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# The Outward Mindset

## Seeing Beyond Ourselves

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

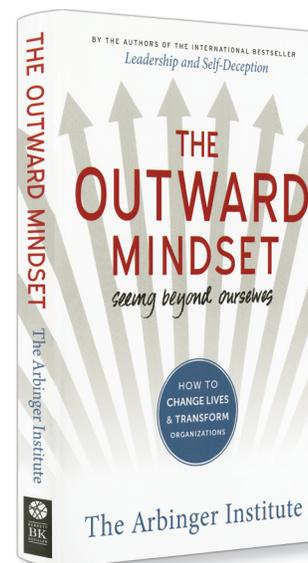
Our mindset is the lens through which we see our work, our relationships and our entire world. Unknowingly, too many of us operate from an inward mindset — a narrow-minded focus on self-centered goals and objectives. When faced with personal ineffectiveness or lagging organizational performance, most of us instinctively look for quick-fix behavioral band-aids, not recognizing the underlying mindset at the heart of our most persistent challenges.

When individuals and organizations make the change to the outward mindset, incredible things start to happen. The outward mindset is focused on the objectives and results of the organization as a whole. It seeks to be helpful, responsible and make a real impact. It helps individuals see how they might be creating obstacles in the work of others, and helps them change the way they are working and relating to their team members in a way that creates real, sustainable results.

Through true stories and simple yet profound guidance and tools, *The Outward Mindset* enables individuals and organizations to make the one change that most dramatically improves performance, sparks collaboration and accelerates innovation — a shift to an outward mindset.

### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to recognize the two mindsets that drive people and organizations.
- How and why we prevent ourselves from having an outward mindset.
- The three key elements of an outward mindset and strategies for adopting them.
- Why adopting an outward mindset creates a competitive advantage for organizations.



by The Arbinger Institute

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE OUTWARD MINDSET

by The Arbinger Institute

**The author:** The Arbinger Institute delivers training, consulting, coaching and digital tools to help individuals and organizations change mindset, transform culture, accelerate collaboration and innovation, resolve conflict and sustainably improve results. As a result of its 35-year track record with clients, Arbinger is now recognized as a world leader in the areas of mindset change, leadership, team building, conflict resolution, crisis management and culture change.

*The Outward Mindset: Seeing Beyond Ourselves; How to Change Lives and Transform Organizations* by The Arbinger Institute. Copyright © 2016 by Arbinger Properties, LLC. Summarized by permission of the publisher, Berrett-Koehler. 192 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 978-1-6265-6715-3. To purchase this book go to Amazon.com.

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## Introduction

Think of the following people: the three people in your life whom you most like; the two people who've had the most positive influence on you; your best boss; the person who inspires you to do your best; your three favorite co-workers; the acquaintance you most respect.

As you think about these people, consider why you like them, respond well to them, work hard for them and revere them. Many of the people you are thinking about likely have this in common: You feel seen by them. Something about the way they see and engage with you makes you feel as if you matter. You feel this way when you are with them because to them, you do matter. This characteristic you admire in others is a way of seeing that is called an outward mindset.

People often use the term “mindset” to refer to a core belief about oneself. However, the biggest lever for change is not a change in self-belief but a fundamental change in the way one sees and regards one's connections with and obligations to others. Understanding the difference between a self-focused inward mindset and an others-inclusive outward mindset will help you become more outward in your work, your leadership and your life. It will guide you in building more innovative and collaborative teams and organizations. And it will help you see why you like many of the people you do and what you can do to become more like them.

Developing an outward mindset is a matter of learning to see beyond ourselves. “Leaders fail,” says Paul Hubbard, CEO of a healthcare company, “by coming in saying, ‘Here's the vision. Now you go execute what I see.’ Although leaders should provide a mission or context and

point toward what is possible, what humble, good leaders also do is to help people see. When people see, they are able to exercise all their human agency and initiative. When they do that, they own their work. When people are free to execute what they see, rather than simply to enact the instructions of the leader, they can change course in the moment to respond to ever-changing, situation-specific needs. That kind of nimbleness and responsiveness is something you can't manage, force or orchestrate.”

