ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND HUMAN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Lesson 12
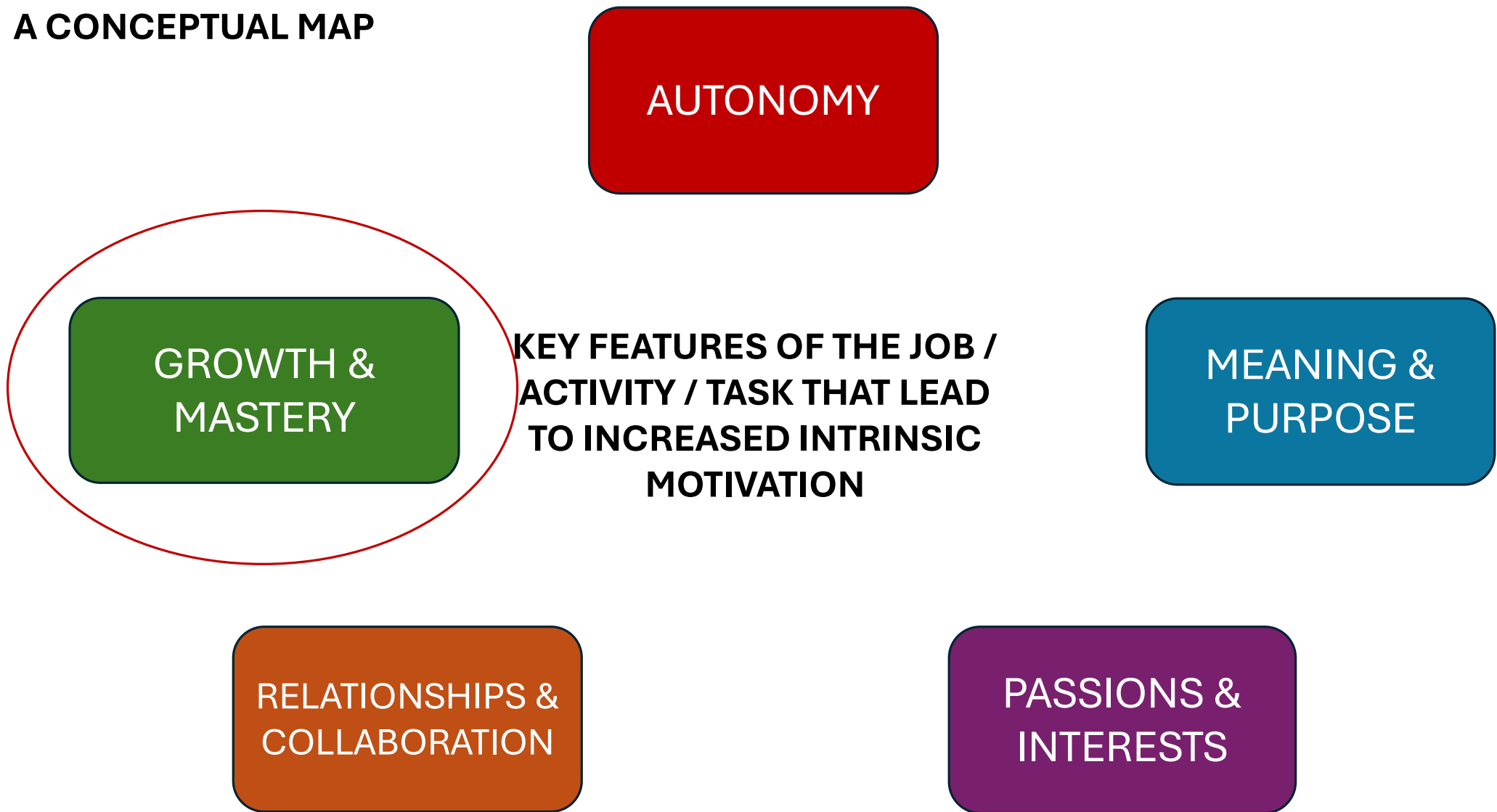
GROWTH & MASTERY

A CONCEPTUAL MAP

AUTONOMY

GROWTH & MASTERY

KEY FEATURES OF THE JOB / ACTIVITY / TASK THAT LEAD TO INCREASED INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

MEANING & PURPOSE

RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATION

PASSIONS & INTERESTS

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GROWTH & MASTERY

WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR INTRINSIC MOTIVATION?
For most people, personal and professional development (growth) and full mobilization of their abilities (mastery) represents a reward in itself.

Intrinsically motivating jobs should provide, _at least to some extent_, with opportunities to **learn**, to receive **feedback**, to be exposed to **new experiences** and challenges, to receive **training**, to **fully utilize their abilities**, to feel **competent** and to pursue **learning goals**

IS FOSTERING GROWTH and MASTERY ALWAYS POSSIBLE?

In organizations, almost all jobs and roles include at least some tasks that are repetitive, simple, devoided of any learning opportunities, or where individuals cannot fully express their abilities.

Thus, the key point is **the extent to which a certain job or task provides at least some opportunities for growth and mastery**.

However, it is also crucial the **individuals' attitude towards activites**. For example, different individuals may interpret the same challenging activity in very different ways, in relation to their implication for growth and mastery

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WHEN DOES A JOB PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND MASTERY?

