



Collective 'Growth Mindset'

October 25, 2023

The Touchstone team meeting built on the previous, continuing with a broader discussion on the groundbreaking concept of the 'Growth Mindset,' as described in Carol Dweck's seminal work, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Learning from Dweck's research transforms theory into best practices for radical personal, professional, and by scaling up, for organizational growth. Such conversations support professional development, upholding our standards for optimum organizational behavior.

Reinforcing the statement previously affirmed by us, that, 'change at an enterprise level is the sum of change at an individual level,' food for thought explored the reshaping of individual attitudes and 'mindsets' to tasks at the table, within our teams, and as a firm. The overarching theme was to consider orienting and advancing organizational mindset through a growth (not just a performance based) culture.

The agenda tackled scaling the 'growth mindset' and its implications and impact on organizational culture. As justification, we referred to a published case study titled, *Satya Nadella at Microsoft: Instilling a Growth Mindset* (by Ibarra, Rattan, and Johnston, June 2018), rationalizing the need to build a "learn it all" rather than a "know it all" culture. An understanding of the

neuroscience behind responding to setbacks and challenges from an organizational standpoint, labeled 'threat rigidity.' This endorses the need to develop 'growth mindset' behaviors and practices that foster optimal growth and learning (*How a Crisis Can Help You Cultivate a Growth Mindset* by Susan Ashford, HBR.Org. Dec 2020), and as demonstrated by the purposeful metamorphosis initiated by Microsoft in 2014.

We referred to a definition of organizational culture, coined by Edgar Schein, from the Sloan School, MIT, and examined his *Culture Model*, used to understand and shape an organization's culture. As Schein's model points out, 'underlying assumptions are the unconscious beliefs that people hold to be true,' and form the invisible bedrock for a culture's overlying 'values' and 'artifacts.' Therefore, shaping subconscious mindsets (towards a growth orientation) and ensuring congruence with a firm's strategies and goals forms the basis of a solid organizational culture.

To align strategies with ground to forge such mindsets, we considered four observable ways to inculcate this outlook in our daily work. The first, was to consider the continuum between 'genius' and performance strained behaviors that promote unhealthy competition through a "being better" approach versus 'growth' and learning

orientations that foster development through “getting better” attitudes (*Create a Growth Culture, Not a Performance – Obsessed One*, by Tony Schwartz, HBR. Org, March 2018). Bolstering ‘getting better,’ we gleaned from the research of Angela Duckworth, Professor of Psychology and Character Development at the University of Pennsylvania, who proposes ‘grit’ which is, “the passion and perseverance for very long-term goals” as a key component in building a ‘growth mindset.’ Next, we introduced ‘feedback loops’ as a necessary tool in appraising and nourishing professional growth. Dweck’s research points to providing praise with emphasis to the effort invested above the talent exhibited, emphasizing persistence and tenacity in the accomplishment, while valuing mistakes as learning opportunities. Third, we examined encouraging communication and collaboration in teamwork. Reference to the educational model marking the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), conceived by Psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1934), recommends scaffolded learning by partnering with a ‘more knowledgeable other.’ This creates an opportunity to enhance learning beyond an individual’s current ability, thus advancing one’s learning curve. Last, we delved into the need to develop new interests, by honing interdisciplinary skills and developing ‘T-shaped’ expertise to adapt to rapidly changing work environments marked by globalization and digitization (*Having a Growth Mindset Makes it Easier to Develop New Interests*, by O’Keefe, Dweck, and Walton, HBR.Org, 2018).

The collective mindset informs organizational culture, which depends on everyone. Acquiring requisite management skills is a way of life for executives and organizations. Critical conversations on subjects such as this emphasize our beliefs, commitment, and accountability for our roles in building an accomplished team, profound purpose at Touchstone, and the far-reaching impact we come to bear.

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