**Thrive In the Future of Work**

***How Embracing an Agile Mindset Can Benefit You and Your Organization***

**Extract from Chapter 3: The Agile Mindset**

### Traditional Versus Agile Mindset

Mindset is a broadly used, yet poorly defined, term. Some consider it a state of mind, an orientation, a way of thinking, or mental attitude. Others refer to it as a combination of our intellectual, emotional, and physical states because the mind is a container for all three (thoughts, feeling, *and* expressed action).

In our context, and for the purpose of clarity, an Agile mindset is the degree to which we are inclined toward “being” Agile. It is not just about “doing” Agile, in terms of adapting specific work practices and methods. It’s about our genuine, deep-rooted conscious and subconscious disposition to seeing the world of work and learning in an open and evolving way.

An Agile mindset is something like author Carol Dweck’s “Growth Mindset” meets the Agile Manifesto with its principles such as collaboration, iteration and experimentation. It infers a bias and orientation for purposeful action and an openness to change, learning, collaboration, iteration, diversity, and improvement.

To create a picture of the Agile mindset, we all need our own reference points to visualize what we are aiming for, as well as an understanding of the traditional mindset it contrasts with. While each of us should create our own list of attributes based on our own experiences, the following table might help.

#### Table 3.2: Contrasting Mindsets

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Traditional Mindset** | **Agile Mindset** |
| Past experience and knowledge determines future results (Fixed Mindset)  | Thrives on challenge, continuous learning and new experience (Growth Mindset) |
| Manage change, minimize disruption | Embrace and be comfortable with change and ambiguity |
| Strategy, goals and objectives  | Strategy exists to support a higher purpose, stakeholder outcomes, and future possibilities |
| Action based on clear business case and evidence | Bias for informed action, iteration and experimentation  |
| Work practices and processes focused on linear, prescribed and “waterfall” ways of working | Work practices focused on outcomes, iteration, adaptation, co-creation and ‘Agile’ ways of working |
| Emphasis on individual knowledge and expertise  | Emphasis on collective knowledge, working in small teams and networks, collaboration, and diversity |

As we know, the traditional attributes and qualities in the left column of the table are not “bad” and are frequently needed; we often require these attributes to help us focus and get things done. When faced with problems or tasks that are relatively straightforward, for example, more linear and “waterfall” ways of working are suitable to achieve a speedy and efficient outcome. However, the mindset features on the right are needed *more* when facing a complex, uncertain and continuously changing environment – which is an increasing reality in the changing world of work. It is just a simple fact that we will increasingly need to call on and develop such agile mindset attributes habits and muscle memory in order to adapt and thrive into the future.

Almost all outstanding performers who have successfully adapted to significant change, in any walk of life, employed the mental and behavior attributes on the right side of *Table 3.2*. Examples of these stories are everywhere. A young woman I interviewed in my research for this book told me she was given the task of automating her own job! When I probed as to the possible career limiting downsides of her assignment, she would have none of it. Her mindset was set on the growth opportunity that the experience offered. She saw it as a way to advance her understanding of how her field of work was changing. If her job was susceptible to automation, she wanted to be a part of it. She was determined to learn how to leverage her domain knowledge, combine it with what she was learning with new colleagues as part of the re-design and digitalization process, and to be even more relevant in her chosen field in the future. What’s more, she was grateful to her company for involving her in the process and giving her to opportunity to grow and develop. She viewed it as an opportunity to future-proof her career. She knew automation in her field was inevitable; it was up to her to “lean in,” take responsibility, and adapt to the situation. I left my discussion with this inspiring young woman convinced I had just witnessed the Agile mindset in action and had met someone who was destined to thrive in the future of work.