- There are «objective» or «contextual» elements (related to job design and other contextual factors)
  - VARIETY of TASKS
  - VARIABILITY of TASKS
  - COMPLEXITY of TASKS
  - PRESENCE of LEARNING GOALS
  - FEEDBACK MECHANISMS
  - STYLE of LEADERSHIP
  - ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
  - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
  - Etc

- But there are also subjective / personal aspects that are quite relevant

- Their relevance is often underestimated
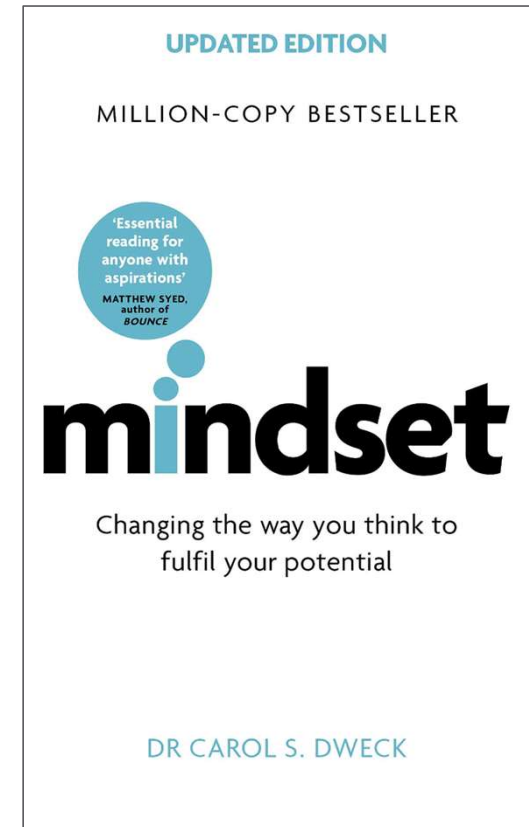
A COUPLE OF BACKGROUND ELEMENTS

- **Do you know what a placebo is?**
- The belief that a certain medicine will be effective will generate the expected effect, even if the «medicine» is **not** a medicine but an **inert substance**
- In medicine, this effect is very well studied and **extremely consequential**
- BELIEF generates a PHSYOLOGICAL outcome that is aligned with such belief
  - This is also true with the NOCEBO effect, which is the opposite of a PLACEBO

- Interestingly, this is NOT just about medicine and health. There are MANY realms in which this phenomenon is very relevant (sports, nutrition, education, work and more)

- **Do you know what neuroplasticity is?**
- It's the ability of our brain to change itself, **physiologically**, depending on the experiences (including thought) that we have
- It declines with age, but it's always present

What happens if we use the expectancy effect (placebo) and neuroplasticity in a goal-oriented, intentional way, in order to improve certain elements of our behavior?

CAROLD DWECK AND MINDSETS

- PUBLISHED IN 2006

- As the summary of decades of research on the topic

- Then extended and updated later

- Very influential and, yet, still not widely enough considered as a crucial tool for effective leadership and human resource management, as it should be

- However, we will see example of extremely important companies that benefitted enormously by incorporating Carol Dweck's principle in their HR management

UPDATED EDITION

MILLION-COPY BESTSELLER

'Essential reading for anyone with aspirations'
MATTHEW SYED, author of BOUNCE

mindset

Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential

DR CAROL S. DWECK

CAROL DWECK: FIXED vs GROWTH MINDSET

- WHAT IS A "FIXED MINDSET" (FM)?
- It's the belief that your abilities are unchangeable. You were born with certain traits and a certain level of abilities (such as intelligence or any other)
  - The belief that tThere is no way to significantly change that "given stock" of personal resources
- BEHAVIORAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES:
- Challenges and setbacks are seen as threats, potentially revealing inherent weaknesses.
- Effort is often viewed negatively, interpreted as a sign of lacking natural talent.
- Criticism and feedback are typically avoided or resisted because they might expose limitations or inadequacies
  - Feedback as a MEASURE of one's natural abilities
- you feel you must constantly prove yourself
  - you want to prove you have a lot of abilities, although you secretly worry you don't have enough
  - you feel you're being judged or rated in every situation
- A person's belief he/she is highly capable can evolve into a sense of entitlement or specialness

CAROL DWECK: FIXED vs GROWTH MINDSET

- WHAT IS A "GROWTH MINDSET" (GM)?
- You believe the abilities you're born with are a starting point you can build on with hard work, persistence, and the right learning strategies
- BEHAVIORAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES:
- You have a passion for learning, you welcome opportunities to improve yourself
- Challenges and setbacks are viewed positively—as opportunities for growth
- Effort is valued, seen as essential for achieving mastery
- Feedback and criticism are sought actively, accepted openly, and used constructively
  - people with a GM understand that they need accurate information about how they are doing in order to improve (FM distort negative feedback, either blowing it out of proportion or making excuses and minimizing it)
- People with a GM are more realistic about their strengths and weaknesses than those with a FM.

Other implications: MINDSETS and SUCCESS

- Over time, people with fixed mindsets and growth mindsets come to **view the nature of success and achievement very differently**
  - Fixed-minded (FM) people care about perfection. To feel successful, they not only have to "get it" right away, they have to be perfect or extremely good at it
  - Growth-minded (GM) people feel succesful when they try hard and make progress or are able to do something they couldn't do before
  - FM people expect to immediately perform at high levels, without the need to learn. They don't allow themselves time to develop. As a result, they get frustrated by failure and give up early
  - GM people expect to need to put in lots of time and effort to become successful, and are thus more resistant to failure
  - FM people want and seek success alidation by others
    - validation is very different from feedback!!
  - GM people aren't afraid to acknowledge their need to become successful through questioning and receiving critical feedback

A QUICK COMPARISON

KEY ASPECTS	GROWTH MINDSET	FIXED MINDSET
VIEW OF ABILITIES	DYNAMIC, CAN BE DEVELOPED	STATIC, CANNOT BE IMPROVED
APPROACH TO CHALLENGES	EMBRACE AND PERSIST DESPITE DIFFICULTIES	AVOID OR GIVE UP QUICKLY
ATTITUDE TOWARD EFFORT	NECESSARY, LEADS TO MASTERY	INDICATES LACK OF TALENT
REACTION TO CRITICISM	LEARN FROM CRITICISM, SEEK FEEDBACK	REJECT, IGNORE OR FEEL THREATENED
REACTION TO SETBACKS	LEARN FROM MISTAKES, RESILIENCE	DISCOURAGEMENT, EASILY LOSE CONFIDENCE
PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS	DEFINED BY IMPROVEMENT, GROWTH, LEARNING	DEFINED BY OUTCOME, COMPARISON TO OTHERS

MINDSET AS A VARIABLE, CONTEXT-DEPENDENT CONTINUUM

- Mindset is **not permanent**, and it is **not a dicothomy**
  - It can be changed! (more on this later)

MINDSET

GROWTH   FIXED

- We usually have a personal **general «tendency»** (a «chronic orientation» towards FM or GM)
  - Because of **environmental factors**
    - parenting and educational practices, socialization, culture etc
  - Also, some **personality traits** seem to be associated with specific mindsets
    - OPENNESS and CONSCIENTIOUSNESS: associated with GM
    - NEUROTICISM: associated with FM

- It is also **context-dependent**
  - e.g., the same person may have different mindset orientations on her intelligence, creativity, social skills, negotiation abilities, athletic abilities etc

CONTEXT-DEPENDENCY of MINDSETS

- WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE CONTEXT-DEPENDENCY OF MINDSETS?

