



# Leading with a **growth** mindset

**Toolkit 2:** Connecting with your people



# Welcome to the second in our series of **leadership toolkits**

This series is designed to delve into the challenges of leading, the styles of leadership and the business environment we find ourselves in.

In a time where change is the only thing that is certain, our work with business leaders has enabled us to gain a deep first-hand insight into what is important for business. Strategy, brand and culture, combined with the effect that the pandemic has had on leadership and behaviours to enable these to be a success, has all played a major part this year.

## Other toolkits in this series:

Leading with purpose

How we can lead with bravery

Leading with trust

Be the face of change

Thank you to all our contributors for sharing their experiences and thoughts on developing their own leadership styles.

In our first toolkit, we helped you define your purpose and showed you how to implement it in your day to day lives. If purpose underpins everything, then how do you put that into action? Being not just open to challenge but to also have an appetite to thrive on it. You have the power to transform your psychology and, as a result, your life!

We hope you will find this toolkit thought-provoking and meaningful – not just for yourself, but for the people around you too.

Right, here's a question. You can choose between these two employees:

- 1 **The Fixed Mindset:** avoids all challenges, resents other people's successes and sees generally making an effort as completely pointless.
- 2 **The Growth Mindset:** embraces all challenges as learning experiences, is inspired by other people's successes and gets a kick out of helping and nurturing those around them.

Which do you go for? No prizes for picking the latter apart from being much more likely to succeed. And because every company's culture is highly influenced by its management, especially in times of upheaval, this second toolkit is all about how to cultivate The Growth Mindset. So let's get started.

We think these areas are priorities to focus on:

- Purpose
- Values
- Leadership
- Remote working
- Wellbeing
- Mental health
- Trust

# Contents

- 05** Putting purpose into practice
- 08** Fixed and Growth Mindsets
- 17** Creating a culture of Growth Mindset

01

Putting **purpose** into practice



# Exercise 1: Time to live and breathe your purpose

While our first toolkit looked at how to identify your purpose, we now want you to be able to communicate it. Why? Because having a clear purpose makes you an inspiring and motivating leader and helps you live out your values authentically.

So, how do you ensure yours is easily understood by your team? Here are a few more questions to help you find out.

**What does your purpose mean to your employees?**

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**How does it inform your behaviour towards them?**

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**How can you live your purpose through them?**

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**How can they help you live your purpose?**

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**What are the synergies between your purpose and your employees'/organisation's purpose?**

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Difficulty used to mean  
stupidity, now it's an  
opportunity to **get smarter**