Our journey begins with a foundational idea: Mindset drives and shapes all that we do — how we engage with others and how we behave in every moment and situation. ●

## PART I: SOMETHING NEW

### What Shapes Behavior

Countless books on personal improvement and organizational transformation recount the behaviors and actions of people who have achieved remarkable results with the promise that, by replicating their behaviors, you can achieve similar outcomes. This formulaic approach to improvement takes as its starting point the simple idea that behaviors drive results.

The idea that behaviors drive results seems almost self-evident. But how many of us have tried to replicate a behavioral formula — adopting the same leadership practices or mimicking the same interpersonal approaches of those who have achieved enviable results — only to throw up our hands in frustration? “Well, that didn't work!”



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There are two core problems with a purely behavioral approach for improving performance:

- The behaviors people choose to engage in (that they sense are right and helpful given their situation) will depend on how they see their situation and those with whom they interact. So while behaviors drive results, behaviors themselves are informed and shaped by one's mindset.
- In whatever a person does, his or her mindset comes through, and others respond to this combination of behavior and mindset. This means that the effectiveness of an individual's behaviors will depend to some significant degree on that individual's mindset.

Change efforts built upon the incomplete behavioral-model approach, where a person or organization tries to improve performance by focusing only on behavior change, will fail much more often in comparison to efforts that focus on changing both behavior and mindset. Studies conducted by McKinsey & Company corroborate this, showing that organizations that "identify and address pervasive mindsets at the outset are four times more likely to succeed in organizational-change efforts than are companies that overlook this stage."

When you sufficiently improve the mindset — either of an individual or of an organization — you no longer have to specify everything each team member is supposed to do (the way those who operate from a behavioral model often assume). As the mindset changes, so does the behavior, without having to prescribe the change. And where certain behaviors still need to be stipulated, the suggestions won't be systematically resisted. For these reasons, mindset change facilitates sustainable behavior change.

Moreover, as the mindset changes, people begin thinking and acting in ways that hadn't been imagined before. Let's begin to explore the mindset that makes this possible. ●

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## Two Mindsets

Incentive structures, company metrics, career goals and personal egos all conspire to keep people focused on themselves and their own perceived needs and challenges, usually to the detriment of the team and the enterprise. In short, organizations and their people get inwardly focused, and as a result, they get stuck. They consider only those options that would advance their own agendas. This way of operating is called an inward mindset.

With an outward mindset, people are able to consider and behave in ways that further the collective results that they are committed to achieve. These two mindsets — an inward mindset on the one hand and an outward mindset on the other — form two ends of a continuum. Consider, for example, an organization in which every person operates with an inward mindset and where the practices, policies and processes continually invite the same. No organization is completely this way, but consider this extreme case as the left end of the mindset continuum. Then consider an organization composed of people, processes, and practices that are entirely outward. Again, no single organization operates with a completely outward mindset, but consider that possibility as the extreme right end of the continuum.

The objective is to move individuals and organizations further to the right on the mindset continuum. Why? Because accountability, collaboration, innovation, leadership, culture and value to customers all improve as organizations increasingly apply an outward mindset in their strategies, structures, systems, processes and day-to-day work.

### Seeing Truthfully

With an outward mindset, you are alive to and interested in others' needs, objectives and challenges; you see others as people. With an inward mindset, on the other hand, you become self-focused and see others not as people with their own needs, objectives and challenges but as objects to help you with yours. Those that can help you, you see as vehicles. Those that make things more difficult for you, you see as obstacles. Those whose help wouldn't matter become irrelevant.

Don't confuse introspection with an inward mindset. One can introspect in a self-centered way, which would indicate an inward mindset. However, a person also can introspect about one's connections with others, which is the very essence of outwardness. Sometimes it is helpful to look inside to see how one is connected with what is outside.

Seeing people as people rather than as objects enables better thinking because such thinking is done in response to the truth: Others really are people and not objects. This truth, once seen, enables change even where change seems most unlikely. Rok Zorko, vice president of product development for the very successful app-development company, Outfit7, said, "It is an eye-opener to realize that you are not to treat people as objects but to treat them as people. Once you have this knowledge, you can never unthink it." ●

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## PART II: EXPLORING THE OUTWARD MINDSET

### Getting Out of Our Own Way

For all the advantages that an outward mindset seems to offer, why would people ever be inward? It is tempting to blame difficult circumstances or challenging people. However, what keeps people from an outward mindset is themselves. We get in our own way.

