

# YOUR MINDSET MUST PUMP THE HEART OF YOUR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

When undertaking [digital transformation](#), the focus usually lies on implementing new digital tools and business models, designing new digital processes, and maybe even on developing the digital skills required to drive such a change. This is all good and fair, and nothing is wrong with taking care of all these aspects. But transformation and real innovation require more. Just scratching the surface is no longer sufficient. Old way thinking will not unleash the powers that are needed to fuel real transformation. The foundation for a successful and sustainable change needs to go deeper. The organization needs to build a **transformational mindset** that transforms the way how people think, work, and collaborate.

## SIX ASPECTS OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL MINDSET

What is a transformational mindset? It is about a fundamental set of characteristics that are required to innovate, grow, and succeed in a complex digital world. The model my team uses with clients addressing the mindset is built on six main components—**growth mentality, explorer's mind, belief in self-efficacy, teamwork, diversity, and agile thinking**. Embracing those aspects allow people to overcome blockages, unlock their creativity, and walk down unknown paths to find solutions to the unprecedented challenges we are facing today.

- One of the leading themes is developing a **growth mentality**. People with this mindset have a deep understanding that learning never stops. They share a firm belief that everybody has the potential to develop and grow. Failures are learning opportunities and feedback is highly welcome. Freely sharing knowledge, experiences, and mistakes with others are drivers to grow individual and team competencies.
- Tightly related to a growth mentality is the **explorer's mind**. Explorers are curious about everything and on an ongoing discovery journey. They want to understand and find out how things work. They love to take risks, experiment, and try out new things. They know that only by exploring unknown territory, new experiences can be built and new solutions for previously unknown problems can be detected. They feel a sense of ownership for solving problems and advancing the organization.
- Achieving this is highly supported by a **belief in self-efficacy**. People with this attitude look at the positive side of things, they trust in their power and the power of others. They show a strong can-do attitude and know deep inside that the resources to solve a problem already exists, along with the combined knowledge and experiences of the team, new solutions can be found, and innovation can emerge.
- This leads to the importance of **teamwork**. Today's challenges are complex, and they require the combined knowledge and experience of a diverse team. Establishing teams of the right experts where expertise, experience, and personalities complement each other is one of the key success factors of innovation.
- This does not only mean **diversity** in demographics, but it also means diversity in background, education, experiences, and ways of thinking. Bringing people together from completely different corners working on a problem, looking at it from all angles, and fighting hard to find a solution, often leads to the best results.
- Finding new solutions is often best performed by applying **agile thinking**. Get to first results quickly, fail fast, learn from your mistakes, and improve your approach. Do not expect the perfect solution, but proceed in iterative and incremental ways, allowing yourself to adjust the direction when the context is changing. Be flexible when requirements are changing and focus on creating outcomes rather than following processes in detail. Speed is equally or even more important than quality, which requires a major shift in many people's minds.

Individuals who are especially used to a highly structured approach may feel insecure when the guardrails of an elaborate project plan, clear work instructions, and detailed individual metrics are missing. This also applies to the notion of “how we do things around here”, or “I prefer to do it this way” mindsets. Is it possible to create a transformation mindset as described above?

## SHIFTING TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIONAL MINDSET

Changing a mindset is a story on its own and many doubt to what extent it is even possible. Often so-called culture change programs have flashy titles and colorful artwork, but unfortunately, despite all good intentions, they only lead so far. Typically, they do not take root in the workforce as the target groups are not appropriately involved in the rollout. So, what can be done to at least achieve a certain shift in mindset?

First of all, we have to understand that culture and the underlying mindset are to a large extent a response to the **structure** of their environment. People react to how they are led and measured, how much they are trusted and empowered by superiors if they have the freedom to make their own decisions. Culture is reflected in what behavior is rewarded and what is sanctioned. If you would like your people to achieve outcomes as a team, you cannot measure performance based on individual results. Performance measures need to reflect the desired behavior. In the end, the old slogan still is valid—you get what you measure.

If you want to innovate fast, you cannot end the process by too many approval steps and checkpoint meetings. Exploration and experimenting only work if people are not already totally swamped by their daily routines. So, one of the first things to support a shift in culture and mindset is to declutter your process landscape and make it easy for people to bring forward new ideas. Make sure you provide a high level of transparency and allow people easy access to the information they need for their work. You can create structures where knowledge sharing is made easy and is perceived as valuable. As well as implement new and agile meeting formats for problem solving and ideation like bar camps, open space, or hackathons (also for non-IT challenges).

The shift is made real by the **leaders** of an organization. Leaders set the example and are role models of the change. They are the ones who provide a safe space where experimentation can take place and where new approaches are appreciated. Open communication about the desired culture and behavior, and full transparency where the organization is heading lays the basis for changing the culture but is not sufficient.

Team members need to understand the purpose of the organization, its vision and mission, and they need to realize how this reflects in day-to-day activities for them to build trust and confidence. They want to understand and internalize the role they play in the wider game and how they can contribute to the overall success. If they see that making mistakes is a learning experience by their superior, if they are encouraged to come forward with suggestions for improvement and if new approaches are appreciated by their managers, then they may start changing their thinking.

### ACCELERATE WHAT'S NEXT WITH EXPERT ADVICE AND IMPLEMENTATION

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## ABOUT ANKE HIRNING

Anke Hirning leads the worldwide Management of Change team at HPE. This team assists companies to achieve their desired business results by proactively guiding their people through digital transformations. As an expert in the areas of adult education, organizational development, and Management of Change consulting, Anke develops programs for customers in all industries to support their workforces on their transformation journey. Anke is based in Germany and holds a doctorate degree in Physics.

Of course, formal **development programs** also play a role in creating the right mindset, despite what was said at the beginning of this chapter. It starts with hiring and retaining the people with the right development potential and attitude rather than with the perfect skill match only. Identify the people who can act as role models, develop those talents, and give them visibility. Educate your workforce so that they get a taste of new ways of thinking and the opportunity to reflect and try out new things in a safe environment. And don't forget to train your leaders so that they understand their contribution to changing the mindset of an organization, coach them to become better leaders.

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