Carol Dweck

02

Fixed vs **growth mindset**



# Fail fast, learn quick

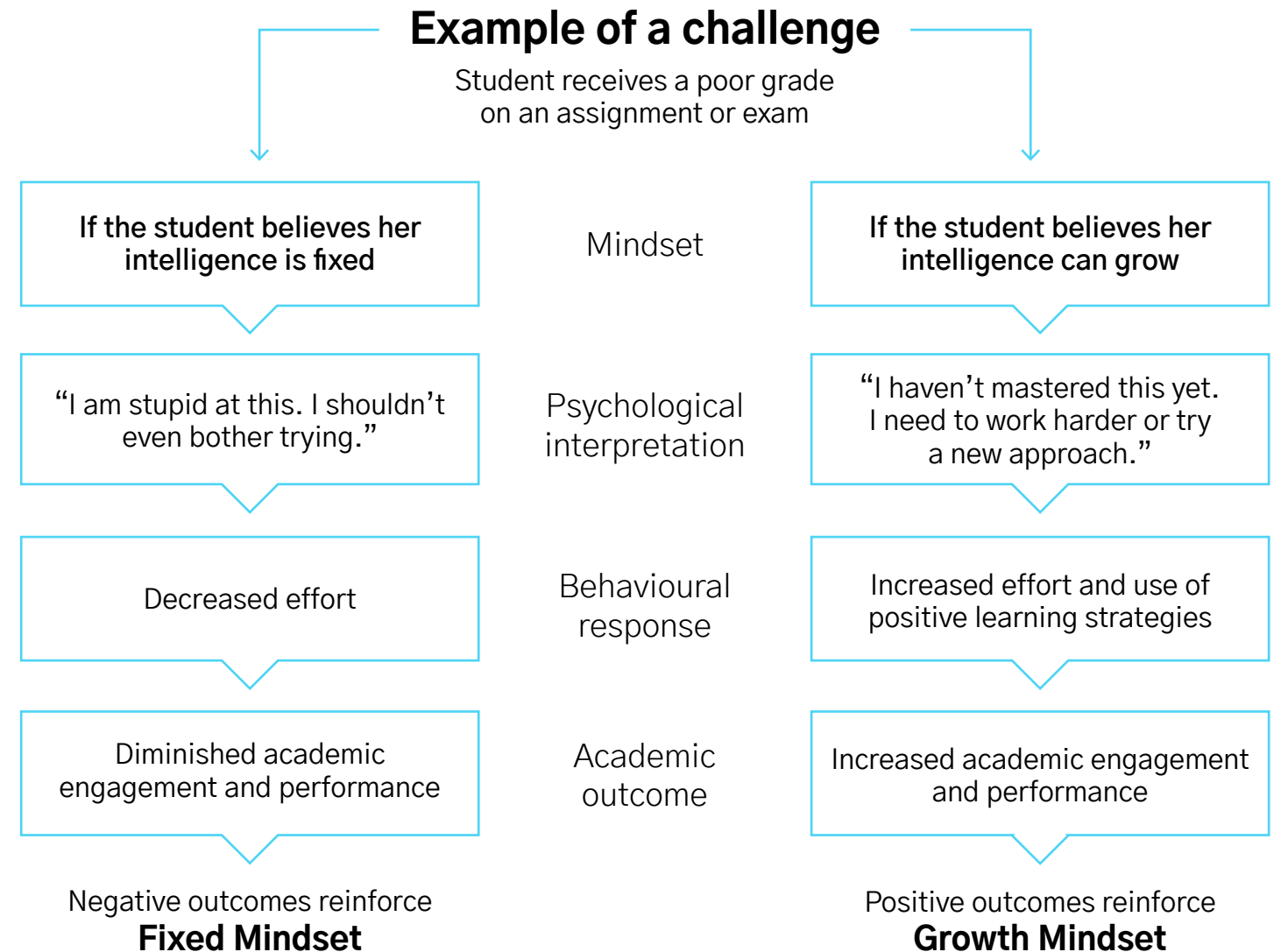
As a professor of psychology at Stanford University, Carol Dweck noticed a difference in how her students dealt with failure. For some, it seemed to be the end of the world, while others saw it as an exciting opportunity.

Dweck coined the terms ‘Fixed and Growth Mindsets’ to explain these two ways of thinking – and went on to observe the same pattern across the entire western population.

She concluded that the key factor determining which mindset a person had was how they approached the concept of talent.

Those with a Growth Mindset consider their talent to be dynamic, which allows them to see failure as an opportunity to learn. On the other hand, those with a Fixed Mindset think of their talent as finite, so failure shows them they’re lacking in that area and therefore there’s no reason for them to keep trying.

Opposite: Students’ mindsets about their ability shape their responses to challenges in school.



# What people say

We teamed up with tml Partners to interview marketing leaders on their expertise and insight into the Growth Mindset. We talked to them about their wide-ranging experience in both national and global roles.

Read our Q+A to learn how they nurture the Growth Mindset in their teams.



**Anna Nicholson**

Global VP, Marketing &  
Business Development  
EF Education First



## Who inspires you and why?

I have been very fortunate to have had some outstanding managers in the past. If I think about specific people who have led me, those that combine empathy with understanding and recognise how to motivate a team from the inside out, have truly encouraged the Growth Mindset and inspired me.

## How do you sustain the longevity of a Growth Mindset across teams?

Firstly, I focus on results. I continually encourage my team to work towards an end goal, which will have a positive impact on the business. No matter what, the task at hand can always be improved. Secondly, I ensure that everyone in the team has ownership of the project. Finally, as a leader I make sure I listen to others. I firmly believe you can learn from everybody around you.

## What do you think the hardest thing is about having a Growth Mindset in your team?

In the last year, it has been about having that balance between the sheer volume of work and completing tasks efficiently. That can take its toll on the team when you have to be incredibly focused on the execution. But above all, remaining positive is important. It's so easy to forget the 'what can I do to improve' when you are so focused on the outcome and delivery of the project.

