

# Dimensions of growth:

## How can we expect people to develop if they are put in a box?

The near future is going to make big demands on workers to learn and grow; being told that you are constrained by your personality is not going to help people make the effort to develop. A “fixed mindset” has been shown to limit individual’s attempts and success at learning. However this is exactly where “type” personality assessments put you – in a box. That can be one of 16 type boxes, or one of four boxes in a matrix, but the end result – you’re defined by your box. Meanwhile future effectiveness require the ability to think and act beyond a box – to believe in capability to learn and apply new knowledge and skills – that’s what a “growth mind set” is all about.

It seems inevitable that technologies will bring about radical changes in jobs. McKinsey researchers estimate that only around five percent of existing jobs will be destroyed by technology (by 2030), while 60 percent of jobs will be significantly disrupted – at least a third of their tasks could be automated. A metaphor for work in the near future is the “freestyle” human chess player, with laptop support to check options. Many workers will need to learn the skills of working with virtual assistants and making the most of databases. This will be difficult for those with the view that they are “not techy”, that they are just not wired that way.

When giving people feedback on their personality assessment – which is more empowering and likely to help move people towards growth and development?

A. You are a “sensor”, inclined to be literal about things, to believe what you know is real because you can see, touch and experience it, you are not someone who connects with abstract issues

B. You are in the middle of the distribution for open-mindedness, you are likely to be comfortable exploring new ideas and situations which build on your present understanding; you can build on your current capabilities to learn new things

### Fixed or growth mindsets

Carol Dweck researches the extent to which thinking you have a fixed amount of intelligence (or personality) influences your approach to challenges and your persistence with demanding problems.

Overall there is a clear difference in the behaviour of those with either a fixed or growth mindset. Fixed mindset folk are more inclined to avoid challenges, more likely to defend their self-image, and more

likely to give up when the problems are difficult. The growth mindset-oriented people go the other way – challenges are approached as opportunities to learn, as are failures. Difficult problems provide more opportunity to practice and learn.

More recent work by Dweck has explored the impact of fixed mindset on career interests. Are people who believe that career success is a matter of finding and following their passion likely to put in the effort to realise their career aspirations?

Unfortunately not. Those who subscribed to this fixed view of career interests were more likely to give up when the going got tough. Which makes sense – the assumption of following your passion is that the work you do will not feel like work – it will be

<p>16 MBTI Types – Wikipedia; <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myers-Briggs_Type_Indicator#/media/File:MyersBriggsTypes.png">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myers-Briggs_Type_Indicator#/media/File:MyersBriggsTypes.png</a></p>	<p>5 OCEAN dimensions OCEAN Report</p>



exciting and energising! Having to make an effort means there is something wrong with the dream. Those who had a more flexible view of career interests were more likely to keep going.

**Understanding personality can provide the room to grow**

There is danger in feeding back to people the suggestion that they are going to behave in a particular way because they were born that way. If this is the way you are, the best you can do is to find work to match that. In this mindset growth is not an option – attempts to develop new knowledge and skill are at risk of running into the sands of disbelief. And more bad news – the job you are destined for might not exist in the near future.

Type-based personality tests (like the Myers Briggs) reinforce this fixed mindset – you are one of 16 types.

In the real world we all know people who can act “against type”. Many effective presenters are “introverts”. Some “disorganised” people are “trained” by their partners. Such individuals have

learnt that in some situations it is worth investing in learning the appropriate behaviour. It’s deliberate, practiced, and under continual development – like many a golf or tennis game.

Meanwhile, for the last 30 years we have known that personality is defined by five dimensions (the Big Five, or OCEAN model). Significant advantages this scientifically validated model provides over “typing” people:

- › People can and do develop along these five dimensions (Open, Conscientious, Extravert, Agreeable, Nervous) – so your “score” is not a life sentence
- › Your results on the OCEAN profile predict real-world outcomes – job performance and success, health and well-being – so there is good reason to invest in developing these capabilities

Personality does develop. For example the typical 65-year-old is more conscientious than about 85 percent of early adolescents – setting things up nicely for inter-generational conflict! By identifying priority areas of diligence (or empathy, or

assertiveness) and focusing training or coaching on those it is possible to see long-term change. For example engineers who implemented personal self-management tools were more productive (and conscientious) in their subsequent work.

Individuals who review their results on a dimensional personality measure can make development choices based on personal values and goals, and work towards self-improvement, and building their growth mind set. **HR**



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