was introduced in the 1990s by organisational psychologist William Kahn as part of his work on what drives employee engagement. Subsequently, Professor Amy Edmondson of Harvard Business School brought the concept to a global audience with the work that underpins her book *The Fearless Organization*. She defined psychological safety as "the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes".

The embrace of psychological safety across organisations reflects and responds to the evolving nature of work and the

move from rigid hierarchical structures. These days, organisations need to recognise the value of diverse perspectives and input from individuals at all levels. By creating an environment where everyone feels empowered to share ideas and concerns without fear of reprisal or judgement, organisations benefit from the collective intelligence of a wider base. This fosters innovation, trust and collaboration, enabling growth.

About the idea

Amy Edmondson's research suggests that psychological safety is an important predictor of team and individual performance. It is essential for enabling team members to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and innovate. When team members feel safe to speak up and share their ideas, they are more likely to engage in open and honest communication, which can lead to improved decision-making and problem-solving.

High levels of psychological safety enable people to feel secure and able to share ideas, contribute and be themselves. This contrasts with low psychological safety, where people are predominantly concerned about how they and their contributions will be viewed, and are anxious not to make a misstep.

Everyone at work, especially a leader, has a responsibility to help create cultures where psychological safety can flourish. That means being intentional in the following ways.

Encourage open and honest communication

Colleagues should feel comfortable speaking up and sharing their thoughts and ideas, even if these are different from other people's thoughts and ideas. Everyone should feel able to ask for help.

Provide opportunities to voice opinions

Dedicated time should be set aside for team members to share their thoughts and ideas. Everyone should be encouraged to contribute.

Build trust and respect

Trust and respect among team members are essential for creating a positive and supportive work environment. Team members should feel that their colleagues value their opinions and ideas and will treat them with respect, even if they disagree. There should be no sense of one team member undermining another.

Promote a culture of inclusion and belonging

Team members should feel valued and included, regardless of their background, seniority or role. Diverse perspectives and ideas are sought out, welcomed, valued – and acted upon.

Create a safe space for learning and growth

Colleagues should feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them. Team members are encouraged to take (calculated) risks, to reflect on their work and identify areas for improvement.

The opposite of psychological safety is *psychological danger*. Edmondson talks about the problem of "dangerous silences", where individuals withhold their thoughts, concerns or ideas due to fear or perceived negative consequences; people may worry about being ridiculed, judged or punished. Edmondson's work has looked at the impact of dangerous silences in high-stakes environments, such as complex medical procedures. For example, a nurse notices that a critical step has been missed, but established hierarchies and cultures prevent her from speaking up. The oversight and the nurse's silence have the potential to be life-threatening.

The same principle applies even when the stakes are lower. For example, a team member has reservations about a new project, but chooses to remain silent because she doesn't want to be seen as negative or not a team player. This does not help the team to consider those concerns, which may mean that they miss something that could cause delays or expense and have a big impact.

In practice

Psychological safety is all about creating the right conditions for learning and performance. Building safe workplaces takes practice, intention and skill. Fortunately, Edmondson has developed some useful tools and assessments that can be used to develop your practice. Here are some pointers.

Assess the current level of psychological safety

Start by openly discussing how safe people feel at work – for example, by conducting surveys or focus groups. This can help identify areas for improvement and provide a baseline for tracking progress.

Edmondson has identified seven statements that can be used to frame this process.

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk in this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and used.

Set the stage

Make clear expectations about failure, uncertainty and interdependencies. Be clear about what's at stake, why your work matters, who benefits, and why. The aim is to create shared expectations and meaning.

Invite participation

Be clear that no one has all the answers. Encourage questioning and constructive challenge. Role model active listening. Set up active and intentional structures and routines for discussion and input. Help people to feel confident that their voice is welcome.

For example, you could set aside time at the start or end of regular meetings for team members to share their thoughts and ideas. You may also actively encourage the sharing of diverse perspectives and ideas, such as inviting people from outside your team or group to share their views and experiences on specific issues.

Respond productively: express appreciation

Ask people their opinions and value whatever considered response comes your way. You don't have to agree but you should listen carefully and acknowledge the contribution.

Think about ways in which you can destigmatise failure, looking forward and offering help when things go wrong. The key is to develop cultures of continuous learning.

Thought starters

How psychologically safe do you consider your team and organisation to be?

How could you improve awareness about the importance and power of safe working environments?

Are there sufficient proactive opportunities for people to have their say?

Are you and colleagues willing to take risks and try new things?

Do team members feel comfortable making decisions, or do they worry about potential mistakes?

What next?

Read *The Fearless Organisation: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation and Growth* by Amy C. Edmondson.

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The GROW model of coaching

Making coaching practical, goal-oriented and effective

The big picture

The steady rise of coaching since the 1980s has been driven largely by a desire to deliver immediate and practical benefits, both for the individual being coached and, by extension, their employer. A coaching model developed by the British racing driver, author and pioneer of executive coaching Sir John Whitmore meets this challenge by helping coaches deliver sessions that are practical and effective. The framework helps people to focus on their goals, reality, options and way forward (GROW), as well as their will to do this.

Whereas coaching originally focused on developing top-level managers and leaders – expensive employees deemed worthy of costly one-to-one coaching – people today often see coaching simply as another form of communication and development.

As a result, many organisations have built coaching capability internally. The GROW model has helped to democratise coaching and significantly broadened access to coaching within the workplace, benefiting individuals and organisations alike.