- Self-Efficacy and Perceived Competence:
  – People with **higher self-efficacy** in a specific area tends to cultivate a growth mindset for that domain
  – People with **lower self-efficacy** (or previous negative experiences) tend to develop a fixed mindset in that domain

- Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation:
  – Intrinsically motivating, autonomous tasks usually encourage growth mindset (through exposure to experimentation, challenge-seeking, development opportunities etc)
  – Extrinsically motivating or imposed tasks may encourage or reinforce fixed mindset due to fear of failure or performance pressures

- Environmental Feedback and Contextual Cues:
  – Encouraging and supportive environments (teachers, coaches, leaders, supervisors, organizations emphasizing effort, learning, and process) typically nurture context-specific growth mindsets.
  – Critical or performance-driven environments (emphasizing innate talent or immediate success) foster fixed mindsets within those specific contexts.

A (NOT SO) OBVIOUS PARADOX

- Low Self-Competence, low self-efficacy: more Fixed Mindset
- Hi Self-Competence, hi self-efficacy: more Growth Mindset

Do you see the paradox?

individuals who need a growth mindset most are least likely to possess it (and vice versa)

- Can you think of ways through which organizations may facilitate growth mindset even in situations where people have low self-efficacy and self-competence?

- Contextual Framing of Challenges and Goal Setting:
  – Clearly communicate new or unfamiliar tasks as explicit learning opportunities rather than competence assessments
  – Emphasize learning goals (vs performance goals)
- Building Self-Efficacy through Small Wins:
  – Develop small, low-risk initial challenges for unfamiliar tasks. Early successful experiences ("small wins") build self-efficacy, fostering a growth mindset in subsequent, larger challenges
  – Remember the «PROGRESS PRINCIPLE» by Teresa Amabile
- Create an organizational or team culture where psychological safety is emphasized
  – More on this later

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Research shows that Growth Mindset is associated with:
  - FOR INDIVIDUALS
    - Resilience
    - Learning
    - Goal attainment
    - Adaptive performance
  - FOR ORGANIZATIONS
    - Innovation and creativity
    - Team task performance
    - Team collaboration
    - Adaptability
    - Employees' Engagement and Retention

EXAMPLES (outside the field of management)

- In education, GM is clearly associated with grades performance and general academic performance. Most significantly when
  - Challenging subjects: students with GM persist longer, engage more deeply
  - Transitions: GM helps manage new academic pressures and environments
  - Students facing stereotypes or low expectations

- A neurological study measured the brainwaves of people as they answered hard questions and got feedback. Their brainwaves showed their level of attention to and interest in the feedback.
  - people with FM paid attention to feedback on whether their answers were right or wrong (reflecting their ability), but weren't interested in information that could help them learn — they weren't even interested in learning the right answer when they got something wrong.
  - In contrast, people with GM paid attention to information that would help them learn the right answer to the questions they got wrong.

An experiment with children (1)

- 400 children (about 10 years old) are given a relatively simple test
  - Half of them is praised for their intelligence (group FIXED, F)
  - Half of them is praised for their effort (group GROWTH, G)

- All are given a new test. They can freely choose a more difficult test, or an easier test.
  - 90% of Group G chooses the difficult test
  - Most children in Group F chooses the easy test

- Then all are given a very difficult test
  - in Group G children experience this test as a challenge, they enjoy it, they are happy, they say that it's their «favourite test»
  - in Group F children are discuoraged, they react in a negative way, they refuse to continue

An experiment with children (2)

- At the end of the difficult test, all children are asked if they want to see the tests completed by those who performed better than themselves, or worse
  - Group F wants to see tests of those who performed worse; they want to be reassured about their intelligence, about how good they are
  - Group G wants to see tests of those who performed better: they want to learn from their mistakes, they want to improve

- At the end, a new test is given to all, similar to the first one
  - Group F decreased their performance by 20%
  - Group G increased their performance by 30%

A very famous case study on Growth Mindset: Microsoft

from a «KNOW-IT-ALL» to a «LEARN-IT-ALL» organization

SATYA NADELLA
CEO of MICROSOFT

What happened in Microsoft (1)

- in 2014, when Nadella became CEO, Microsoft was perceived by many as a fading giant, struggling with:
  - Declining innovation
  - Internal silos and excessive competition
  - A hierarchical, bureaucratic culture resistant to risk-taking
- Some of the changes that Nadella implemented

1. **Leadership culture and Role Modeling**
   - Nadella himself became the strongest advocate and role model for growth mindset behaviors, by:
   - Openly sharing his own mistakes and lessons learned.
   - Consistently encouraging executives to admit uncertainties and failures publicly.
   - Changing how leadership communicated: moving from a culture of "knowing" and certainty toward curiosity, learning, and exploration.

2. **Redesigned Performance Management**
   - Abolished the controversial "stack ranking" performance evaluation system, which forced managers to rank employees competitively and rigidly, creating internal rivalry and a fear-driven culture.
   - Introduced a more flexible, continuous feedback approach emphasizing learning, development, and teamwork, not just individual results.
   - Performance dialogues now regularly include conversations about growth, improvement areas, and lessons learned from failures.

What happened in Microsoft (2)

3. Training and Education

- Microsoft heavily invested in training, explicitly embedding Carol Dweck's ideas into its leadership and employee development programs

- Leaders received training focused on understanding how a growth mindset impacts innovation, employee motivation, and adaptability.

