

Total Leader's Mind

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Abstract: This paper discussed the whole mind of the leaders in the shape of their mindsets that differentiate leaders from their followers or other people. Further, this paper will introduce the conceptual framework with the title, Total Leader's Mind (TLM), covering all the mindsets of a leader that are: Thinking Big, Positive, Creative, Systems Thinking, Adaptive, Emotional Agility, and Ethical that are crucial to be a great leader. These mindsets are also interconnected with each other, and their core is the ethical mindset. Based on the conceptual framework of Total Leader's Mind, psychometric tests can be developed that will be used in leadership development need analysis. Additionally, leadership trainers can utilize this framework to design and conduct leadership development programs for functional and enterprise leaders of the corporate sector all over the world.

Keywords: Leadership, Mindsets, Conceptual Framework and Total Leader's Mind (TLM)

Introduction

Leadership is all in the head (Sprenger, 2010). In other words, leadership is not a position; it is the mindset of a person (Rant, 2016). It is also worth mentioning that the most successful leaders' mindset is remarkably the same. It means leaders, irrespective of race, age, or gender, think in similar ways. (Mellon, 2011). This paper will discuss the whole mind of the leaders in the shape of their mindsets that differentiate them from their followers or other people. Further, this paper will introduce the concept of Total Leader's Mind covering all mindsets that leaders must possess to exercise the leadership process effectively.

Literature Review

Mindsets shape word and action, direction and deed; with repetition, neurons in the brains connect ever more strongly, and channels of consciousness are dug deeper (Gunn, Gullickson, 2005). Mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how a person makes sense of the world and of himself. It influences how one thinks, feels, and behaves in any given situation (Cherry, 2021).

In the case of leaders, mindsets are leaders' mental lenses that dictate what information they take in and use to make sense of and navigate the situations they encounter. Simply, mindsets drive what leaders do and why. (Gottfredson & Reina, 2020).

As per researches in social sciences, there are four distinct sets of mindsets; that have been found to affect leaders' ability to engage with others, navigate change more successfully, and perform in their leadership roles more effectively. These mindsets are:

1. Growth Mindset
A growth mindset is a belief that people, including oneself, can change their talents, abilities, and intelligence.
2. Learning Mindset
A learning mindset involves being motivated toward increasing one's competence and mastering something new.
3. Deliberative Mindset

Leaders with a deliberative mindset have a heightened receptiveness to all kinds of information as a way to ensure that they think and act as optimally as possible.

4. Promotion Mindset

Leaders with a promotion mindset are focused on winning and gains. They identify a specific purpose, goal, or destination and prioritize making progress toward it. (Gottfredson & Reina, 2020).

As per the research report Leadership Mindsets: The Thoughts and Actions of Successful Leaders by GP Strategies published in 2019, four leadership mindsets— *growth*, *inclusive*, *agile*, and *enterprise*— are critical to being a successful leader today. This research validates that these big four represent the most important mindsets a leader need.

According to the report, when a leader has a *growth mindset*, they see their setbacks, and those of the people they lead, as opportunities to be more persistent and try again. When leaders have an open mind, growth opportunities are possible. Further, an *inclusive mindset* is a collective way of thinking that operates under the premise that all stakeholders are a part of the organization. This mindset cannot be an option for leaders who aspire to create engagement and foster innovation in the organization. Another imperative mindset for leaders is adaptability for good reason. Having an *agile mindset*, particularly in the context of an ever-changing business and work environment, is crucial. Agile leaders are not just resilient— they seek change as a way to spur innovation. Last but not least, the *enterprise mindset* pushes the leader’s thinking beyond themselves and their team. A leader with an enterprise mindset puts the needs of the organization first and foremost by making decisions based on the greater good (Clark, 2019).

MIT Sloan Management Review in collaboration with Cognizant published the research report “The New Leadership Playbook for the Digital Age” in the year 2020 identified four specific mindsets that represent the hallmarks of great leadership in the digital economy. These mindsets reflect the principles, values, and norms of trailblazing leaders. According to the report, the four mindsets are as follows:

1. Producer Mindset

“The producer mindset combines a focus on customers with a focus on analytics, digital savviness, execution, and outcomes.” Producer leaders embrace analytics and emerging technologies to accelerate innovation and identify changing customer needs and preferences. One of their priorities is to improve the customer and user experience.

