

Leadership Mindset Development at Scale:

Key Learnings from Six Years with the Leadership Mindset Indicator.

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Executive Summary

Over the past six years, the Leadership Mindset Indicator (LMI) has been used by over 12,000 leaders, scores of organizations and hundreds of certified practitioners. As one of the first AI-enabled instruments to support vertical development at scale within organizations, the LMI both reinforces the transformational power of building mindset capacity and reveals ways to make this work more relevant, practical, and accessible for today's organizational leaders.

Yes, vertical development theory provides essential scaffolding developing leadership capacity. Our experience delivering this work at scale has illuminated important adaptations. We see this as an evolution in leadership mindset development—building on theory to practical application that meets leaders where they are and accelerates their growth in ways that directly serve organizational challenges.



12,000+

Leaders impacted



300+

Practitioners



What We've Learned So Far:

1: Use Mindset as a Map, Not a Measure

The Challenge: Leaders resist being labeled or pegged to a hierarchical stage, as often happens with vertical or adult stage development approaches. While they value the clarity that mindset frameworks provide, the traditional emphasis on levels and scores can detract from the real work of development.

What We've Learned: The mindset framework is most powerful when treated as a navigation tool rather than an assessment ranking. Theory suggests mindset growth follows a strict stage-by-stage hierarchy. Practice reveals people as more complex and context-dependent. Organizational culture can limit or mask a leader's mindset, and leaders can shift their mindset depending on the situation.

The Application: Encourage leaders to hold their mindset score lightly while taking their growth and context seriously. The transformative questions become: *If you were more effective at what needs to be done, what mindset would enable that? What stands between you and that mindset? What would shift if you were to embody that mindset a little more?* This reframing invites experimentation and growth rather than evaluation and comparison.

2: Leaders Have More Capacity Than They Know

The Reality: Leaders in complex organizations already possess significant mindset capacity. However, their capacity is often limited by role expectations, organizational norms, and the behaviors of those around them.

What We've Learned: The LMI experience reveals what's possible. Many leaders readily shift their mindset and consequent behaviors once they have clarity about alternative ways of making sense of situations and an invitation to experiment outside their usual mode. Rather than driving leaders to change their behaviors or “mature” their capacity as often happens with vertical development programs, we invite leaders to become more aware of their own and other mindsets and to experiment outside their comfort zone.

The Implication: The work to shift mindset can be a heavy lift, often requiring new experiences and leading to deep transformation. That said, leaders rarely hesitate to take on the challenge when it's clear how it will serve them and the impact they intend to create. The barrier isn't capacity—it's awareness and permission to experiment.



of people accessing Diplomat, Expert or Achiever mindsets improve their scores, widening their range of mindsets, over the course of a program

3: Building Mindset Range Is a Critical Growth Path

The Innovation: Traditional vertical development focuses on two growth paths: consolidating within a mindset stage or transitioning to the next. Our work has identified a third, equally valuable path—building mindset range.

What Range Means: Range is not simply "playing all the keys on the piano" or gear-shifting. It requires leaders to attune to what a situation demands, accept what that will take, and skillfully shift between conventional mindsets (adhering to what is known and specific) and post-conventional mindsets (welcoming the unknown and complex). Leaders who have completed large-scale LMI programs consistently cite building mindset range as the growth edge most important to their success.

The Growth Work: Developing range requires effort to stretch outside comfort zones—whether that stretch means tolerating what seems rigid and prescriptive or taking risks that challenge one's need for certainty. Growth happens through paying attention, clarifying intention, and experimenting with different ways of being, doing and relating. Leaders with greater range demonstrate increased confidence, agility, and resilience as they become more adept at adapting to what comes at them.



4: Mindset Is Not a Head Thing—It's a Whole-Person Experience

The Misconception: Traditional vertical development often emphasizes cognitive complexity and thinking differently as primary development goals. This misses the full picture.

What We've Observed: Mindset is made up of all forms of processing—emotions, physical sensations, relationship patterns, cultural influences, beliefs and assumptions, and one's relationship with uncertainty and the unknown. Mindset both shapes and limits how we make sense of ourselves, others, and our context through multiple channels simultaneously.

The Implication: Growth work involves waking up to these different channels and learning to work with them for greater access to incoming information and more skilful responses to what's happening. The more leaders use these channels, the more information and confidence they bring to their responses. This is why effective mindset development must be experiential—heat experiments, perspective-taking, and real-world application, with deep attention to what else shifts with one's mindset.

The Approach: The LMI process emphasizes a more client/less coach experience. Leaders define their own learning edge and determine their development activities with guidance from the mindset map and tools. From there, they are encouraged to actively engage in experiences that take them outside their zone of ease just enough to prime the nervous system to be ready for action in different ways.

5: Awareness and Intention Lead the Way

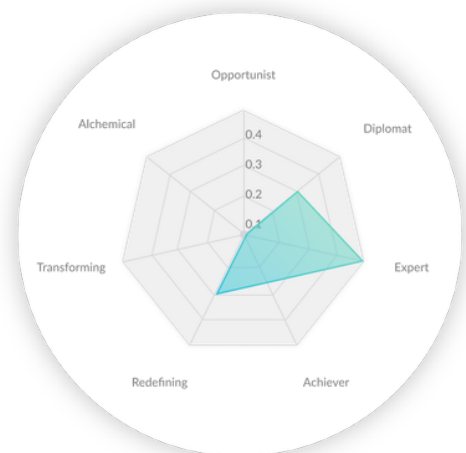
The Data: Analysis of hundreds of leader reflections from the LMI experience reveals a striking pattern—roughly 80% of learning and growth stems from just two elements: awareness and intention.

The Elements:

- Awareness: Understanding the mindset from which they tend to operate and recognizing other mindsets that could be useful and available
- Intention: Clarifying their purpose for growth, what makes it worth pursuing, and what else would change as a result

The Impact: Simply seeing the mindset map changes the game. Being clear on where to go and why the journey matters enables meaningful experimentation. This awareness and intention combination consistently leads to new behaviors, different interactions, and unexpected epiphanies—resulting in expanded mindset capacity and range.

The Simplicity: Mindset growth doesn't have to be complicated or lengthy. The most powerful shifts come from awareness of where you are, intention about where you're going and why, and then experimenting with what it takes to get there.



Why This Matters for Your Organization

These learnings represent a significant evolution in how we deliver vertical development in organizational contexts. By treating mindset as a map rather than a measure, recognizing existing capacity, developing range as a growth path, engaging the whole person, and focusing on awareness and intention, we've created an approach that is:

- More accessible to leaders at all levels
- More practical for real-world organizational challenges
- More effective at generating sustainable behavior change
- More scalable across large populations
- More aligned with how adults actually grow and develop

The Leadership Mindset Indicator doesn't replace the valuable foundations of vertical development theory—it enhances them with insights gained from working at scale, deep within organizations, across industries and leadership levels. This is vertical development evolved for the complexity and pace of modern organizational life.



For more information about the Leadership Mindset Indicator and how these learnings can enhance your leadership development initiatives, please contact us to schedule a conversation.

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