# What people say



## Ben Rhodes

former Group  
Marketing Director  
**Royal Mail**



### How do you inspire others?

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To elicit the greatness out of people, you need to sprinkle a little bit of stardust in the department. By that I mean, pushing and challenging them to go further in thinking outside the box.

### Is there a downside to the ‘fail fast, learn quick’ technique?

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I think the best way to look at that issue is through a lens of continuous improvement. The danger of the ‘fail fast’ methodology is that complete dynamism doesn’t allow much room for growth. The arc of transformation in certain projects is huge and to achieve that requires a marathon, not a sprint. Therefore, the people who set out clear objectives, KPIs and goals are the people who grow, as opposed to managers who jump from tactic to tactic to try to achieve change.

### How important do you think it is to cultivate a Growth Mindset?

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Fostering the right environment is essential. An analogy used from a past leader of mine has always stuck with me: ‘happy bees create lots of honey’. In other words, if you set the correct temperature from the top, your bees (employees) will be able to produce a lot of honey (good work). If the functional leader is clear with their objectives, the rest of the team will inevitably follow suit.

# Typical behaviours of a...



## Fixed Mindset

- Avoid taking on challenges
- Give up easily
- Are highly self-critical
- See effort as pointless
- Disregard criticism
- Resent the success of others
- Criticise and judge others
- Argue for our limitations

Since failure directly impacts how those with Fixed Mindsets see themselves, it's no wonder their behaviours are unhelpful, compared to those with Growth Mindsets.



## Growth Mindset

- Embrace any challenge
- Never give up
- Practise self-compassion
- See effort as a journey
- Learn from all criticism
- Are inspired by the success of others
- Help and nurture others
- Believe in possibilities

# Company culture has changed forever

Dweck and her colleagues have extended her work to find that Fixed and Growth Mindsets affect organisations' cultures, levels of collaboration, innovation, ethical behaviour and how supervisors view their employees.



Recent years have made these findings more relevant than ever before. As we're all very aware, business transformation escalated, creating both challenges and opportunities. Before the pandemic, many businesses were focused on strategy, vision, empowerment and execution. Now priorities have shifted towards developing a culture that supports flexible thinking and 'value results' over 'activity results'.

Technology has been brilliant in allowing us to work remotely and given leaders an exciting new goal: to enhance culture and engagement from a distance, attracting and retaining the best talent, no matter where they are.

The organisations that will come out strongest are the ones where leaders have encouraged their teams to adapt. Creating a culture of psychological safety and taken the time to focus on the individual – including themselves – is important.

Your culture is reflected inside out and for those strong businesses, the past few years has been a prime opportunity to confront some issues in the workplace and to take the time to learn and grow from the challenges we've all experienced. This is what will help people adapt and give the ability to see things differently.

## Side note #1

Employees in a 'Growth Mindset' company are:

- 47% more likely to say their colleagues are trustworthy
- 34% more likely to feel a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the company
- 65% more likely to say that the company supports risk taking
- 49% more likely to say that the company fosters innovation

# What people say

Raj Kumar, Former Group Brand and Reputation Director at Aviva plc, gives us some insight into his take on leadership in the financial sector. Raj tells us how he leads a team of brand and communications specialists across the business. Raj starts off by proudly sharing Aviva's deeply entrenched values, which have been highlighted by the pandemic.



## Raj Kumar

Former Group Brand and Reputation Director  
Aviva



“Aviva is lucky in the sense that we can trace ourselves back through our 325-year heritage. Our legacy means that many of the values established then, still hold true today. Yes, the language may have changed, but the ethos around social purpose – the very foundation of the insurance industry – is still very strong.” Raj rightly points out that in a crisis, you uncover whether your values are real or built on sand.

“We always make sure that when it comes to embedding values, it's important to ensure that they are held up and embodied by those in leadership positions by asking them to contribute to the process. We refer to those core values in any given situation, making it part of the DNA.”

When asked about how he fosters continuous learning in a year of survival, Raj comments that development should never be reserved for the few. He gives a pertinent example of how he learnt this as a child:

“My Dad gave me a poster when I was young that stated, ‘Never let school interfere with your education.’ This has stuck with me. Learning is about new experiences, challenges and mindsets, not just training.”