2. Investor Mindset

“Leaders with an investor mindset pursue a higher purpose beyond shareholder returns.” While leaders with this mindset are concerned with profitability and business outcomes, they are more concerned about sustainably achieving their goals. When making an executive decision, these leaders are likely to think about how it will impact the environment, the community, and their employees’ quality of life.

3. Connector Mindset

In an interconnected world, it only makes sense for leaders to have a connector mindset, a mindset that empowers them to build strong relationships, partnerships, and networks. Leaders need to master collaborative relationships inside and outside of their organization.

4. Explorer Mindset

As things stand today, leaders that will succeed are those that are open to change and are flexible in different situations. Explorers, engage in continuous experimentation and learn by listening to many, and varied voices. Organizations whose leaders have an explorer mindset often have cultural norms that tolerate, and indeed encourage, failure, reverse mentoring, and a deep curiosity about how the forces of digitalization are reshaping the competitive environment (Ready, Cohen, Kiron&Pring: 2020).

Leaders develop a mindset that becomes the foundation of their success. The mindset informs how they view themselves and the organization, their priorities, and their actions and behaviors. Understandably, as they advance, many leaders are reluctant to let go of their old way of thinking and adopt a new mindset that corresponds better to the demands of the new position. The most difficult transitions a leader faces today are transitioning from functional leader to enterprise leader (Baltzley, Lash, Dai, Kwok: 2018).

Postulation

The literature review of this paper discussed the various latest researches that covered the multiple mindsets of a leader for a better understanding of the readers. In addition, now this paper will talk about a new way to approach the mindsets of a leader in the following text:

1. 'Thinking Big' Mindset of a Leader

'Thinking big' means being able to dream and visualize what a person can achieve on an audacious scale: with no limits on thinking (Winn, 2012). Further, thinking big means that set the trends rather than follow them and be willing to question and upset the status quo (Mattone, 2019). The people who think big believes that they can succeed and they will (Schwartz, 2007).

Intelligent leaders dare to think big. They know it is not easy because if it was easy, everyone would do it. They also know that thinking big makes up only one dimension of being an intelligent leader. Yet, it is a fundamental dimension and something on which all the other dimensions of leadership depend (Mattone, 2019). In the context of leaders, thinking big mindset means that leaders think greater than their current operating environment. They look out into the future and define their highest potential. They look at other successful people strategically, but not as a benchmark for growth. Thinking big means that financial earnings are no longer viewed as the gauge of performance (Gulledge, 2018). Leaders with a thinking big mindset move beyond thinking realistically and toward what might seem improbable or even impossible (Klaphaak, 2021). Overwhelmingly, leaders accomplished great things when they focused on how their contributions were connected to a larger sense of purpose. Such big thinking elevated leaders' energy levels and served as a motivator to keep pushing for better results. (Dion & Schell, 2021). John Maxwell writes in his book, *How Successful People Think*, it is the great leaders who develop a 'Thinking Big' mindset, which opens their eyes, mind, and heart to new people, ideas, and possibilities (Reuter, 2018). The seventh leadership principle of "The Amazon Way: 14 Leadership Principles Behind the World's Most Disruptive Company" is:

Think Big. Thinking small is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Inspirational leaders create and communicate a bold direction that inspires results. They think differently and look around corners for new and better ways. Amazon's vision is to be earth's most customer-centric company, to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online. This very intentional BIG thinking and aspirational purpose were declared early at Amazon (Rubis, 2018). Successful leaders understand that if they think small, they will stay small, and that is the worst kind of failure. They do not let their fears dissuade them from thinking big. (Daskal, 2018). The new leadership art is to think big and fail small. (Vernooij, 2018).