- Employees participated in workshops aimed at cultivating self-awareness, reframing challenges as opportunities, and increasing comfort with failure as a learning process

4. Encouraging Collaboration and Psychological Safety

- HR practices and internal communications consistently emphasized collaboration and psychological safety

- Teams encouraged to share failures openly in "blameless retrospectives"

- New guidelines explicitly stated that mistakes and failures should be viewed as opportunities for learning rather than as reasons for punishment or shame.

HOW TO DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET: a few suggestions

–FOR YOU, PERSONALLY
  • self-directed orientation
–FOR LEADERS, who want to develop a growth mindset in their collaborators
  • Others-directed orientation
–FOR HR MANAGERS and ORGANIZATIONS
  • Culture-directed orientation

–Most or all of the following suggestions can be used in all 3 cases
–Obviously, the specific process and the techniques through which these suggestions can be implemented may vary significantly
– we will focus more later on specific methodologies to develop a growth mindset
– A little exercise: evaluate, for each suggestion, how much and how often do you utilize it. At the end, summarize your results. Do you use them all? Just a few? None? Often? Rarely? Never?

HOW TO DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET (1)

- Reframe Challenges as Opportunities
  - When encountering difficulty, consciously remind yourself: "This is an opportunity for me to grow, not a threat to my competence"
  - Replace negative internal dialogue ("I'm just not good at this") with curiosity-driven statements ("I'm still learning this")
- Set Learning Goals (Not Performance Goals)
  - Prioritize goals oriented toward personal growth and mastery rather than just grades or external validation.
  - Example: "I want to learn about this" instead of "I must get a 30 grade at all costs"
- Normalize Effort and Persistence
  - Explicitly acknowledge effort as essential and valuable, rather than a sign of insufficient talent.
  - Develop rituals and habits that reinforce the value of regular effort
  - Dedicate specific daily or weekly time slots to challenging but meaningful activities
- Learn from Mistakes and Embrace Feedback
  - View mistakes as valuable information rather than failures.
  - When receiving criticism pause, listen actively, and ask yourself: "How can I use this feedback to improve?"
  - Consider journaling mistakes and feedback received, explicitly identifying lessons learned

HOW TO DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET (2)

- Actively Develop Self-Efficacy through Small Wins
  - Build confidence gradually through achievable challenges
  - Identify smaller, attainable but challenging tasks related to a larger goal
  - Celebrate small successes, using them as evidence that your efforts can produce improvement
- Expand your Comfort Zone
  - Regularly push your boundaries by trying new activities
  - Take courses or engage in projects outside your primary field of interest or comfort area
  - Remember that feeling uncomfortable initially is natural and beneficial
- Cultivate a Supportive Social Environment
  - Surround yourself with peers, mentors, or groups who value continuous learning and resilience
  - Openly discuss setbacks or difficulties with supportive peers or mentors who reinforce growth-oriented messages
- Regular Reflection and Self-Assessment
  - Schedule periodic self-reflections and ask yourself reflective questions
    - "How have I grown in the last month?"
    - "What have my challenges taught me recently?"
  - Track your progress (for example, through a journal)

HOW TO DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET (3)

- Adjust your Language to Reinforce Growth Mindset
  - Shift your language away from "fixed" statements toward "growth" statements
  - "I'm not good at math" vs "I can improve at math with practice"
  - "I'm either talented or not" vs "My skills can grow if I commit to practice."
  - Language is powerful: this intentional shift can reshape your habitual thought patterns
- Develop Emotional Regulation Skills
  - practice mindfulness meditation, or stress-management techniques to better manage anxiety related to failure or criticism
  - emotional regulation strengthens resilience, making setbacks less intimidating and easier to learn from
- Teach Others What You Learn
  - Teaching or mentoring reinforces your own learning and fosters a growth mindset
  - Volunteer to tutor, present, or discuss topics you're learning
  - Explaining concepts to others helps internalize growth-oriented thinking
- Read and learn about Growth Mindset
  - Just being aware of GM and knowing about its advantages will lead to more GM

A VERY COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING

– DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET IS NOT JUST ABOUT "INCREASING EFFORT"
  • EFFORT ALONE DOESN'T WORK (OR, ITS POSITIVE EFFECTS CAN BE SMALL)
– WHAT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL IS "STRATEGIC EFFORT"
  • In other words, effort should be accompanied by a very specific METHODOLOGY

–KEY POINTS
1. PLANNED: effort should be directed towards CLEAR GOALS
2. INFORMED: effort should be adjusted based on FEEDBACK and REFLECTION
3. FLEXIBLE: the type of effort should be RE-ORIENTED if the current strategy doesn't work
4. EFFICIENT: effort should be focused on HIGH-LEVERAGED ACTIVITIES, not just on sheer time spent

A VERY SIMPLE EXAMPLE of STRATEGIC EFFORT ABOUT STUDYING

– STUDENT A

– Spends 4 hours re-reading textbook chapters
– Avoids practice problems (self-testing) because they're difficult, or because she thinks that time is better spent re-reading again and again
– Does not seek feedback (even self-feedback: she is not testing her knowledge)
– Result: High effort, low improvement

– STUDENT B

– Spends 2 hours focused on hardest topics
– Completes practice problems (self-testing) and reviews errors
– Seeks feedback from tutor or peers (even just help with testing)
– Tries different problem-solving methods
– Result: Focused effort, targeted improvement

– THE DIFFERENCE IS NOT EFFORT QUANTITY, BUT EFFORT QUALITY

EXAMPLES OF HR PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE A FIXED MINDSET CULTURE (INSTEAD OF GM)

- RECRUITMENT
  - Focusing on recruiting only the «best talents», from the «best schools», requiring and/or giving a lot of weight to cognitive tests, may signal and promote a FM

- ONBOARDING
  - Not providing much training, coaching and guidance may signal a FM

- ASSESSMENT and COMPENSATION
  - Rewarding strictly based on performance standards may encourage a FM
  - Even the language framing the assessment process may be relevant: is it a «PERFORMANCE EVALUATION» or a «PROGRESS REPORT»?

