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## 4 MINDSETS EVERY LEADER SHOULD BRING TO WORK

### 5 MIN READ

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At [Decoded](https://decoded.com/) (<https://decoded.com/>), our global team of educators and technologists work with Fortune 100 and FTSE 1,000 leadership to demystify the complex world of technology and upskill their talented teams for the future of work. Although we began with a belief that everyone should learn to code, because code was and still is a critical lens through which to see the world, we've learned that code alone is not enough.

From our experience preparing workforces for the 21st-century economy at companies around the world, such as IBM, General Electric, and Unilever, we've distilled four key mindsets that leaders will need as they shepherd their companies into the future.

# 1. The creative technologist

More and more companies are hiring creative technologists. It's a great job title, but it leaves a lot to the imagination. Creative technologists are developers, artists, or even tinkerers who are able to draw upon their understanding of the digital world in order to think creatively about new solutions to problems. The essence of a creative technologist is being able to see connections between technologies as part of a larger digital ecosystem. That ecosystem involves a range of technologies, each of which is complex and magical in its own right: code, data, APIs, the Internet of Things, cybersecurity, chatbots, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and much more.

For leaders, adopting the mindset of a creative technologist is critical, because change does not come about from isolated technologies. No single technology will be the silver bullet to transform a company into the digital version of itself. Companies will only be able to innovate in the digital world by envisioning the whole ecosystem and recognizing how to leverage its component parts.

# 2. The data scientist

You may have data science teams with doctorates in computer science and physics, but you don't need a top degree to think like a data scientist. Taking on a data scientist mindset means understanding not just the value of data — what some people have been calling the “new oil” for several years now — but also appreciating how data can be manipulated in order to gain insight. This mindset is all about how to ask the right questions of data — and how to leverage ever-advancing analytical techniques like machine learning, deep learning, and other advanced analytics to drive prediction and automation.

The data scientist mindset isn't about being a data science practitioner; it's all about how you work with data scientists to make the most of the data you have and make the best business decisions you can.

# 3. The innovator

You've probably heard the innovation buzzwords floating around: lean, agile, design thinking, scrum, sprint, user experience, customer-centricity, and many more. The innovator mindset isn't about adopting one or another of these methodologies. Instead, it's about new ways of working that enable your company to adapt quickly to the ever-changing marketplace.

The key to this mindset is to adopt a tolerance and preference for an iterative approach to problem-identification and problem-solving. It means championing small experiments, small wins, and small failures that lead to learnings over costly programs, big wins, and epic failures that generate unnecessary losses of time, money, and effort. That shift can lead to a radical change in the way projects are scoped and budgeted, how internal experts are utilized and evaluated, and ultimately how knowledge is shared throughout an organization.

For leaders, the innovator mindset starts by recognizing that very few of us are Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, or Henry Ford. It means recognizing that everyone in an organization has ideas. As a leader, your direction is then to help identify, support, resource, and champion the ideas that ultimately prove themselves best suited for solving customer pain points.

## 4. The hacker

The hacker mindset is about thinking like your adversary in order to better protect your business. This adversary isn't the competition you already know about — it's the cybercriminal you don't know. The hacker mindset is about understanding that no matter how good you think your cybersecurity is, it's not good enough to repel the most determined hacker. This mindset knows that people and culture are ultimately the weakest points in the battle to secure financial assets, trade secrets, and valuable information.

For leaders, the hacker mindset knows that even though people are the weakest link, investing in them and supporting them wins out over negative reinforcement in the name of information security. Time and again, the carrot wins out over the stick.

Hacking is also a creative way of looking at the world. This type of hacking can be brought into corporate culture via hackathons aimed at new product development, process improvement, or team reorganization. It's a mindset that is about understanding the ways in which systems work in order to make those systems do other things. And sometimes that other thing is what leads a company into its next chapter.

## Putting the mindsets to work

No one knows exactly what the future of work or business will be. Change is accelerating across too many fields. By some accounts, the future of work will be characterized by intelligent algorithms and automated robots that take over our boring tasks, while we're left with more time to be creative and ask the hard questions. At Decoded, we believe the core characteristic that will distinguish successful individuals and teams in this future will not be the knowledge they already have, but their ability to learn new information, to synthesize it, and to guide and train algorithms to better do what they do. [Leaders \(https://consciouscompanymedia.com/category/personal-development/leadership/\)](https://consciouscompanymedia.com/category/personal-development/leadership/) will be those who can learn constantly, voraciously, and efficiently.

So, how do these four mindsets come together to prepare leaders for the future of work? The creative technologist will understand how the technology ecosystem is interlinked; the data scientist will see flows of data and information as opportunities to enhance decision-making; the innovator will never be satisfied that a problem is solved and will always be looking to improve; and the hacker will be on guard to ensure the security of the business and its employees. It's a lot to ask of any leader, but today's future insists upon all of these mindsets reinforcing each other.

## Jeffrey Lancaster

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