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Do Innovation Managers think differently? If so, how? And what to do about it?

Jaime Luis Amsel[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Abstract/Summary

Research has shown the power of the mindset and its impact on outcomes. Mindsets being knowledge structures managers use to scan the environment, focus on specific data, make judgments, and decisions involving opportunities, value creation, and growth. This article presents the results of a qualitative analysis identifying the differences in mindsets between managers who engage in innovation efforts and managers running routine organizational endeavors. The paper begins by presenting the importance of the mindset to management outcomes. It proceeds to describe the relevant terms of comparison as being the mindsets of successful ‘command and control’ (routine) managers and successful innovation managers. Qualitative analyses of semi-structured interviews resulted in 16 root mindset differences between an effective command and control manager and an effective innovation manager. These initial 16 mindset distinctions elicited are defined and explained, followed by in-depth explanations. Results have potentially important implications for the theory, research, and practice of Innovation management. The paper ends with suggestions for further research and applied management recommendations.

**Keywords -** command and control, logical frame, innovation management, mindset.

# Introduction

Organizations, the building blocks of society, are confronting enormous challenges, resulting from the increasingly complex and swift changes in society. The terms: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) have been adopted to describe the present turbulent times (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). “VUCA is both an outcome of disruptive innovation and a driver of it (Millar, 2018, pp. 6). VUCA “creates an acute challenge for management in designing innovation” (Millar, 2018, pp. 7-8). Technological and scientific advances have been growing exponentially in recent years, demarking the Era of the Singularity, a “period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed (Kurzweil, 2014).” Our hurting planet, requires emergency and creative interventions, if we want to inherit it to future generations. All these contributing to the creation of ever increasing tempestuous managerial environments.

Managers, the organizations’ drivers, require new adaptive managerial tools to successfully drive their organizations within this challenging context. Tidd (2001) identified uncertainty and complexity as key environmental factors in innovation management processes. Innovation and its management are becoming essential managerial tools for the aforementioned environment. A sign of this is the increasing number of managers appointed to the newly established role of Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) in many organizations. There arises the need to better comprehend the Innovation managers’ mindset.

# Innovation management

Innovation, once the naughty exception among management concepts, has become a staple in most organizations. Managers understand the need to deploy innovation within their organizations and are frightened realizing that without innovation their organizations will not survive, not to say provide the societal value they were created for(Perry, 2016. Bonnet, 2015).

There is research on the mindset of the Entrepreneur. It is not applicable to the phenomena of Innovation. Innovation and Entrepreneurship, although connected, are very different phenomena. The concepts are often confused, even in academic circles. See as examples: Ireland et al. (2003), Nauman (2017), Sidhu et al. 2016, Urban (2019). Blurred concepts, lead to wrong questions and therefore useless conclusions. “There is an urgent need to untangle frequently confused concepts: Entrepreneurship, Innovation (Amsel, In Venezia 2019, pp.26 - In that chapter discerning definitions for each phenomenon are presented ).” For Academicians and Practitioners in the areas of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, it behooves us to use clear and distinguishing definitions to guide our research and conclusions.

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of innovation is: the process to add value by engaging needs with creativity in a previously unknown fashion. As such, creativity comprises just one (albeit critical) component of the process of innovation. The other critical component – and the less researched one – is the process of adding value.

This inquiry focuses solely on IM management. The purpose is to shed light on the mindset of those individuals who work within hierarchical organizations, get a monthly paycheck, their income is not at risk, and have to lead creativity and risk taking on behalf of the organization they are currently employed.

## The importance of innovation and its management

If quantity of publications is a measure for the interest in a term, innovation management seems to be exploding: Googles’ Ngram featuring to the word “innovation” jumped from 0.0005% in 1960 to 0.0030 in 2018. Amazon’s online bookstore renders over 30,000 results for the search Innovation+Management, and Google Scholar renders about 4,330,000 results for the same search. Sumita (2008) establishes “innovation is more and more substantial for sustainable corporate profit and economic growth.” “more and more people in the world have come to commonly recognize how important the innovation is for economy.” And not only for businesses, Coppock (2013) states: “grassroots innovation can help fortify social, human, and financial capital and this, in turn, can improve risk management and human well-being.” As for the bigger national picture, Kao (2007) states: “Innovation has become the new currency of global competition … where the capacity for innovation is viewed as a hallmark of national success.” (pp.1).

Simply put, the “only way for an organisation to survive, let alone thrive, in such a VUCA context is to innovate.” (von Stamm in Kunert, 2019, pp. 31).