About the idea

Coaching is a goal-oriented, non-directive and learner-led discussion, in which a coach helps an individual to achieve a goal. The coach provides practical *support* by helping the individual explore and focus on the goal, and *challenge* by encouraging the

individual to venture into areas they may have disregarded or avoided.

Whitmore's GROW model recognises the support and challenge inherent in effective coaching, and provides a framework for coaching with four stages.

Goals

The coach helps the learner focus and precisely understand their intention and priority, clarifying and understanding the specific outcome that the learner wants to achieve. This can be an *end goal*, such as achieving sales revenues of £1m within a year, or a *performance goal*, such as delivering an engaging presentation or becoming a better public speaker. This provides the practical outcome that the coaching work will support.

Reality

The second stage involves the coach exploring the reality of the learner's situation. This matters because it highlights and prioritises the most significant influences as well as the motivations and benefits of achieving the goal. This stage not only informs the process of progressing the goal, but also helps generate the desire and momentum that may be needed if the goal is particularly difficult or daunting.

Options

In this stage the coach helps the learner explore options, generate ideas, and ultimately choose the best route to achieving their goal. This stage provides the coach with the opportunity to reframe situations that at first appear to be obstacles as something more constructive.

Way forward/wrap-up/will/when

The final stage involves the coach helping the individual to discuss goals, reality and options in a practical, specific and

time-constrained action plan. It also involves the coach checking that the individual has the commitment to progressing the goal, and that this commitment to act will last well beyond the coaching sessions.

In practice

The GROW model relies on several fundamental coaching skills, notably active listening and questioning. These include:

- giving and receiving feedback, particularly forward-facing, non-judgemental guidance
- demonstrating a positive regard and intent to help the person being coached
- being objective about the goal being discussed
- evaluating what to do and when to help the person develop and learn
- establishing rapport and being assertive when needed. This enables the coach to provide challenge without it being misconstrued as hostile or judgemental.

Effective coaches accept learners for who they are. They provide encouragement and support, especially after setbacks and mistakes, and they give specific praise.

Coaches also set positive expectations, respect confidentiality and, crucially, help the person being coached to find the answer for themselves. In this way they build confidence as well as developing experience and shaping mindsets.

Remember that coaching is underpinned by questioning that encourages the learner to come up with their own solutions. Suggestions and examples are highlighted below, but it is worth remembering that the best coaches find the style, tone of voice and questions that best suit their context and the individual they are coaching.

Goals

This stage focuses on the individual's aims and priorities and sets the agenda. The outcome is a clear goal for the session.

Questions include:

- What is your goal? What are you trying to achieve?
- What are your priorities?
- How will you know when you have achieved your goal?
- Is the goal specific and measurable?
- What will success look like?

Reality

The coach then explores the individual's current position: the reality of their circumstances and concerns about the goal. The coach needs to help the learner analyse and understand the most relevant issues they face. The coach can also provide information and summarise the situation, helping to clarify the reality.

Questions include:

- Why is this goal significant? Why does it matter?
- What are the major issues you are encountering (or will encounter)?
- Are these issues major or minor? How could their effect be reduced?
- What other issues are there that may affect your goal?
- Can you control the result? What don't you have control over?
- What are the milestones or key points to achieving your goal?
- Who is involved and what effect could they have?

As a result of this discussion, the goal itself may need to be revisited and revised.

Options

At this stage the coach helps the individual to generate options, strategies and action plans for achieving their goal.

Questions include:

- What options do you have?
- Which option do you favour and why?
- If you had unlimited resources, what options would you have?
- What would be the perfect or ideal solution? What would it take to achieve (or partially achieve) this solution?

Way forward/wrap-up/will/when

The final stage of a coaching session can often be rushed, yet it is one of the most significant. The aim is to agree what needs to be done. The coach should be a sounding board, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, testing the planned approach and offering additional perspectives.

Questions include:

- What are you going to do, and when?
- Who needs to know?
- What support and resources do you need, and how will you get them?
- How will you overcome obstacles and ensure success?

Effective plans should incorporate a robust review and feedback process to check progress and provide motivation.

Thought starters

- How ready do you feel to act as a coach?
- How will you develop your skills and effectiveness as a coach?
- How might you apply the GROW model, at the right time and in the right way?

- Which part of the GROW model is the most challenging for you?
- Reflect on whether you would benefit from coaching. What would be your top two or three goals?

What next?

Read *Coaching for Performance: The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership* by John Whitmore.

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The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Understanding individuals and their impact on teams

The big picture

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) is the world's most recognised personality assessment and one of the first to become widely used. Developed by Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers in the 1940s, the MBTI is based on the theories of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung and draws on his seminal work of 1921, *Psychological Types*.

The MBTI is designed to be accessible, easy to understand and apply, and is used by individuals and organisations worldwide. The assessment is managed and debriefed by qualified practitioners, and the results are often the foundation of interviews, role allocation, team formations and feedback, and can form an important part of personal development plans.

The MBTI can also help individuals understand themselves (and others) better. It can help teams to understand how to maximise their productivity and effectiveness by increasing the quality of interactions between team members.

About the idea

The MBTI is an assessment instrument designed to identify an individual's personality type, strengths, preferences and perception of the world. It also highlights how they interact and ultimately provides insight into how they might make decisions.