

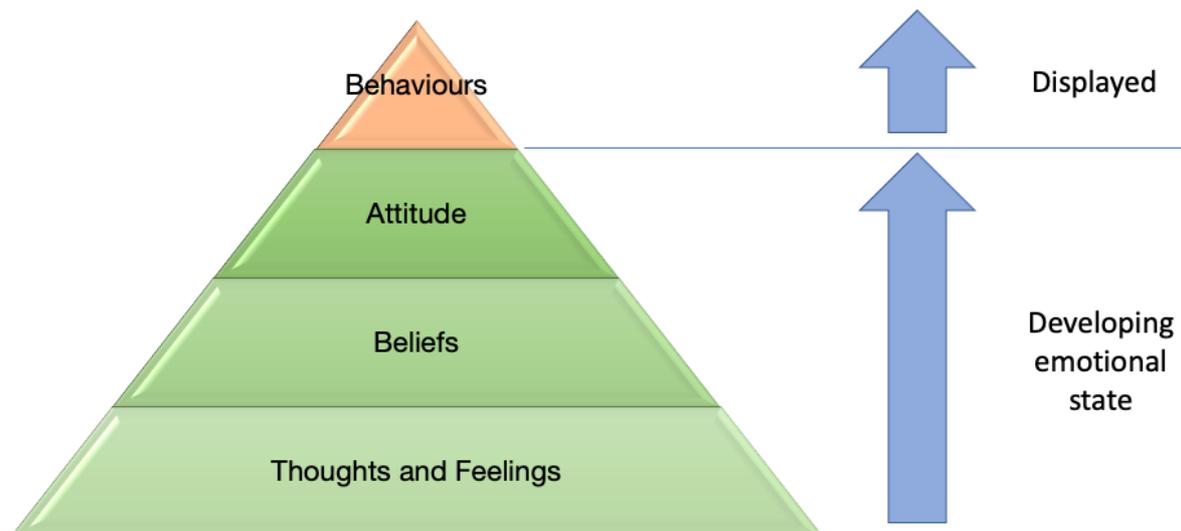
Fact sheet – Outward Mindset

By the Arbinger Institute | September 01, 2017 (modified by Leach 2020)

Introduction

In my opinion one of the things that sets senior managers apart from junior managers is their ability to maintain at all times an open mindset. In this fact sheet we're going to look at the open mindset and understand it and, in a little bit more detail what that actually means. The reason that mindset is so important is that often as managers we talk of the need to have our staff behave in a certain way and for certain behaviours are 90% of performance. Using a mindset approach to behaviours the senior manager is able to influence behaviours in a more meaningful manner that both achieves the objective and engages the staff more in the business, and has a more lasting effect.

A great example of behaviours and mindset has come with the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. In the UK during the first lockdown in the spring of 2020 it was analysed that over 90% of the population complied with the regulations, and also at that time the ratings of the Prime Minister soared. The virus was unknown, and the threat became very real to the majority of people and so compliance was not a chore but something that people wanted to do. There was a very strong feeling of togetherness and being in the situation together, the Thursday 'NHS clap' that emerged was but one example of this.



Later in the year however when the 2nd wave appeared around the October November period, it was believed that the compliance level was less than 25% of the population. A number of factors would have been contributing to this including general fatigue at the situation, and these factors inform individual mindsets. So by simply laying down a law that says one is not allowed to travel for example, and trying to get people to behave in a certain way, does not work. You can't make somebody behave the way you want them to behave, you have to work alongside them understand their developing emotional state understand their mindset and be able to influence their attitude's , their beliefs and their feelings.

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What is Mindset?

Put simply, mindset is how we see. It is the lens through which we see our work, our relationships, and our world. It is at the foundation of all that we do and shapes *how* we do it.

Two Mindsets

Arbinger's research indicates that people operate at any given time from one of two mindsets: an inward mindset or an outward mindset. From an **inward mindset**, we focus only on our own personal goals and objectives, without consideration for our impact on others. With this self-focused inward mindset, we see others not as people with their own needs, challenges, and objectives, but as objects. We see them as:

- ◆ *Vehicles* to achieve our own objectives and results
- ◆ *Obstacles* that are in our way or causing problems
- ◆ *Irrelevancies* that can be ignored

With an inward mindset, we are blind to what others need and therefore can frustrate others or create conflict. We might blame others for our frustrations or failures. Focused only on our own objectives, we might even hamper our organization's effectiveness or results while thinking we're doing a good job!

With an **outward mindset**, however, we see others as people who matter, like we do. We consider their needs, challenges, and objectives. And we focus on collective results. We feel responsible to do our jobs and do them well, but also to do them in a way that supports others in doing *their* jobs—because we know their jobs contribute to the organization's results just like ours do.



When we have an outward mindset—when others *matter* to us—we naturally want to be helpful to them. So, we adjust our own efforts to make their work easier however we can. Rather than blaming others for our frustrations or feeling like victims of our circumstances, we begin to see new possibilities and solutions to our most vexing or long-standing problems.

What Kind of Mindset Change is Needed for Organisational Transformation?

You guessed it, a change from an inward mindset to an outward mindset. Organisations can only resolve internal problems and achieve breakthrough results by maximizing the extent to which their employees work with an outward mindset, considering their impact on others and focusing on the needs of the organization as a whole.

Shifting to an outward mindset is the one change that most dramatically improves performance, sparks collaboration, and accelerates innovation. By implementing an outward mindset across the

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organization, governmental agencies can set themselves up to develop far more innovative solutions to their most challenging problems.

How Can Outward Mindset Help with Common Organisational Challenges?



With an inward mindset, organisations and the individuals in them may think only about their needs, challenges, and objectives relative to a given problem. Organisations may become more siloed, more conflict-prone, as departments and offices focus on solving their piece of the puzzle. They might try to protect the resources they currently have—at the expense of organisational interests. They might blame others for their inability to solve the problem.

With an outward mindset, organizations and individuals focus on collective results. They can have difficult conversations about resource allocation, roles, and responsibilities without feeling the need to protect their silos, defend their decisions, or appear in certain ways. They might frame the problem differently, allowing them to see new possibilities for solutions and new directions for problem-solving. The innovation of an outward mindset applies at all levels, even offices and individual contributors. With an inward mindset, office directors and employees may avoid difficult conversations because they're uncomfortable, potentially contentious, or simply too far in the future to worry about.

With an outward mindset, difficult conversations take on a new light. They are seen as important for the success of the team and the organization. With this framing, the range of possible solutions expands dramatically.

Changing mindset from inward to outward starts (and ends) with yourself, and how you see those around you:

- ◆ See others – their needs, objectives and challenges
- ◆ Adjust efforts – to be more helpful to others
- ◆ Measure impact – the impact of your work on others

“When people focus on themselves rather than on their impact, lots of activity and effort get wasted on the wrong things! The absence of collaboration results in low levels of innovation, and employees disengage due to the boredom inherent with inward-mindset thinking.”