You might find yourself in circumstances that make this claim sound naive. Your boss may be difficult to work for. You might be on the brink of financial ruin or feel as if your career has hit a dead end. In response to these or other difficulties, perhaps you have felt compelled toward an inward mindset.

Let's consider how this happens. Let's say that you work with someone named Lori. Suppose that one day you come across a piece of information that will be very helpful to you in your work. Suppose as well that from your understanding of Lori's needs and objectives, you realize that the information would be very helpful to Lori. If you have an outward mindset, knowing that the organization's success depends on your colleague's success as well as your own, you will feel an obligation to help your colleague succeed. Recognizing that Lori would be helped by the information, you will have the desire to share it with her.

But what if you were to choose not to share the information? What if Lori once did something that made a situation harder for you? As you begin to entertain the possibility of not sharing the information with her, do you think that you might remember that time when she didn't help you? What if she has some annoying habits? Maybe you don't know Lori very well. Not knowing her would give you a lot of room to imagine what she must really be like. What picture of Lori would make it easier for you to feel justified for not sharing the information? Lori as hardworking or lazy? Trustworthy or unreliable? Helpful or uncooperative?

With an inward mindset, you see Lori in distorted ways — ways that help you feel justified for deciding not to help her. You will zero in on anything in her or in the situation that will give you this apparent justification. "She doesn't help me," you might say to yourself. "And she's really an annoying person. You can't trust her either; no one who is really trustworthy has such shift eyes. Besides, if she worked harder, she would've discovered the information herself. I shouldn't reward slothfulness. No, that wouldn't be good for the company. It would really be

a mistake if I shared this with her." Your self-talk and how you are now feeling toward Lori will justify the way you are choosing to live.

Are there people in your life, either at work or at home, whose needs, objectives and burdens you resist seeing? How about people that you don't resist — people with whom you are open, curious, interested, aware? As you compare these relationships, what differences do you notice in how you feel and act? Can you spot any blame in what you tell yourself about others or any self-justifying narratives that you've come to believe about yourself?

The most troubling areas of our lives will be those in which we resist what the humanity of others invites us to see. This is a hopeful truth. It means that we can be rid of the distorted ways of seeing that strain our connections with others. We can stop resisting.

### The Lure of Inwardness

Within organizations, every person who is burning time and energy seeking justification is doing so at the expense of the contribution he or she could be making to the overall results of the company. The energy-draining, time-wasting, silo-creating effect of this justification seeking is one of the most debilitating of organizational problems. Entire organizations can fall prey to the lure of inwardness with spectacularly damaging results.

An inward-mindset style can easily be mistaken for an outward mindset. This style omits the needs, objectives and challenges of others. Even though people or organizations operating with this style of inwardness feel as if they are doing things for others and not for themselves, they aren't paying attention to the needs, objectives and challenges of those they are supposedly doing things for. They don't experience themselves as being egocentric. They feel as if they do good things for others all the time and actually experience themselves as being outwardly facing.

What is the cost of an inward mindset? 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 and working. ●

### The Outward-Mindset Solution

A person conceiving her work with an outward mindset is alive to and interested in the needs, objectives and challenges of each of the persons toward whom she has responsibility — toward her customers, direct

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reports, peers and manager. Her objectives and behaviors take these people's needs, objectives and challenges into account. Her focus is outward on something much larger than herself — on her essential contribution to the overall goals of the organization. And thinking of her role in this way requires her to focus on doing her work in a way that helps others to do theirs.

The power of this outward-mindset approach can be seen in the results of an innovative debt-collection agency that has built its entire mission and strategy in terms of the outward mindset. The company is CFS2, headquartered in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Bill Bartmann, founder and CEO of CFS2, has known his own hard times. Having been hounded by debt collectors himself, he wanted to build a debt-collection company that worked differently — which is to say, outwardly.

Bill and his company focus on treating those who are in debt with dignity and respect. They operate from the premise that their clients owe them money precisely because they don't have enough money to pay them. The typical approach to debt collection — an inward-mindset approach — is to browbeat those who owe money until you squeeze whatever you can out of them. An outward-mindset approach, on the other hand, begins with thinking about these people and what they are up against. Those who take this approach are alive to and interested in the challenges these people are facing, and their mission is to help them with those challenges.