  - However, more research is needed on all these topics

A SUMMARY of the KEY POINTS

- It is very important to adopt a growth mindset as often as possible
  - both for individuals, groups and organizations
  - in the vast majority of cases, a growth mindset is preferable than a fixed mindset
  - especially when adaptability, change, innovation, development are necessary
  - growth mindset is clearly associated with intrinsic motivation, while fixed mindset is associated with extrinsic motivation

- Mindsets can be reoriented, both in the long term and in the short term
  - education studies show that **awareness** of the malleability of our abilities and its relevance for our long term success is already sufficient, in many cases, to reshape people's mindsets
  - while individuals usually have a general, long term orientation toward a specific mindset, **contextual triggers** may also have a significant influence in the short term

- In organizations: language, communication, culture, norms, practices and leadership styles are significant in shaping an «organizational mindset»
  - this is relevant not only in people development and training, but in all other HR Management areas (recruitment, onboarding, assessment, goal setting, compensation, work organization etc)
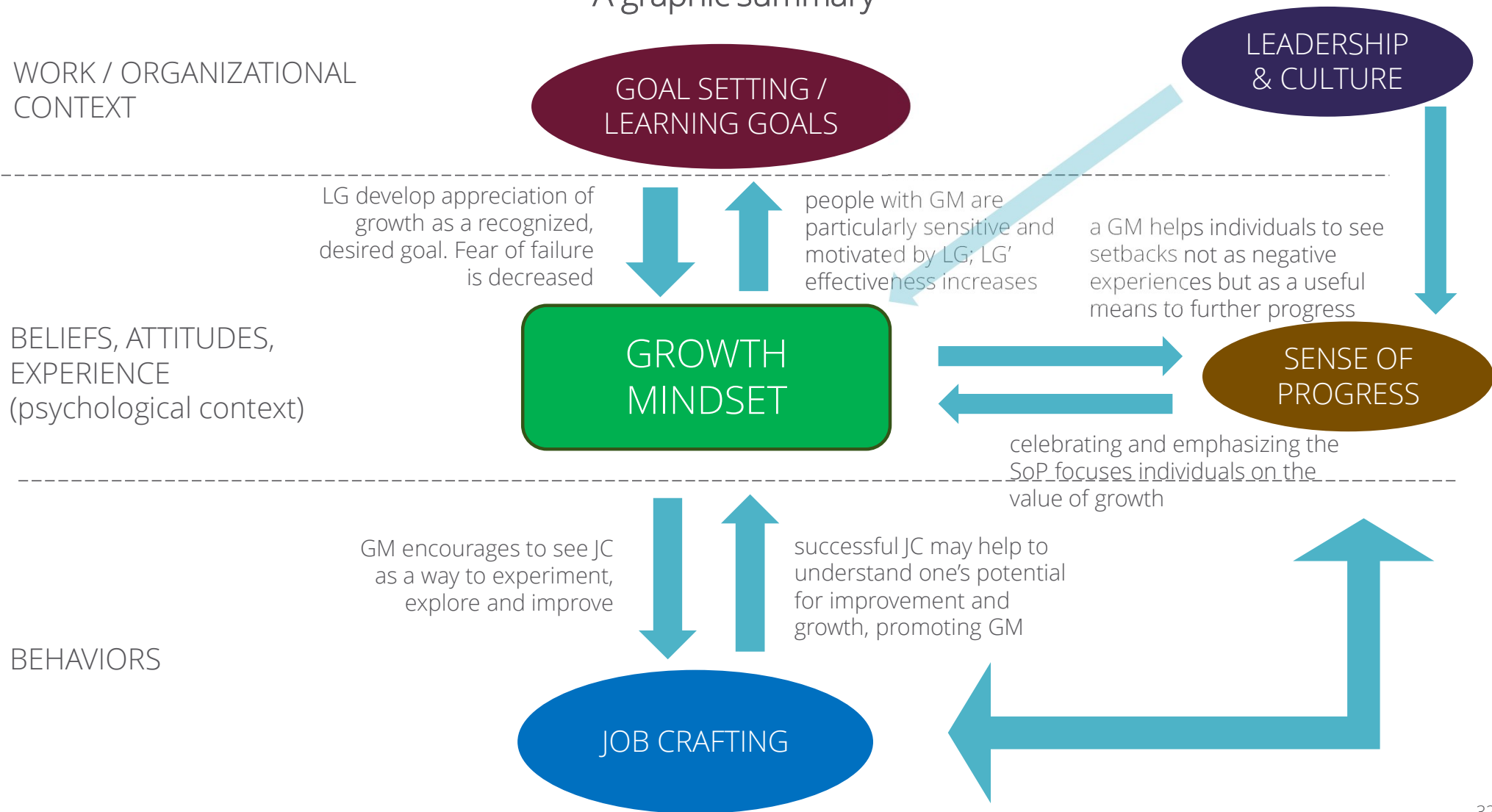
A FEW CONNECTIONS WITH PREVIOUS LESSONS (1)

- ## GROWTH MINDSET and JOB CRAFTING
  - just few studies available
  - a **growth mindset increases people's propensity to craft their job**
    - GM encourages to see JC as a way to experiment, explore and improve
  - a FM has the opposite effect (especially for «expansive» JC)
    - However, a FM may encourage certain kinds of «avoidance» JV
  - the relationship is likely to be **bidirectional**
    - successful JC may help to understand one's potential for improvement and growth and, by consequence, to embrace a GM

- ## GROWTH MINDSET and the PROGRESS PRINCIPLE
  - Amabile's progress principle: experiencing progress in meaningful work improves positive emotions about work, motivation, engagement
    - the opposite happens with setbacks
  - Growth mindset promotes the perception of the relevance and possibility of progress (seen as learning and improvement), promotes persistence (which increases the possibility of progress), helps interprets setbacks as learning opportunities (thus buffering against negative impact of setbacks)
    - **again, bidirectionality:** celebrating and emphasizing the Sense of Progress focuses individuals on the value and possibility of self-improvement and growth

A FEW CONNECTIONS WITH PREVIOUS LESSONS (2)