2. Positive Mindset of a Leader

Remez Sasson defines 'Positive Thinking' as a mental and emotional attitude that focuses on the bright side of life and expects positive results. A more comprehensive definition is of Kendra Cherry, which states that Positive Thinking means approaching life's challenges with a positive outlook. It does not necessarily mean avoiding or ignoring the bad things; instead, it involves making the most of the potentially bad situations, trying to see the best in other people, and viewing yourself and your abilities in a positive light. From these definitions, we can conclude positive mindset is the tendency to focus on the bright side, expect positive results, and approach challenges with a positive outlook (Ackerman, 2020). In the context of leadership, a positive mindset means that leader is supposed to remain hopeful and see the best in even the most difficult situations. Leaders with a positive mindset see every tough situation as an opportunity to prove their skills and capabilities to overcome any type of adversity and believe that difficulties are a medium to a higher end (Kashyap, 2020). A positive mindset is essential for effective leaders because positive leaders can mitigate the challenges and turn some of them into opportunities (Youssef-Morgan, Luthans, 2013). Leaders who possess a positive mindset focus on the strengths of their employees, staying positive in the face of difficulty, and frequently recognizing the good work of their employees; contribute to the success of the organization as a whole. The positive mindset of a leader is an approach where the leader uses positive strategies within five major areas to influence his/her employees to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Five

dimensions that surround and influence the organization include (a) building a positive structure, (b) operating with a positive purpose, (c) establishing a positive climate, (d) developing positive relationships, and (e) engaging in positive communications. A leader's positive mindset means the entrepreneurial mindset, i.e., being entrepreneurially alert—monitor the environment searching for opportunities, recognize them and utilize them even where competitors perceive threats (Stander & Nell, 2013).

Leaders must understand and manage with positive psychological capital. American researcher Fred Luthans stressed the importance of this capital that helps companies in achieving competitive advantage. In addition to economic capital (finances and tangible assets), human capital (experience, education, skills, and knowledge), and social capital (relationships and contacts), Luthans and his colleagues have pointed out the importance of another significant resource - psychological capital. Psychological capital refers to a positive psychological state, which is characterized by a leader's confidence in his/her success, optimism, hope, and resilience (Baltezarevic&Vesna, 2016).

3. Creative Mindset of a Leader

When we combine two seemingly basic elements that haven't been brought together before, we can build something extraordinary. When we eliminate something or add something to an already great product or service, we can make it even better. This is what a creative mindset is: making minor, slight, incremental changes to preexisting things, which can take us surprisingly far. There is a powerful, quietly revolutionary impulse that underlies all acts of the Creative Mindset: a rejection of the boundaries that traditionally delineate the creative acts. The Creative Mindset opens up the possibility of innovation in all realms of our everyday lives (DeGraff&Staney, 2020). According to the 2020 LinkedIn Learning Report and the 2010 IBM CEO Study, creativity is the most important of all leadership skills. This may be because these studies were conducted at the onset of big recessions (DeGraff, 2020). Leaders who have a creative mindset are the ones who take on the challenges, forefront the changes, and usher in the new era with visions for others to follow. In today's modern age, some of the leaders who have creative mindsets are known worldwide including, Elon Musk, Jack Ma, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, James Dyson, and many more (Upadhyay, 2020). Leaders with a creative mindset can deliberately engage others with their imagination to define and guide a group towards a novel goal—a direction that is new for the group. Because of bringing about this creative change, creative leaders have a profoundly positive influence on their context (workplace, community, school, family, etc.) and the individuals in that situation. The creative mindset of a leader encourages creative thoughts and engages in some specific behaviors that support creativity and value creativity. Taking risks and trying out new approaches by creative leaders sends a clear message to others that not only is novelty tolerated, but it is also encouraged (Zacko-Smith, Puccio&Mance, 2010). In today's fast-growing market, creativity is undoubtedly one of the most sought-after leadership mindsets. Creativity is at the core of business innovation, which itself is the engine of growth. Creativity leads to progress, relevance, and therefore: prosperity. This one is a no-brainer that when a leader approaches a particular goal from a creative point of view, he or she reaches the aforementioned goal easily. Further, a creative mindset of leaders allows them to grow by opening up new opportunities for problem-solving. Creativity and leadership go hand-in-hand. Think of people like Steve Jobs, Thomas Edison, or Henry Ford. All of these famous business leaders have had one thing in common, and that would be a boundless creative streak (Michael, 2021). There is no doubt having a creative mindset in leadership and building a creative workforce is key to turning modern business challenges into opportunities and gaining a competitive edge. Creative business leaders outperform their peers on several key financial metrics, demonstrating above-average performance for organic revenue growth, total return to shareholders, and net enterprise value (Jones, 2019).