With this approach, Bill Bartmann and his people began by figuring out how they could help their clients make money. Bill asked his entire workforce to begin brainstorming and experimenting to see how they could best help their clients get jobs. At first, they tried giving their clients advice and suggestions about what to do. But this didn't seem to help much. One of Bill's employees offered this observation: "They can't do the heavy lifting themselves — they're so beat down they have no get-up-and-go left."

So the employees of CFS2 began writing résumés for their clients. They began looking for job opportunities for them, helping them fill out applications and scheduling job interviews. They ran mock interviews to prepare them for the real thing. And they even began calling their clients on the mornings of their appointments to get them out of bed early enough to arrive at the job interview on time!

From there they began helping in other ways. Any headache in their clients' lives became an opportunity to help. CFS2 has identified a myriad of organizations that exist to help people in need with these and many other

services, and Bill's team brings in these organizations to help meet the needs of their clients. And they do all this for free. In fact, Bill rewards his employees not for how much debt they collect but for how many free services they can provide to their clients!

From an inward-mindset perspective, this all seems crazy. But the results speak for themselves. After just three years in the industry, CFS2's rate of collection was two times that of any firm in the industry.

We see in the CFS2 story how an outward-mindset approach can mobilize an entire company to work on behalf of its customers — not just to provide a product or service but to enthusiastically innovate to meet the customers' needs and help them achieve their own objectives. Inward-mindset people and organizations do things. Outward-mindset people and organizations help others to be able to do things.

Now let's explore a proven methodology to move from an inward mindset to an outward mindset. ●

### PART III: BECOMING MORE OUTWARD

## The Outward-Mindset Pattern

Those who work with an outward mindset see the needs, objectives and challenges of others; adjust their efforts to be more helpful to others; and measure and hold themselves accountable for the impact of their work on others. Engaging in these three steps is a practical approach to implementing and sustaining an outward-mindset way of working. You can remember the pattern with the simple acronym SAM — see others, adjust efforts, measure impact.

Alan Mulally was hired as president and CEO at Ford in September 2006. Bleeding at the rate of \$17 billion per year, Ford put all its remaining chips on Alan Mulally. As Mulally soon discovered, no one at Ford felt responsible for the problems of the company.

Mulally led through a mechanism of weekly meetings, including the Business Plan Review, or BPR. Mulally trained his executive team to come to the BPR prepared with charts that showed performance against the company plan for each area of responsibility. He had them color-code their charts: Anything that was on plan was to be coded green, anything at risk of going off plan was to be coded yellow, and anything off plan was to be coded red.

Mulally also pointed to 10 BPR rules: people first; everyone is included; compelling vision; clear performance goals; one plan; facts and data; propose a plan, "find-a-way"

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attitude; respect, listen, help and appreciate each other; emotional resilience ... trust the process; have fun ... enjoy the journey and each other.

As the executives presented, each and every chart was coded green. Why? Because you couldn't be wrong at Ford and keep your position. "The company was under-performing, sure," the executives would privately admit, "but I'm not."

The next week, just before the new Ford Edge was about to ship out of Oakville, Ontario, Canada, a test driver reported a problem on one of the test vehicles: The tailgate had an actuator problem. Mark Fields, who led Ford's operations in the Americas, had a decision to make.

Telling the truth, exposing challenges in your area of operations, usually resulted in losing your job. Fields felt like a dead man. If he shipped and the vehicles were faulty, he was a goner. But he was sure that the same fate awaited him if he came to the meeting and, in a final blaze of glory, told everyone that the Edge had a problem.

He thought it over and finally decided that since he was dead anyway, he was going to call it like it was. He prepared his chart. In red. Everyone around the table knew what Mark Fields knew. He was as good as gone.

Everyone except one, and that person started clapping. "Mark," Mulally smiled as he clapped, "that is great visibility." Then he turned to the rest of the group and asked the question that was the beginning of their education in the outward mindset: "Who can help Mark with that?" At that invitation, a number of Fields' colleagues jumped in with offers. One said that he had seen that issue on another vehicle and would get that information to Fields immediately. Another offered to quickly get a group of his top-flight engineers to Oakville to help on any redesign that might need to happen. And so on.

When he showed up the following week with his Edge chart still red, but moving to yellow, and Mulally still smiling at him, the others began to realize that Mulally was for real. "You aren't red," Mulally insisted. "The issue you're working on is red." And he wanted them to help each other with the challenges they each faced, something they could do only if they came forward with their challenges. The week after that, the charts around the room had so much red that the meeting looked like a crime scene.