- **GROWTH MINDSET and GOAL SETTING**
  - Goal setting: clear, challenging goals have a positive effect on motivation and performance
    - both **performance goals** and **learning goals** show similar effects
    - but the outcome can be quite different: **performance goals, especially if feedback is not provided, and especially if strongly associated with incentives, may decrease the focus on learning and development**
  - Growth mindset amplifies the motivational power of learning goals
    - people with GM particularly appreciate learning goals
    - the relationship is **bidirectional**: setting learning goals helps promoting and cultivating GM
  - Performance goals (without an integrated learning orientation) can reinforce FM
    - when performance goals are perceived as significantly challenging, people with a FM may increase their aversion for failure
    - The example of "STRETCH GOALS"
    - that is why it's particularly **important to combine performance goals with learning goals**

A graphic summary

WORK / ORGANIZATIONAL
CONTEXT

GOAL SETTING / LEARNING GOALS

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

LG develop appreciation of growth as a recognized, desired goal. Fear of failure is decreased

people with GM are particularly sensitive and motivated by LG; LG' effectiveness increases

a GM helps individuals to see setbacks not as negative experiences but as a useful means to further progress

BELIEFS, ATTITUDES,
EXPERIENCE
(psychological context)

GROWTH MINDSET

SENSE OF PROGRESS

celebrating and emphasizing the SoP focuses individuals on the value of growth

GM encourages to see JC as a way to experiment, explore and improve

successful JC may help to understand one's potential for improvement and growth, promoting GM

BEHAVIORS

JOB CRAFTING

CASES and EXAMPLES

on growth vs fixed mindset and other key elements of
training and development HR policies

A very famous case: PIXAR

PIXAR

- Currently a susbidiary of Walt Disney Studios
  - Began in 1979 as a division of Lucas Films
  - Incorporated in 1986 (main investor: Steve Jobs)
  - Acquired by Disney in 2006

- Extremely successful company, both commercially and artistically

  - 23 Academy Awards, 10 Golden Globe Awards, 11 Grammy Awards

  - 2024: "INSIDE OUT 2"; revenues 1.7 billion (budget: 200 million) in $
  - on average, per year: revenues 600 millions (budget: 150 millions) in $
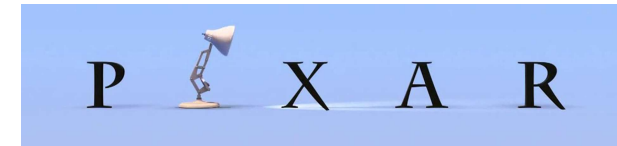
A SHORT HISTORY

– 1979, George Lucas creates a computer division for Lucasfilm

- Early computer-generated animation productions

– 1986, Steve Jobs purchased the division and establishes «PIXAR» as an independent company

- First short animation movie, «Luxo Jr», Oscar nomination

– 1988, «Tin Toy», first academy award winner for best short animated film

– DISNEY proposed PIXAR to create a full length film based on the Tin Toy idea. They wanted PIXAR to create a **whole separate production unit** for it. But **PIXAR refused**, and kept the production inside PIXAR. They realized **they needed to keep their collaborative culture intact** for best results. In 1995, Toy Story is released, first computer animated film ever, and first world-wide success of Pixar

PIXAR'S CULTURE, DERIVED FROM HISTORY

- Catmull about the decision not to separate production teams:
  - *The modern Hollywood approach was to put together a team for one project and then disband the team when production was finished, but we thought that was dumb. When it comes down to it, the only way to make a good movie is to have a good team. The current view in Hollywood, in contrast, is that movies are all about ideas, and that a good idea is rarer and more valuable than good people. That's why there are so many copycat movies: everyone is chasing the same concept. But that's a fundamentally misguided approach. <u>A mediocre team will screw up a good idea. But if you give a mediocre idea to a great team and let them work together, they'll find a way to succeed.</u>"*

- PIXAR's organizational culture:
  - this company created a totally new way of making movies
  - technology (software and hardware) and art evolved together: they were constantly challenging each other, learning from each other and about each other
  - that's why an approach to **extremely open and constant collaboration between people with very different skills and backgrounds was utilized since the beginning**
  - Steve Jobs realized this was a key element for success, and he personally decided to extend such idea to most aspects of daily work at PIXAR

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT

- The original plan: 3 separate buildings for management, technicians and animators
- Steve Jobs instead wanted **one building** with a **vast central atrium, to encourage interactions**

- Meeting rooms, cafeteria, rest areas, even bathrooms were all located at the centre of the building

A Pixar high level producer: "We think a lot about the geography of where people are sitting and how the offices are laid out. Part of my job [as a producer] is to make sure everyone is smooshing together. If I don't see lots of smooshing, I get worried."

"The assumption is that a few of those random talks in the hallway are going to be really useful. Most of them won't be, of course. They'll just be talking about their kids or football or whatever. **But every once in a while that random conversation is going to lead to a breakthrough.**"

PIXAR's «Braintrust»

- KEY PRINCIPLES
- Braintrust, a **regular peer-feedback meetings** for creative seniors (leaders and crative directors) at key milestones of the film production process
- **No authority structure in the room**: particpiants are not obliged to follow advice.
- The goal is not to dictate solutions but to **surface problems** and **spark better ideas**.
- Radical candor is balanced with **respect**: the culture is "**candid but supportive**"

- GOALS:
- Tackle and solve high-level storytelling and creative problems
- Help directors and creative leads see blind spots and improve their films
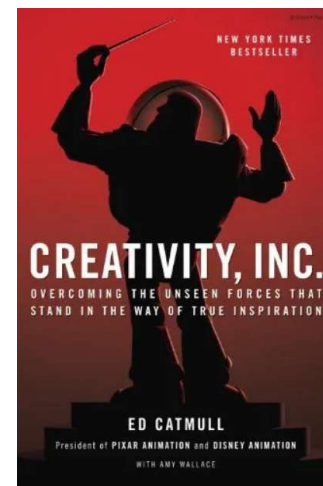
PIXAR's «Crit Sessions»

- Crit sessions (short for Critique Sessions) are **daily or regular feedback sessions within specific production teams**, especially in animation, design, lighting, and effect
- Artists and animators **present works-in-progress**
- Peers and supervisors provide **specific, immediate feedback,** especially very **in depth, detail oriented, critical examination** of the current state of work
- **Diversity** of participants is crucial (**people from all expertise areas**)
- **Everyone expects feedback, and values it as a path to mastery**
- The "**PLUSSING**" technique
  - derived from the "YES, AND …" tecnhique in comedy improvisation

