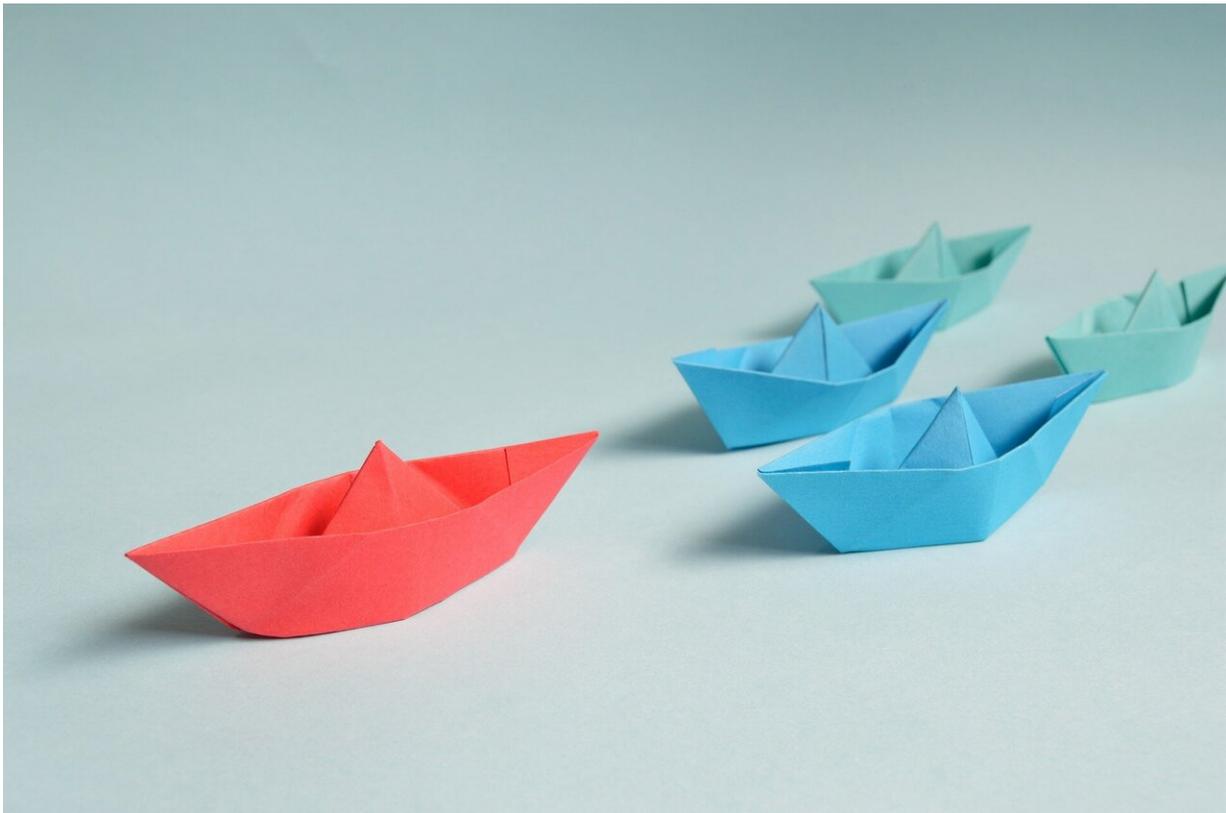


Researchers identify commonly overlooked key attributes of effective leaders

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Why aren't organizations getting more "bang" for their leadership development buck? To answer that question, two leadership experts looked at the underlying processes that contribute to leaders' decision-

making and behavior: their mindsets.

Christopher S. Reina, Ph.D., assistant professor of management and entrepreneurship in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business, and Ryan K. Gottfredson, Ph.D., assistant professor of organizational behavior in the Mihaylo College of Business and Economics at California State University Fullerton, reviewed decades of research across the social sciences to identify various mindsets that play an important role in determining why leaders do what they do.

In papers published in the most recent issues of *The Leadership Quarterly* and *Harvard Business Review*, the professors write that traditional [leadership](#) development efforts overlook this specific developmental attribute that is foundational to how leaders think, learn and behave.

"Mindsets are leaders' mental lenses that selectively organize and process information in unique ways, guiding them toward corresponding actions and responses," Reina said. "In other words, mindsets dictate what information leaders take in and use to make sense of and navigate the situations they encounter. Simply, mindsets drive why and what leaders do."

The authors identified four distinct series of mindsets that affect leaders' ability to engage, navigate change and lead more effectively: growth vs. fixed mindsets, learning vs. performance mindsets, deliberative vs. implemental mindsets, and promotion vs. prevention mindsets.

"If organizations want their investment in leadership development to more fully pay off, it is essential that they prioritize mindset development, specifically by targeting growth, learning, deliberative and promotion leader mindsets," Reina said. "If organizations focus on and help leaders hone these mindsets, they are much more likely to give their

leaders and their organization the gift of lasting and meaningful development."

A [growth mindset](#) is the belief that people, including oneself, can change their talents, abilities and intelligence, while those with a fixed mindset do not believe that people can change.

A learning mindset involves being motivated toward increasing one's competence and mastering something new. A performance mindset involves being motivated toward gaining favorable judgments—or avoiding negative judgments—about one's competence.

Leaders with a deliberative mindset have a heightened receptiveness to all kinds of information as a way to ensure that they think and act optimally. Leaders with an implemental mindset are more focused on implementing decisions, which closes them off to new and different ideas and information.

Those with a promotion mindset focus on winning and gains. They identify a specific purpose, goal or destination and prioritize making progress toward it. Conversely, leaders with a prevention [mindset](#) focus on avoiding losses and preventing problems at all costs.

The research has a variety of important implications that include enhancing leaders' self-awareness, improving leaders' meta-cognition and mindfulness, improving leadership effectiveness and improving [leadership development](#).

More information: Ryan K. Gottfredson et al. Exploring why leaders do what they do: An integrative review of the situation-trait approach and situation-encoding schemas, *The Leadership Quarterly* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101373](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101373)

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