You may know the rest of the story. Working this way together and spreading this helpful, self-accountable approach throughout the company, Ford was able to pull itself out of a deep ditch — to such a degree that it was able to get in front of the financial crisis of 2007–08 as the only American automobile manufacturer that didn't have

to take federal moneys to survive. Alan Mulally retired from Ford in the spring of 2014. His replacement at Ford was Mark Fields.

### The Three Elements

Think about the Ford turnaround story in relation to the three elements of the outward-mindset pattern. Regarding the first step — seeing the needs, objectives and challenges of others (and the organization as a whole) — the BPR process itself gave the members of Mulally's team visibility both into their own contribution to the whole and into the needs, objectives, challenges and activities of their colleagues. Because Mulally's mindset was outward in the way he worked with his team and conducted these meetings, that forum offered the Ford team an opportunity to see their own roles in relation to others.

The second step of the outward-mindset pattern is adjusting one's work to become more helpful to others. This step naturally follows the first. Once the team could see the challenges faced around the table, Mulally invited them to step up and help. "Who can help Mark with that?" was more than a question. It was a statement about how Mulally wanted his people to take responsibility not just for their own part in the overall project but also for their impact on their colleagues' ability to successfully fulfill their responsibilities.

Lastly, they gathered together each week to see if the help they were providing was making any difference in their co-workers' ability to get results. This is the third step in the outward-mindset pattern: measuring impact. Mulally's process gave the Ford team at least a once-a-week way of assessing whether the adjustments being made by those around the room were actually helping. Each week they had the opportunity to assess their impact on one another and the company's overall results and make necessary adjustments. The turnaround at Ford depended on the team's engaging in each step of the outward-mindset pattern: See others, adjust efforts and measure impact. ●

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### Don't Wait on Others

While the goal in shifting mindsets is to get everyone turned toward each other, accomplishing this goal is possible only if people are prepared to turn their mindsets toward others with no expectation that others will change their mindsets in return. This capability overcomes the biggest impediment to mindset change: the natural, inward-mindset inclination to wait for others to change before doing anything different oneself. This is the natural

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trap in organizations. Executives want employees to change, and employees wait on their leaders. Everyone waits. So nothing happens.

Ironically, the most important move in mindset work is to make the move one is waiting for the other to make. Sometimes people are afraid to make this move because they think that others may take advantage of them if they do. But people misunderstand if they think that working with an outward mindset when others refuse to do the same makes a person blind to reality or soft on bad behavior. It does neither.

In fact, what obscures vision and exposes people to more risk is not an outward mindset, which stays fully alive to and aware of others, but an inward one, which turns its attention away from others while simultaneously provoking resistance. People who work in dangerous, high-risk situations know this most of all — people like the Navy SEALs and SWAT team members. They know that their lives and missions depend on their ability to remain fully aware of the complexities of their situations and to do so in a way that doesn't stir up escalated resistance. The outward mindset doesn't make them soft; it makes them smart.

Remember, the principle to apply is, "As far as I am concerned, the problem is me. I am the place to start. Others' responses will depend mostly on what they see in me. The most important move is for *me* to make the most important move." ●

### PART IV: MULTIPLYING THE MINDSET CHANGE

## Mobilize Around a Collective Goal

In organizations that have successfully built outward-mindset cultures, one factor is constant: The leaders involved their organizations in pursuing a collective result — that is, a result that at once involved everyone in something much bigger than himself or herself and required that everyone join together with others in order for their efforts to succeed.

Every organization already exists as a collective, but very often, people in organizations mostly identify around their separate, individual roles. They don't have an understanding of how their own roles are essential to the overall collective result of the organization.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you utilize the outward-mindset-at-work framework for redefining your role in this way:

- **Toward your manager.** Do I have a clear understanding of my manager's objectives? What can I do to learn about them? What do I need to do to make sure that I am holding myself accountable for my contribution to my manager's results?
- **Toward your customers.** Who are my customers, and what objectives do they have that I could help them with? How will I measure whether they are, in fact, helped by my efforts?
- **Toward your peers.** Which of my peers are affected by my work? Do I know whether I am helping or hindering them in their ability to accomplish their objectives?
- **Toward your direct reports.** Are my direct reports growing in their abilities? Have I worked with them to set a collective result for the entire team, and do they understand how they contribute to that result? Are they holding themselves accountable for that impact in each of the directions of their work? What can I do to help them to do this?