  – together with detailed critique, everyone is expected to "yes, and …". In other words: **be constructive, add a proposal, build on what is already there: PROVIDE A "PLUS".**

  - *"It might be hours later, but I'm often still thinking about what the group talked about. Maybe I'm still a little upset because I got taken apart. Or maybe we just exposed a really tough problem, and none of the proposed fixes really worked. But it's like I put the problem on the back burner of my brain. And then, when I'm doing something else, like in the gym, I come up with a better solution. I suddenly know how I should animate the face, or how that scene should go. I'm still plussing."*
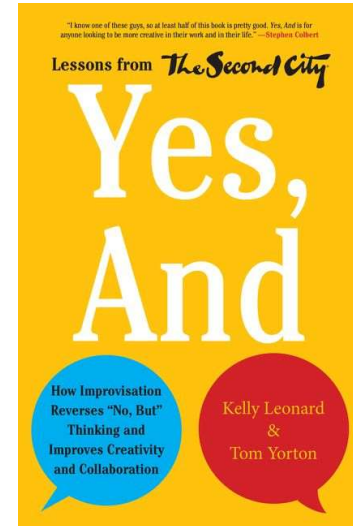
THE PLUSSING TECHNIQUE

–ADVANTAGES:

- avoid conflict while preserving the critical thinking orientation
  - "plussing" means that you also expose yourself to more "plusses" and critiques, you make your ideas vulnerable just like the ones you are criticizing
  - you are "signaling" that your purpose is not to blame somebody, but to help improve the product
- generate more creative ideas: knowing that others will "plus" your ideas makes it safer to make bold or unconventional proposals
- learn from each other and generate collective intelligence: ideas improve iteratively through a number of small, positive additions
- growth mindset activation: ideas are treated as drafts to be improved, not final judgments, not attached to personal or professional identity
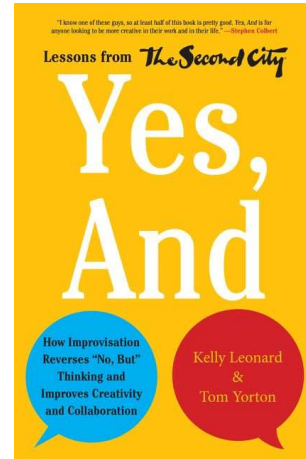
PIXAR UNIVERSITY
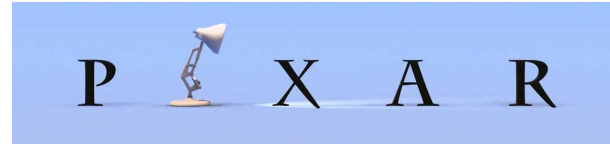
- Pixar University offers a **very wide range of classes and workshops**, designed to cater to various interests and skill levels. The curriculum is **diverse**, covering both **technical and artistic disciplines**
  - **Animation and Art Classes**: Courses on drawing, painting, sculpture, animation techniques, and storytelling. These classes help employees understand the fundamental principles of Pixar's work and encourage artistic expression.
  - **Technical Training**: Classes on software development, computer graphics, and other technical aspects of filmmaking. These are crucial for employees working in animation and special effects.
  - **Professional Development**: Workshops on leadership, communication, project management, and other soft skills. These classes aim to develop well-rounded professionals who can lead and collaborate effectively.
  - **Cultural and General Education**: Classes in subjects like history, languages, and cultural studies. These courses broaden employees' horizons and provide new perspectives that can inspire their work

  - PIXAR's UNIVERSITY VIDEO

A FEW GENERAL LESSONS FROM PIXAR

LEARNING AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS SIGNIFICANTLY ON:

– not just investing in "formal" training initiatives (like courses, seminars etc) but **also creating and encouraging learning processes in all daily work activities**

– having a **diversity of contributions,** both in terms of **people** (types of expertise etc) and **topics** (e.g. at Pixar University)
  • Mutual improvement and learning REQUIRES diversity

– creating the **social / organizational / psychological conditions** that truly ignites mutual learning
  • CONTINUOUS FEEDBCAK, DISCUSSION and CRITIQUE but with a CONSTRUCTIVE attitude
  • creating the sense of SAFETY so that contributions can be HONEST
  • celebrating individual and organizational success not as IMMEDIATE PERFECTION, but as a process of continuous, RELENTLESS IMPROVEMENT

Pixar creates the perfect conditions for people to embrace a GROWTH MINDSET, both individually and organizationallY

The SALESFORCE case: the company

- Salesforce offers a wide range of cloud-based services, including CRM solutions, data storage, enterprise software, and sales automation tools. Their major platforms include Sales Cloud, Service Cloud, Marketing Cloud, and Commerce Cloud.

- Salesforce is the largest CRM provider by market share (about 33% woroldwide).

- Salesforce serves over 150,000 businesses globally (USA, Europe, Asia)

- Annual Revenue (2024): $34.9 billion, + 11% increase from the previous year.

- Gross Profit: $26.3 billion.

- Salesforce employs around 72,000 people worldwide.

- Headquarters: San Francisco, California. About 65 locations worldwide

The TRAILHEAD platform at Salesforce: POLICIES and PRACTICES (1)

- **Wide Range of Courses**: Trailhead offers a **diverse array of courses and learning paths**, known as trails, that cover various aspects of Salesforce products, technical skills, business acumen, and soft skills. These courses are designed to be accessible to **learners at all levels**, from beginners to advanced users

- **Gamified Learning**: The platform uses gamification elements, such as badges, points, and ranks, to make learning engaging. Users earn badges and points by completing modules and assessments, which helps to **track progress** and encourages continuous learning.

- **Skill Validation**: Trailhead provides **structured certification programs** that allow employees and users to validate their skills and knowledge. These certifications are **recognized industry-wide** and can significantly enhance career prospects.

- **Role-Based Learning**: The platform offers **role-based learning paths** that guide users through the specific skills and knowledge required for various job roles within the Salesforce ecosystem, such as administrators, developers, marketers, and consultants.