4. Systems Thinking Mindset of a Leader

Barry Richmond coined the term Systems Thinking in 1987 (Dolfing, 2017). Systems thinking is a way of understanding reality that emphasizes the relationships among a system's parts rather than the parts themselves (Serman, 2000). Systems Thinking consists of elements (characteristics), interconnections (the way these characteristics relate to and/or feedback into each other), and a function or purpose. Notably, the least obvious part of the system, its function or purpose, is often the most crucial determinant of the systems' behavior. Though not all systems have an obvious goal or objective, systems thinking does (Arnold, Wade, 2015). The discipline of systems thinking is useful for seeing and understanding wholes, interrelations, and

change patterns. Leaders should practice systems thinking and encourage their followers to practice it as well (Akay,2015).

There is a quote by Stephen Covey (American educator, author, businessman, and keynote speaker) that management works in the system, leadership works on the system (Duncan, 2014). The systems approach is necessary for leaders to be able to understand the dynamic complexity of social systems. Further, Systems thinking mindset impacts leadership performance in the following areas:

- *Application of innovations:* Holistic approach helps to integrate new ideas into a working system.
- *Strategic planning:* Treatment of an organization as a system gives a possibility to decide on priorities and to concentrate attention on strategic aims and resources of utmost importance.
- *Creation and realization of organizational vision:* Understanding of systems dynamics (growth, delay, and feedback principles) helps to set objectives clearly, and to plan activities integrated into a system. The conception of these principles creates an additional value in leadership: business systems are seen as interdependent; reasons are searched both inside and outside the organization.
- *Growth and management of an organization:* As the organization is a complicated 'open system', it is necessary to consider the environmental influence on the system and the system influence the environment while planning changes, making decisions, and solving problems inside the organization.
- *Project and change management:* Treatment of an organization as a system helps to understand systematic forces, which contribute to organizational changes. Understanding mental models and feedback helps to identify sources of opposition to changes, to find the leverage point for change, and to see changes as a continuous process (Palaima&Skarauskiene, 2010).

5. Adaptive Mindset of a Leader

Given the complexity and speed at which things change in our lives these days, an adaptive mindset is essential to building a resilient, sustainable, and thriving business. An adaptive mindset is a mental attitude of assessing the facts and circumstances of the current situation and/or environment and making the appropriate adjustments to thrive in any scenario (McGill, 2016). Adaptive mindset enables leaders to use different thinking strategies and allows them to shift and experiment as things change. Leaders having an adaptive mindset understand that while an end goal and a vision are necessary, the path that takes them there needs to be flexible. The practice of adaptive leadership means having multiple plans for reaching said goals. Rather than getting stuck on one solution to solve a problem, adaptable leaders have a contingency plan in place for when plan A doesn't work. Planning allows appropriate responses to the demands of the moment. When the mindset of leaders is adaptive, they have more curiosity. They ask questions, listen and observe. They ask others for their opinions, perspectives, and approaches. The adaptive mindset of leaders helps them to create a safe environment for risk-taking with new models and fast failures to accelerate learning. Adaptability occurs through experimentation (Keating, 2021). Leaders with adaptive mindsets will empathize and walk in another's shoes to understand their perspective. They expect change, and the teams they build are dynamic and embrace change, and they channel any uncertainty into positive outcomes through collaboration and communication (Ferris, 2019).

An adaptive mindset does not come naturally to everyone. However, with practice and focus, it can be developed through the course of changing landscapes (Keating, 2021).

In a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environment, leaders with adaptive mindsets are required more now than ever, especially leaders who can pivot and respond to an ever-changing landscape in which they are operating including new circumstances and updating their knowledge and skills to meet these new demands. Adaptive leadership emphasizes learning and to be in a position to ask better questions, listen more astutely, maintain a flexible mindset, build stronger relationships, and further develop a sense of authenticity and humility (Luna, 2020).