Of course, failure is usually a part of every learning curve. We asked Raj about any particular personal failures he has learnt from, and he shares a key moment, indicating that failure is not about being fired but having that opportunity to learn.

“When I was at a past company, we had a huge order under a tight deadline. I was so focused on the deadline that I ended up ordering completely the wrong thing. To my surprise, my boss didn't fire me! He told me that this is an opportunity for us all to learn and grow as a team. For me, this has been hugely inspirational and taught me that not all failures have to be feared.”

For Raj, actions resonate with him far more than leaders or people. “Seeing courage, bravery and kindness keeps me grounded,” he concludes. “It gives me the belief that anything is possible by anyone and reminds us all to keep our eyes open.”

Forget about perfection; **focus on progression** and compound the improvement. They're tiny things but if you clump them together, they make a big difference.

Dave Brailsford

# British Cycling

It's hard to think of a time when the British Cycling team weren't titans of the world stage. But before David Brailsford was appointed in 2003, they weren't performing at anywhere near the same level.

So what did Brailsford do? Well, he didn't change 99% of the organisation – instead he changed only 1%. The 1% he changed though, changed everything.

He instilled a Growth Mindset in the team and by celebrating all improvements (including findings of no improvement at all), the team were motivated to experiment and keep on finding more of those crucial marginal gains.

## Marginal gains included:

- Trying a wide range of massage gels to find the best one for muscle recovery.
- Hiring a surgeon to teach the team how to wash their hands to avoid colds and maintain good health.
- Handpicking pillows and mattresses for optimal sleep and bringing them along to every hotel on the Tour de France.
- Painting the workshop floor white to see any specks of dirt/dust that could impede bike maintenance.



## Side note #2

Until early 2000, British Cycling had won only one gold medal in over 100 years.

In 2012, British Cycling won 8 Olympic golds, broke 7 World and 9 Olympic records and won the Tour de France (which they have continued to do 6/8 times since).



# 03

## Creating a **growth mindset culture**

# Recognising your own impact

Every single manager casts a ‘shadow of the leader’ that influences the rest of their organisation. This impacts the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of employees.

Fixed Mindset leaders live in a world where some people are superior and others are inferior, so they feel the need to repeatedly affirm that they’re superior. They treat the company as simply a platform for doing this. The Fixed Mindset then cascades through the organisation.

Growth Mindset leaders see skills as learnable and value perseverance, not just ready-made talent. This, too, cascades through their organisation, creating a Growth Mindset culture.



## #Insight

The key to developing innovation is in creating a better employee experience. This can positively impact growth by up to 28%.

# What people say

We interviewed Carolyn Hector, who shares her wisdom on leadership and having the right team mindset. Speaking from her current position at Age Co, Carolyn acknowledges that the Growth Mindset is all about how you embrace challenges – and the pandemic is a case in point.

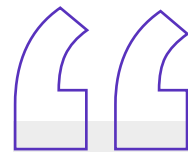


## Carolyn Hector

Director of Marketing,  
Brand & Insight  
Age UK (Age Co)



At Age Co, the trading arm of leading charity Age UK, Carolyn discusses how the pandemic presented the opportunity to scrutinise their budgets, review their purpose and reshape their efforts – in a year that meant people in the company applied themselves with entirely new objectives.



In my career I've learnt that it's healthy to try new things and have permission to fail.


Carolyn exclaims “Periods of great change have forced people to do different jobs they may not normally have done before. It’s important to be exposed to all sides of our operation... permission to try is just as important as getting it right.”

We asked Carolyn how she personally helped her team through the year of ultimate change.

Her response articulates the Growth Mindset, as she says “With the complete restructuring of the business, I had to integrate the team in a completely new way. They had been organised in a specific structure for a while, so the challenge was breaking down those silos, creating small teams which allowed people to share, and allowing people to work across channels.”

“A manager from earlier in my career was excellent at identifying individuals with different skill sets, and bringing them together, which is why I love to pull in people from all different areas.”