- **Trailblazer Community**: Salesforce has built a **strong and supportive community** around Trailhead, known as the Trailblazer Community. This community fosters **collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer-to-peer learning**. Users can join local groups, participate in events, and engage in discussions to enhance their learning experience.

The TRAILHEAD platform at Salesforce: POLICIES and PRACTICES (2)

- **Mentorship and Networking**: The community aspect of Trailhead allows users to connect with mentors and industry experts, providing valuable **networking opportunities** and **guidance** on career development.
- **Executive Participation**: Salesforce leaders actively participate in Trailhead initiatives. By engaging with the platform themselves, leaders **demonstrate** the importance of continuous learning and **encourage employees** to follow suit.
- **Cultural Integration**: The emphasis on growth is integrated into Salesforce's broader corporate culture. Employees are encouraged to take **ownership of their learning (autonomy)** and development, and the company provides the resources and support needed to succeed
- **Flexible Learning Options**: The platform is designed to be flexible, allowing users to **learn at their own pace and on their own schedule**. This flexibility is crucial in accommodating diverse learning styles and personal commitments.
- **Interactive Content**: Trailhead offers **interactive content**, including **hands-on projects** and **real-world scenarios**, allowing users to apply their knowledge in practical contexts. This **experiential learning approach** helps solidify understanding and skill application.

The TRAILHEAD platform at Salesforce: OUTCOMES

- **User Growth**: widespread adoption among Salesforce employees and the broader user community. The platform's engaging and user-friendly design has attracted millions of learners worldwide.
- **High Completion Rates**: The gamified and modular nature of Trailhead has led to high completion rates for courses and certifications, indicating strong user engagement and commitment to learning.
- **Enhanced Skills**: Employees who actively engage with Trailhead have reported significant improvements in their skills and knowledge, leading to better job performance and increased confidence in their roles.
- **Career Opportunities**: The certifications and skills gained through Trailhead have opened up new career opportunities for employees and users, both within Salesforce and in the broader job market. Many have seen career advancements and promotions as a result of their learning efforts.
- **Innovation and Productivity**: The emphasis on continuous learning and skill development has fostered a culture of innovation within Salesforce. Employees are better equipped to tackle new challenges, leading to increased productivity and creativity.
- **Employee Satisfaction and Retention**: The focus on personal and professional growth has contributed to higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention. Employees feel valued and supported in their development, leading to a more motivated and committed workforce.
- **Empowerment and Inclusion**: Trailhead has empowered a diverse range of learners, including those from non-traditional backgrounds, to develop valuable skills and pursue careers in technology. The platform's inclusive approach has helped to democratize learning and create opportunities for underrepresented groups in the tech industry.

IBM's «Your Learning» platform: key features

- **Personalized Learning Paths**: The platform uses AI to analyze employees' roles, skills, and learning preferences. It then recommends tailored learning paths and content to meet their specific career development goals.

- **Skill Assessment:** AI continually assesses the employees' skills and suggests new learning opportunities to fill gaps and stay updated with industry trends.

- **Diverse / Comprehensive Library**: a vast library of over 170,000 learning materials, including courses, videos, articles, and webinars covering a broad spectrum of topics from technical skills to leadership and soft skills.

- **Vendor Partnerships**: The platform includes content from leading educational partners like Coursera, Udemy, and edX, ensuring high-quality and diverse learning resources.

- **Collaborative Learning**: The platform encourages peer-to-peer learning, allowing employees to create and join learning communities, share knowledge, and collaborate on learning projects.

- **Discussion Forums**: Employees can participate in discussion forums and Q&A sessions, fostering a community-driven learning environment.

- **On-Demand Learning**: The platform provides on-demand access to learning materials, allowing employees to learn at their own pace and convenience.

- **Blended Learning**: Combines virtual and in-person training sessions to provide a holistic learning experience.

- **Badges and Certificates**: Employees can earn digital badges and certificates upon completing courses and learning paths, which can be showcased on professional networks like LinkedIn.

- **Gamification**: gamification elements like leaderboards and points motivate employees to engage with the platform and track their progress.

IBM's «Your Learning» platform: outcomes

- **PARTCIPATION**: In 2019, 99% of IBM employees visited the learning system at least once.

- **ENGAGEMENT**: Although technical sales staff is only required to complete 40 hours of Your Learning courses each year, learners invested 77 hours into the platform on average.

- **JOB PERFORMANCE and CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**:
  - The odds of an employee being promoted increase by 9% with each badge acquired, and 16% with skill badges
  - Significant positive effects on job performance and odds of promotion are associated with achievement "strategic" badges (those covering specific knowledge and skills related to new technologies such as AI and cloud computing and critical behavioral skills such as design thinking).

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, learning hours on the platform increased significantly among employees.

Key points: many similarities and a few differences

- COMMON EMPHASIS
- the diversity of learning content
- the customization (autonomy) and flexibility of learning paths
- recognition and practical usefulness for career development (certification, badges)
- training program not just a way to «*fill competence gaps*» but (mostly) to create a learning culture and a growth mindset
- social dynamics (community learning / peer-to-peer learning)
- different kinds of learning processes: both conceptual learning, applied (hands-on) learning
- increasing focus on gamification

- DIFFERENCES
- different emphasis on assessment (less evident in Pixar)
- use of AI-based learning (to design, orient and assess)
- Varied use of external partnership

FINAL POINTS on GROWTH

- Growth, development and mastery are not just a very significant component of intrinsic motivation
- They are **essential requirement for cometitiveness**, in many (if not most) industries
- Growth and development depends on MANY elements

1. INVESTMENTS in TRAINING and DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
2. MECHANISMS TRHOUGH WHICH SUCH PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED and IMPLEMENTED
3. SPECIFIC ORIENTATIONS of LEADERSHIP and ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
4. JOB DESIGN: variety, rotation, flexibility, autonomy and orientation to intrinsic motivation
5. INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS and ATTITUDES

- it is NOT just about particular moments / events / initatitives in HR management, it is ALSO about the way **DAILY organizational life is experienced, managed and carried out**
- it is particularly relevant in the way **GROUPS and TEAMS are managed**
- it is particularly relevant as a key component of **what LEADERSHIP should be about**