6. Emotional Agility Mindset of a Leader

The term 'emotional agility' was first coined by Susan David and Christina Congleton in a Harvard Business Review article published in 2013 (Orlov, 2017). It is defined as approaching one's inner experiences mindfully

and productively (Goyette, 2021). Emotional Agility is a process that allows us to be in the moment, changing or maintaining our behaviors to live in ways that align with our intentions and values (Calheiros, 2017).

There are three steps to developing an emotional agility mindset;

- Recognize patterns of thoughts and feelings in which you are stuck before you initiate to change them.
- Accept your thoughts and feelings, just as temporary because you are not your thoughts and emotions, you just have the thoughts and emotions.
- Unhook yourself from your thoughts and emotions, which do not serve you, expand your choices of thoughts and feelings as per the situation by keeping in view the core values that drive you forward. (Gita, 2021)

The Emotional Agility Mindset of leaders allows them to set the tone for what is appropriate in terms of emotional expression in their organizations. Such emotionally agile leaders express a broad range of emotions in appropriate ways and in doing so, allow their workers to do the same. Leaders with an Emotional agile mindset provides their workers' appropriate outlets for emotional expression and acknowledge the importance of venting out hard feelings that will otherwise translate into gossiping backstabbing, and complaining. Emotionally agile leaders ultimately realize that their success depends on their ability to choose the healthy and appropriate emotional response to a given situation (Calheiros, 2017).

Emotional Agility will allow leaders to manage, interact and navigate their experiences to achieve the desired results. Emotions are what make people human and as such leaders are forever dealing with subjective feelings that determine how they take action and the motivation behind those actions. Effective leaders do not buy into or try to suppress their inner experiences. Instead, they approach them in a mindful, values-driven, and productive way—developing emotional agility (Kiambati, 2020).

7. Ethical Mindset of a Leader

A person with an ethical mind asks himself, “What kind of a person, worker, and citizen do I want to be? If all workers in my profession adopted the mindset I have, or if everyone did what I do, what would the world be like?” Further, once a person develops an ethical mindset, he/she become an impartial observer of the team, the organization, the citizenry, the world. (Fryer, 2007). The ethical mind extracts crucial features of one’s role at work and one’s role as a citizen and acting consistently with those conceptualizations; striving toward good work and good citizenship (Gardner, 2006). Leaders who have an ethical mindset live and dies for integrity. Doing the right thing, even when it hurts, is the ethical leader's mantra. Ethical leaders demonstrate good values through their words and actions. Ethical leaders will not overlook wrongdoing, even in cases when doing so may benefit their businesses. Showing integrity and doing what is right are at the core of being an ethical leader. Ethical leaders set an example for the rest of the company (Kuligowski, 2020).

One leader mindset that does not guide leaders to ethical choices is the “insider mindset.” When we think of the word “insider,” we may think of “insider trading” (having an unfair advantage) or “insider information” (possessing knowledge that provides a special advantage). According to Merriam Webster, the word “insider” means “special privilege or status” and has these synonyms: connection, contact, big shot, bigwig, somebody, VIP. At the core of ethics is thinking beyond ourselves. When we use an insider mindset, though, we place ourselves in the “special seat”, and from that point of view, it is easier to discount the needs and concerns of others. Applying an insider mindset, it is tempting to ignore the laws and protections that keep us from taking advantage of others. Using an “insider mindset” a leader might think it perfectly fine to share “insider” information with a selected few in the inner circle for their benefit. The leader might refuse to share the information publicly even when confronted, since sharing it would take the leader out of the “special seat”, and spread the VIP advantage around to everyone else. Good leaders know that the power of leadership is in its ability to bring out the best in others, which in turn brings out the best in the leader. The leader’s power is then not reliant on any special inside information or advantage since it resides in the potential of every member of the team. An insider mindset has a critical flaw when it comes to ethics. It conveniently “overlooks” the leadership responsibility to protect and serve others before ourselves. It “looks away” from responsibilities that are at the core of good leadership. For these reasons, there is no place for an “insider mindset” in ethical leadership (Thornton, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the above seven (7) mindsets of a leader discussed in postulation, this paper is proposing a conceptual framework with the title **Total Leader's Mind (TLM)**, covering all the mindsets of a leader, i.e. Thinking Big, Positive, Creative, Systems Thinking, Adaptive, Emotional Agility and Ethical that are indispensable to become a great leader. These mindsets are also interconnected with each other, and their core is the ethical mindset.

