

*“Limits exist only in the mind”*

Author Unknown



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### What Do You Have ‘IN MIND’ for the Future?

It's not news. We hear it everyday in every way... times are changing. In dramatic ways. Companies are dealing with unprecedented economic and technological challenges. They are developing new generations of processes, business reorganization and management.

The impact of these changes is creating equally unprecedented career and job challenges for people from every walk of life and business.

Whether you are currently working for an organization at the executive level, as an individual contributor – or anywhere in between; running your own business; or seeking that next career step, one thing is certain... if we are to thrive, and not just survive this ‘new world,’ we must reinvent ourselves in significant ways.

So how do we do this? What can we do to create/recreate the kind of future we have always dreamed of? One of the most overlooked, yet critical paths to our success, is to develop a **Highly Valued Mind**.

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*“Just as iron rusts from disuse, even so does inaction spoil the intellect.”*

Leonardo da Vinci

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### Our Mind(s) Matter

In Five Minds for the Future (Harvard Business School Press, 2007), noted psychologist Howard Gardner says our mind — actually, minds — matters. We achieve greater professional success by learning how to think and learn in new ways.

Gardner believes five different kinds of minds are critical to remaining a highly prized asset in, and to, your organization, especially in times of economic challenges:

### 1 The Disciplined Mind

The disciplined mind has mastered at least one way of thinking — a mode of cognition that belongs to a specific scholarly discipline, craft or profession. Lawyers think like lawyers, engineers like engineers, managers like managers.

Start by figuring out the central concepts of the discipline you wish to master. The field you choose has key foundational concepts, methods and procedures.

You need to develop many “entry points” into your discipline. Those who have mastered a subject can think about it in many ways: storytelling, debate, graphics, humor, drama or classic exposition. If you communicate your expertise in only one medium, then you don't really know your subject.

The end goal is to “perform your understanding.” This isn't mere recitation of known case studies or performance of standard experiments. You must use your knowledge to attack problems you've never seen. You then need expert feedback to determine how well you fared.

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*Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments.*

Jim Rohn

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### 2 The Synthesizing Mind

The synthesizing mind is adept at selecting crucial information from the copious amounts available, across disciplines.

- Recognize important new information and skills and then incorporate them into your knowledge base and professional repertoire.
- Discern what merits your attention and what to ignore, organizing this information in ways that make sense to yourself and others.



### 3 The Creating Mind

Human creativity is at a premium. Businesses want employees who can develop a “new vision” and “extend existing product categories,” on top of completing their daily work.

Creative thinkers are no longer deemed exceptional; they’re the *expected* new hire. Work by psychologists like Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi show that creativity is not a lone endeavor, but three elements that interact to foster lasting breakthroughs:

1. Master a discipline or area and constantly work at it.
2. Create a “cultural domain” that provides models, rules and norms to work with or against.
3. Create opportunities to exercise creativity.

The key ingredient is developing a creative temperament. Creative people notice anomalies and try to explain them, rather than explain them away.

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*“Being brilliant is no great feat if you respect nothing.”*

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

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### 4 The Respectful Mind

The respectful mind responds sympathetically and constructively to differences among individuals and groups. Those with respectful minds work beyond mere tolerance and political correctness; they develop the capacity for listening and understanding.

To succeed, you must cultivate respect for and from others. Respect is developed through various means. Bringing people to together with different backgrounds to work on joint projects with shared goals is a good place to start. This builds a foundation, with a conscious focus on cultivating understanding, tolerance and respect.

### 5 The Ethical Mind

Ethically minded individuals strive for good work and ethical balance in micro to global environments. Four tools, while not sufficient, are necessary to achieve ethical balance:

**The Objective.** What do you want to achieve? Develop clear, actionable objectives that embody your values.

**Good Role Models.** Find a model or models of ethical thinking and behavior that resonates with you and pattern your objectives and actions to that model.

**Look In The Mirror** and ask yourself if you like what you see. Do you approve of what you’re doing at work and how you are doing it? It’s easy to deceive yourself, so get confirmation from people you trust and respect.

**Hold The Mirror Up** to others to see if your colleagues are living up to their professional ethics obligations. If not, what can you do to help improve the ethical fiber of your organization and profession?

#### The Future Is Now

In reality, many individuals in positions of influence are deficient in one or more of the five kinds of minds discussed here.

The best managers and leaders select people who already possess these minds. They then challenge them to maintain, sharpen and catalyze their capacities so teams can work together effectively and serve as role models for future recruits.

The critical questions to ask yourself are:

- With which of these minds do I already show strength?
- How can I improve my mental capabilities?
- Where can I stretch my abilities to enable growth?
- Which of these minds do I need to learn?
- Who in my organization can help mentor me?

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*“Thoughts and action,  
aligned fearlessly to purpose,  
become crowning achievement.”*