“If you put an analytical person in the same room as a creative person, often what you’ll find is they seem to have completely different objectives. But after a while, they begin to see how the other person thinks, and more importantly why. Both perspectives are important and valuable, and this collaborative mindset is key to cultivating growth and diversity across teams.”



## Exercise 2: Your journey

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**1**

### Acknowledge your Fixed Mindset

We all suffer from having a Fixed Mindset in some areas, sometimes. As with all transformation, the first step is awareness and recognition.

**2**

### Identify patterns in your Fixed Mindsets

Spot the triggers that cause you to default to a Fixed Mindset. Failures? Criticism? Deadlines? Challenges? Disagreements? Don't judge, just observe.

**3**

### Identify what your Fixed Mindset makes you feel, think and do

When your Fixed Mindset shows up, what feelings arrive? What self-talk? Think about the stories you tell yourself when in a Fixed Mindset. What do you do and how does that affect others?

**4**

### Be ready and grow your Fixed Mindset

Spot the situations where it might appear and remind yourself that growth requires being out of your comfort zone, taking on challenges and bouncing back from failure and hard feedback. Then, go and do the hard things that need to be done.



## Exercise 2: Your journey

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What are you approaching with a Fixed Mindset at the moment?

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My Fixed Mindset makes me... ?

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What's similar about situations where you started with a Fixed Mindset?

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The effect on others is... ?

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What action could I take right now change this to a Growth Mindset?

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# Some pointers



## Seek employee input for change

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Employees are on the front line, interacting with customers, so allowing employees to share ideas for innovating and enhancing the customer experience will reap the rewards.



## Reward effort rather than results

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Not everyone gets recognition for their hard work, as it's often the effort of many that allow one person to hit or exceed goals. Look for those that put a lot of effort in and recognise them publicly.



## Treat failure as an opportunity to learn

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With failure being a central concept that triggers Fixed Mindset thinking, making sure your employees are confident when it comes to trying new things that may fail, and to learn from them, is crucial.



## Use the phrase “not yet”

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In a culture where the Growth Mindset is flourishing, “no” is replaced with “not yet”. When employees haven't accomplished something before, it doesn't mean they can't. When people have a “not yet” mentality, they're more willing to try new things.



## Develop your team

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Offering career training and development has been shown to keep 86% of millennials from leaving their current positions.

# The Google Brave Penguin Award

The Google Brave Penguin Award is awarded each quarter to one individual who takes the action of the 'Brave Penguin'. If you're a penguin on the edge of an iceberg with all the other penguins, the first one to jump faces the greatest danger (they might get eaten) but critically, regardless of whether or not they perish, the penguin group moves forward as a whole.

Google awards the Brave Penguin Award to people who have tried to do big and impressive things which didn't work out.

By celebrating failure, they recognise that the group has moved forward as a direct result of their bravery. And that their failure is an opportunity for learning and future improvements.



Brave penguins are the first to dive into icy waters, **not knowing what dangers lie beneath.**

# Final word

## Organisational shared values

Dweck suggests that in a Growth Mindset culture, employees know and believe in these five key messages:

- 1 We don't expect that you've arrived here already formed. We care more that you're ready to learn
- 2 We expect that you'll stretch beyond your comfort zone and take reasonable risks
- 3 We value and reward process – taking on big but reasonable challenges
- 4 We reward tenacity and grit
- 5 We reward teamwork

### Interested in talking more about changing mindsets in your business?

We'd love to chat more about how we develop and embed change deep into organisations to create strong brand advocacy.



**Ruth Clarke**  
Partner  
Six



Ruth is a Partner at Six and responsible for growth and helping clients drive success through their brand and culture. As a member of both the CIM and CIPD, she combines her strategic background with a fresh look at brand, HR and employee engagement.

She has worked in the marketing industry for 20 years with a range of different clients of all shapes and sizes.



**Simon Basset**  
CEO  
TML Partners



Simon is the MD and founder of tml Partners. He has worked in this industry for over 19 years and has now engineered hundreds of Marketing Director and CMO appointments with household brands through to high-growth businesses.

His career has been vested in developing long-lasting relationships in the senior marketing community and many people he has placed have gone on to become award-winning and industry-leading CMOs.



We're supporting clients on **aligning business strategy** with purpose, transformation, brand culture and innovation

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