

Always Improve

Research Summary

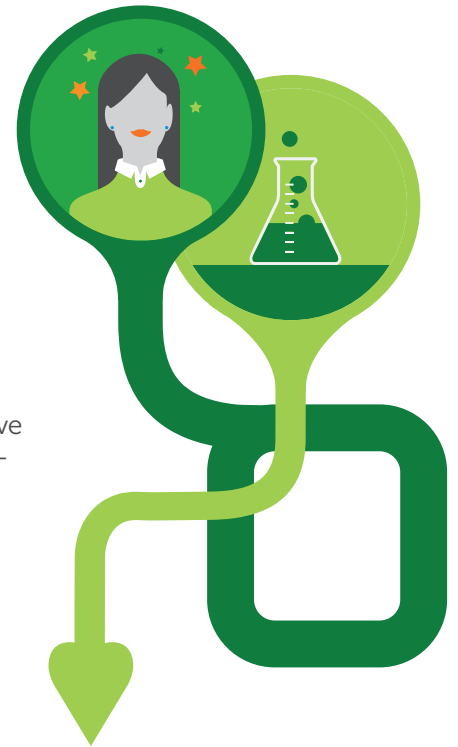
The behavior associated with strong growth mindsets is marked by three distinct features. Research on the mindset-behavior link suggests that deliberately engaging in these behaviors is an effective way to strengthen growth mindset itself.

Experiment

To experiment means to try out a new procedure, idea, or activity.

Studies show that employees with growth mindsets are more likely to experiment with new and different approaches to solving problems, resulting in more innovative and effective solutions. While experimenting has long been valued within the high-tech sector, it is a useful strategy for tackling complex challenges in any industry.

For example, in one study of salespeople, researchers found that those with stronger growth mindsets were more likely to experiment with creative ways to acquire new clients—including throwing parties, organizing tours, and delivering seminars on topics of interest to potential clients. This experimentation led to significantly higher sales and more positive supervisor performance reviews.



Value progress

People with **fixed mindsets** tend to focus only on a “snapshot” of their performance, at a single point in time. This makes whatever is happening in that moment—whether it is a success or a setback—loom larger in their minds than it deserves to, **significantly increasing their distress when things go wrong**. Often unconsciously, they are also more likely to compare themselves to others in an attempt to gauge their competence and worth. Studies show that with a **growth mindset**, people are more likely to **value progress over time**: where they were before, where they are now, and where they are headed.

The impact of this difference in focus was shown in a study of analytical problem-solving. Students who were evaluated across time, comparing their performance on early problems to their performance on later ones, adopted more of a growth mindset. They also scored significantly higher than students who were given a single “snapshot” score.



Always Improve

Research Summary continued

Learn from others

Seeking knowledge and guidance from experts is an essential part of professional development. But too often, people with fixed mindsets shy away from asking others for information, for fear that they will look inept or inexperienced. Studies show that they frequently avoid learning opportunities, even when they would clearly benefit from them, because they don't want to seem like they "need help."



Take, for example, a study of college students at the University of Hong Kong, where all classes are conducted entirely in English, despite the fact that some of the students are not yet proficient in English when they arrive on campus. Researchers asked those students whose English could use some improvement if they would be interested in enrolling in a remedial English proficiency course. **Among those with fixed mindsets, only 13% expressed a willingness to take the course.** Most of them indicated that they did not think a remedial course could actually help them improve. And just as important, they believed that taking a remedial course would publicly expose their lack of ability. **Only the students who scored high on an assessment of growth mindset showed any interest in the course — 73% of these students were willing to enroll.**

Butler, R. (2006) Are mastery and ability goals both adaptive? Evaluation, initial goal construction and the quality of task engagement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(3), 595-611.

Gong, Y., Huang, J. C., & Farh, J. L. (2009). Employee learning orientation, transformational leadership, and employee creativity: The mediating role of employee creative self-efficacy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(4), 765-778.

Hong, Y. Y., Chiu, C. Y., Dweck, C. S., Lin, D. M. S., & Wan, W. (1999). Implicit theories, attributions, and coping: A meaning system approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(3), 588.