

Mind your mindset

By Stephen Walsh



"Mirror, signal, manoeuvre" – all you drivers were instructed in that procedure on your first driving lesson. It formed a learned behaviour set which is useful if not essential for good driving, along with developed behaviours for steering, braking and changing gears. Until you absorbed gear changing into your subconscious you were not able to focus your mind on the countless variables outside the car – other vehicles, pedestrians, traffic lights, hedgehogs and speed cameras.

Mindsets, then, are key to our being able to execute necessary, routine behaviour in order that we can negotiate our way flexibly through the fluctuations of our environment.

The problem with mindsets is that once learned, they are difficult to unlearn – and sometimes you have to trade them in for another set. Have you ever moved the cutlery drawer in the kitchen? Or changed your phone number? How long is it before you adjust to the new circumstance?

Corporate mindsets can be dangerous. The changing business environment requires that we constantly question the 'learned behaviours' of the organisation. The inertial delay in changing a corporate mindset could lead to lost business opportunity, unprofitable product lines or even closure of the company. Over twenty years ago, thousands of people went to work at the EMI Music plant in Uxbridge to make 12" records. That was their business – or was it? The more appropriate mindset was 'EMI is in the business of distributing (profitably) music'. LPs happened to be the medium at that time, making them was not the purpose of the company.

Mindsets **are** useful. We need them to get on, but they can get in the way of progress. The trouble is, we cannot see them in ourselves, just as we cannot see the colour of our own eyes.

For that we need a mirror, or someone else to tell us. If we do ask someone else, then we must be prepared to listen and – sometimes – to change.



Other corporate mindsets include:

The boss-subordinate hierarchy

Promotion is the measure of personal success

Working is done 'at work'

Meetings

Work takes place between 9 and 5

Work takes place Monday to Friday

Presentations are done with Powerpoint

What are your MINDSETS?