Wherever you are located in your organization, you can begin to rethink your work so that you see yourself in the context of achieving your own essential part of a collective result. ●

## Allow People to Be Fully Responsible

Without realizing it, too many leaders assume that the role of leadership is to control. They espouse Plato's "division of labor," which, according to social thinker Hannah Arendt, has influenced government and military structures for thousands of years. With the advent of the industrial revolution, she argues, corporate action, like the action of monarchies and armies, proceeded in two phases: planning and execution. Accordingly, in most organizations you find a class-divided lot: the minds and the bodies, the brains and the backs, the knowers and the doers, the manipulators and the manipulated.

Organizations that perpetuate this leader/led distinction tend to be riddled with justification and blame. Those who are tasked with doing can always blame poor performance on uninformed or unrealistic plans, while those who do the planning can always blame failures on poor execution. Leaders will cry for greater accountability, but the way most organizations are set up breeds a constant lack of accountability.

With an outward mindset, leaders position people to be fully responsible. This means that they empower their

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people with the responsibility both to execute *and* to plan their work. A distinguishing characteristic of organizations that operate with an outward mindset is the extent to which people in those organizations are allowed and encouraged to engage their whole brains in the planning as well as the doing of their work. Whole brains means all of their faculties, including their wills and their hearts. People operating with an outward mindset exercise, as it were, their whole selves. ●

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### Turn Systems Outward

An important aspect of leading successful mindset change is a willingness to reconsider the objectives, systems, policies and processes of an organization. Systems and processes that are designed to manage objects rather than empower people have widespread negative consequences. Efforts to rethink those systems and processes from an outward-mindset perspective can deliver huge benefits.

Leaders of organizations that operate with an inward mindset may feel confused by what they see in organizations that operate with an outward mindset. It will seem risky to manage those they see and treat as objects with systems and processes that are designed to empower people.

This is one of the reasons why an outward-mindset approach becomes such a competitive advantage. Those who are unwilling to adopt an outward mindset won't be able to successfully replicate outward-mindset systems, processes and approaches, while organizations that turn systems and processes outward become positioned to achieve and sustain higher levels of performance. The outward-mindset reporting practices at Ford positioned the company to be able to get in front of the financial crisis in ways that others couldn't.

Hiring and onboarding practices, sales and marketing processes, budgeting practices, incentive structures, performance evaluation and management systems, and every other organizational system, structure and process can be conceived and deployed in inward-mindset or outward-mindset ways. Organizations that are serious about operating with an outward mindset turn these systems and processes outward to invite and reinforce outward-mindset working. ●

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### The Road Ahead

Sometimes having an outward mindset is rather easy. We may be among people who care about each other, and it may seem utterly natural and easy to respond to them

with an outward mindset. In such cases, we feel so cared for and considered by those whose mindsets are outward toward us that we feel no need or desire to be defensive toward them. Almost effortlessly we find ourselves naturally showing consideration in return. An outward mindset in one person invites the same in others.

Unfortunately, the same principle works as well in reverse. When we interact with someone who is operating with an inward mindset, we may feel that he is failing to consider our views or opinions, and we can see that as an invitation to take offense or withdraw. If we do, we will give back to this person exactly what he is giving to us, and we will become embroiled in an inward-mindset struggle. Although an inward mindset in one person does not cause others to respond with an inward mindset, it does invite others to respond in kind. The challenge is how to respond with an outward mindset when those we work or live with invite the opposite.

Consider this central question: What can I do to be more helpful at work? What can I do to be more helpful to those I know and to those I don't? What can I do? And will I see myself and others in ways that will enable me to do what I can do? An indication of an outward mindset is the willingness of a person to honestly ask these questions in each area of his or her life, coupled with an excitement to begin acting on the answers despite challenges.

So what will you do as you consider the people you work with? Whatever you do, you can do it with either an inward mindset or an outward mindset. Which way you do it will determine to a large degree your results.

Start with mindset. Apply the outward-mindset pattern: see others, adjust efforts and measure impact. Don't wait for others to change. Mobilize yourself and your team or organization to achieve a collective goal. Allow people to be fully responsible. Finally, rethink systems and processes to turn them outward. ●

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