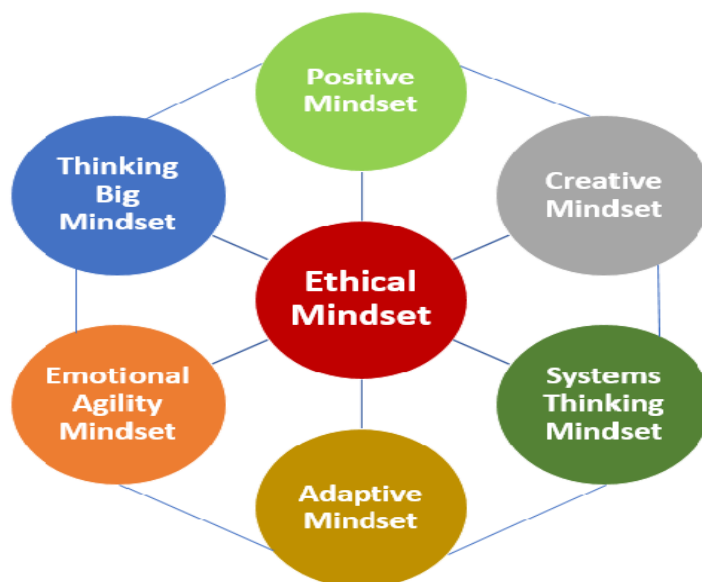


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Total Leader's Mind (TLM)

In this conceptual framework, Thinking Big, Positive, Creative, Systems Thinking, Adaptive, and the Emotional Agility mindsets, all are strategic in nature. Thinking big mindset of a leader helps in developing big missions, visions, and goals. A Positive Mindset develops a hope to achieve the mission, vision, and goals in challenging times. A Creative Mindset allows thinking out of the box to achieve the goals and support the leaders during problem-solving in tough times. Systems Thinking Mindset enables leaders to do strategic planning systematically, and further able to develop integrated systems that are linked to the strategy of the organization. An Adaptive Mindset helps in achieving end goals while remaining flexible in thinking during the volatile and changing environment. Leaders can get benefit from their Emotional Agility Mindset in the shape of reaching their goals in no time. It keeps them mindful of what emotions are good and what emotions are bad for them while achieving the targets. The Ethical Mindset of a leader channelizes all strategic mindsets in the direction of ethics. Leaders ethically think big so that their mission, vision, and goals cover the success of the masses. An Ethical Mindset helps the leader to remain positive in bad situations by choosing ethical options to face the challenges. Ethical creativity will not harm humans but will help humankind in the shape of useful innovation for the people. Ethical systems thinking will develop those systems in organizations, which will promote merit, standardization, and simplicity for people who will work in that system. An ethical mindset will bound the leader to adopt only those changes, which are ethically acceptable in the organization or society and will not harm the integrity of the leader. Ethically utilizing emotional agility helps the leaders to make ethical choices of the emotions to achieve the targets without emotionally manipulating other people in different social and business situations.

Impact

The conceptual framework of Total Leader's Mindset will impact leadership development need analysis practices and leadership development programs all over the world. Based on this framework, a leadership psychometric test can be developed, which can be used during leadership development need analysis. Further, it will help the leadership trainers design and conduct the leadership development programs in light of seven (7) leadership mindsets.

Conclusion

Many organizations in the world do not focus on developing the mindsets of the leaders because they do not understand what they are or the foundational role they play in how leaders process their overall minds and behave accordingly. Moreover, most leaders do not know what mindsets to focus on, but those who focus on their mindsets are on the cutting-edge of leadership development (Gottfredson, 2020).

If organizations want the return on investment of leadership development programs, it is essential to work on the mindset development of leaders. The conceptual framework of Total Leader's Mind will contribute positively to this purpose.

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