



Adopt a growth mindset

Learning to learn, praising the process, and reflecting on your progress all point your mind toward the common goal of persistent development.



Mitchell Shope

Whether it's an article about self-improvement, honing leadership skills, receiving feedback, or increasing efficiency, there's consistently an underlying and pervasive message throughout: adopt a growth mindset. While almost every lesson includes this bullet point, few explicitly demonstrate exactly what a growth mindset is or more importantly how to bring it into practice. Simply put, a growth mindset is a worldview centered around continual learning and relentless development.

Indeed, while most AEC firms will wholeheartedly embrace "growth" and "development" of their employees as core values and top priorities, few effectively excel at embedding these tenets into their cultures. Creating a self-perpetuating growth culture requires buy-in and individualized effort from all levels of an organization. Following these steps can help both you and your coworkers foster a supportive atmosphere and develop a persistent, growth-centered mindset.

1) Praise process, not intellect. Whether it's to members of your team or internally to yourself, praising the process is infinitely more important than praising an outcome. Dr. Carol Dweck, the godmother and creator of the term "growth mindset," demonstrates in several studies that students praised for strategy, effort, and progression

fare significantly better long-term compared to students praised strictly for performance. Those routinely praised only for their output develop defensive and reactive tendencies seeing poor performance as an attack on character and not as an opportunity for growth.

Because of this tendency, testing raw intelligence and performance of individuals is a lose-lose. A perceived loss can be devastating to confidence while a win teaches entitlement and emphasis solely on natural ability. Positioning individuals to "learn to learn" instead of "learning to solve" is paramount to long-term success.

Operating within a deadline and service-driven industry, AEC firms are particularly at risk for

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ON THE MOVE

ELLEN MITCHELL-KOZACK JOINS LEO A DALY AS CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER LEO A DALY, the global planning, architecture, engineering, and interiors firm, announced that Ellen Mitchell-Kozack, AIA, LEED BD+C, WELL AP, SEED, has joined the firm as vice president, chief sustainability officer.

In this role, Mitchell-Kozack leads LEO A DALY's strategic initiatives in sustainable design worldwide, including environmental social and governance, alignment with the UN Global Compact and Sustainable Development Goals, carbon footprint assessment and social impact. She is based in the firm's Dallas, Texas, design studio.

Mitchell-Kozack is a nationally recognized voice in sustainability and public interest design. As senior vice president, director of sustainability at HKS, she led the firm's DesignGreen studio and founded Citizen HKS, an impact initiative focused on leveraging sustainable design to address growing humanitarian needs of communities around

the world. She has managed certification of more than 60 LEED projects worldwide, totaling \$2.8 billion in construction, including 50 United Nations Plaza in San Francisco and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland.

Mitchell-Kozack is co-chair of the American Institute of Architects' Large Firm Roundtable Sustainability Group. She was named one of several "Heroes and Mavericks" by *Boutique Design* in 2018, a *BD+C* 40 Under 40 winner in 2015, and has won Emerging Leader Awards from AIA Dallas (2012) and the Design Futures Council (2013). Her work has been featured in *Dezeen*, *Fast Company*, *Architectural Digest*, and *Designboom*. She has spoken at Greenbuild (2018), NeoCon (2018), AIA National Convention (2017) and SXSW Eco (2015).

"I'm excited to welcome Ellen Mitchell-Kozack as chief sustainability officer. Ellen applies a humanitarian and environmental lens to architecture that will benefit our clients, the

communities we live in and the future of our planet," said LEO A DALY President Steven Lichtenberger, AIA.

"As designers of the built environment, we have a responsibility to address the environmental and social impacts of our work. LEO A DALY is committed to deepening our commitment to the world's most pressing environmental and social issues. I'm excited leverage the firm's integrated design expertise to affect positive change," said Mitchell-Kozack.

LEO A DALY is a leader in the design of the built environment, offering planning, architecture, engineering, interior design, and program management services all over the world. Since 1915, the firm has had an unyielding focus on design excellence to create exceptional spaces that enhance and enrich the human experience. LEO A DALY's award-winning, diverse portfolio includes projects in a wide range of markets in more than 91 countries, all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

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monitoring results over process. Even if underperforming, employees working excess hours each week are rarely working because they have nothing better to do. Breaking the cycle of an underperforming employee requires careful monitoring and praising of mindset over output.

2) Understand the learning curve. In lieu of reducing skills and competencies to a binary ("you either know it or you don't"), reinforce the nature of the learning curve as a continuum by adding "yet" to your vocabulary. While you may not pick up tasks the first or even fifth time, emphasizing and measuring incremental growth over speed or autonomy allows you to recognize that intentional repetition and rehearsal ingrain the process of learning more strongly than simply completing tasks.

Within her research, Dr. Dweck labels this dichotomy as the "Power of Yet" versus the "Tyranny of Now." Maintaining a growth mindset requires understanding that incomplete knowledge of a task should be labeled as "I don't know how to do that yet" instead of "I don't (and will never) know how to do that." Through multiple meta-studies, fixed-mindset individuals' actions after experiencing failure on a challenging test were dramatic. Some indicated cheating on following tests, others targeted someone else who performed more poorly as a shifting of negative attention, and many simply vowed to not try something so challenging again. Within a growth mindset, encountering difficulty just means "not yet" instead of "no."

3) Provide opportunities for reflection. Perhaps most important to the development of a growth mindset is reserving dedicated time for reflection and development of self-awareness. Assessing and measuring individual progress requires careful and intentional introspection to identify areas of both strength and weakness. Soliciting genuine feedback from trusted advisors and coworkers will help to inform this reflection. Only by taking a discrete step away from the whirlwind of day-to-day output can you observe and record personal growth.

While many leaders recognize the value and practice of personal reflection, few also extend the same offering of time to their constituents. Within a workplace driven by results and performance, individuals are rarely allowed time to analyze their processes and strategies toward their work. This shortsightedness ironically results in limited output and performance due to inefficient processes. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening my axe." Allowing yourself and your constituents even one hour per week to think critically about how they do their job, instead of just doing their job, will expose an abundance of implementable ideas and foster more flexible thinking.

"Instilling this mindset into the culture of your firm can pay endless dividends as new ideas and more efficient processes create excitement and potential, instead of resistance and pessimism."

A growth mindset serves as the foundation for effective learning and a powerful career in any industry. Learning to learn, praising the process, and reflecting on your progress all point your mind toward the common goal of persistent development. Instilling this mindset into the culture of your firm can pay endless dividends as new ideas and more efficient processes create excitement and potential, instead of resistance and pessimism. By following the steps above and allowing employees the flexibility to expand their mindsets as well, you may find that your next idea will be met with a "great, how do we do it?" in lieu of an "oh boy, another change." ▀

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