

Science sheet - Mind-set: what's it all about and why it matters

Carol Dweck, a professor at Stanford University, set out to understand what creates success.

Her research suggests we all have one of two mind-sets in any given situation. Mind-sets are determined by the beliefs that individuals hold. Their mind-set will affect their entire psychology, determining how they view everything from risk and opportunity to learning and failure.

Someone with a fixed mind-set believes that people are born with unchanging talents, skills or intellect. A performance policy based on this belief is about recruiting and retaining the most talented.

A growth mind-set, on the other hand, believes that no matter how smart people are they can always get better. These people strive to improve regardless of how good their current performance is.

The mindset of the leadership creates a culture which impacts the whole organisation, its policy and practice and culture.

Mind-sets can be changed through training. People can adopt more of a growth mind-set, where they believe they can change and achieve new things when certain words and phrases are used like 'you haven't learnt to do that yet.'

Leaders and managers who adopt a growth mind-set are more likely to coach, give performance feedback and seek out stretching assignments for employees.

There is evidence that organisations with a growth mind-set are more adaptable, profitable, have more engaged employees and are generally more successful.

Next steps for you...

Check your approach to employees - do you believe they can get better or that the talent they had when recruited will pretty much determine the future?

Check policies for fixed-mind-set assumptions.

Encourage employee to take risks, learn from mistakes and continually strive to get better.

Look at what your performance management and development approaches encourage – fixed or growth mind-set

What mind-set do your most successful people hold?

More on this research

Video: Carol Dweck's TED talk, [The power of believing you can improve.](#)

Video: Carol Dweck – [The power of yet](#)

[The book Mindset](#) on Amazon

Article: [Growth mind-set and organisational performance](#)

Article: [How to change your mind-set](#)