Indeed, innovation management is coming of age. One key feature of successful innovation management is the manager’s mindset. More attention also needs to be given to the effects of management innovation at an organizational and functional level” (Millar, 2018, pp. 8)

# Mindset

What makes managers engaged in innovation tick? How do their worldviews and perceptions guide their efforts and decisions? What they believe

Mindsets, those marvelous and intangible, reality interpreters and reality generators we hold within our ears, need to become explicit, in order for us to be able to manipulate them on our behalf. Otherwise, we run organizations in auto-pilot, without setting where we would like to go or even knowing where are we going. Mindsets tacitly and actively filter how we interpret events and how we respond to those events.

How we think impacts our behaviors. Norman (1983, pp. 257) states: “People form mental models of each other, the world, and the devices and systems with which they interact. These mental models are used to predict system behavior and guide actions.

Peter Senge points out that despite their relevance in defining firm success in general and executive decision-making, mental models have remained a largely unexplored area in business research (Senge, 1994).” Alongside Yrjölä and colleagues’ study into top executive mental models in answering “the call for more research into the mental models of senior executives” (Yrjölä et al., 2018, p. 530.

Although Duffy (2009) conceptualized Mindsets as nested within Mental Models, in this research endeavor, the concepts of mindset and mental models will be used interchangeably. (See another example of this in Werhane et al. 2013).

Borrowing from the domain of Social Cognition, a mindset is: a cognitive structure in place to increase personal efficiency in the use of cognitive resources. Mindsets prompts us to prioritize information, make assessments, solve problems, and make decisions regarding the value and feasibility of an idea. Mindsets guide managers decisions and behaviors, which in turn “alter the direction, focus, and performance of the organization (Maidique & Hiller, 2018).”

Maidique and Hiller (2018) who explored leadership mindsets, state “Knowing the strengths and pitfalls of each mindset — and which ones you rely on most heavily — can help you create better teams and have a greater impact.”

## The importance of understanding the managerial mindset

Mindsets, although difficult to grasp, are key for unlocking management. Successful, effective innovation management decisions and actions generally follow from a proper mindset. The impact of the mindset on outcomes has been the focus of much psychological, educational, and organizational research in the last 30 years. Mindsets have been found to influence a variety of behaviors. Studies have delved into the following concepts, for example: self-efficacy and motivation, or the ‘growth mindset’ (Rhew, 2018); entrepreneurship (Haynie, 2010); global management (Cohen, 2010; Nummela et al. 2009); global service management (Lusch & Vargo, 2008); positivity (Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995); learning from errors (Frese & Keith, 2015); mental models of senior executives (Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Strandvik et al., 2014, both cited in Yrjölä et al., 2018); how top management makes sense of strategic issues such as customer value creation (Holmlund et al., 2017, Cited in Yrjölä et al., 2018), the resilience-growth mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2012); and the unconscious thought effects (UTE) decision making theory (Strick, et al., 2011). Overall, research reveals the critical impact of the mindset on organizational results.

“How we understand the mind matters … for what we value in ourselves and others, - for education, for research, for the way we set up institutions, and most important for what counts as a humane way to live and act.” (G. Lakoff in: Women, Fire and Dangerous things, pp. xvi)

Because mental models are usually tacit, existing below the level of awareness, they are often untested and unexamined. They are generally invisible to us until we look for them. The core task is bringing mental models to the surface, to explore and talk about them with minimal defensiveness to help us see the pane of glass, see its impact on our lives, and find ways to reform the glass by creating new mental models that serve us better in the world (Senge, 1994 pp. 236).

As P. Drucker (1980) stated, the “greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic.” Thus, the right mindset should strive to avoid applying “yesterday’s logic” and adopt the logic of today, and even better of tomorrow too. Thus, the importance of converting tacit mindsets to explicit ones.

To make things more acute, “Perceptions of personal “limitations,” in Piet Hein’s view, turn out to be a failure to act rather than a failure while acting. Limitations (= mindsets) are deceptive conclusions, but, unfortunately, people don’t realize this. What they don’t realize is that limitations are based on presumptions rather than action. Knowledge of limitations is not based on tests of skills but rather on an avoidance of testing. Weick (1979, pp. 149)

The research question that sparked the present study is: do ‘innovation managers’ (those managing innovative efforts, like the idea development of new product or the implementation of a new business model) have a specific enacted mindset and if so, how does it differ, if at all, from the mindset of a manager in charge of routine organizational efforts? Provided we find these differences, how can we leverage them for the benefit of the organization?

# Methodology/Method

This field research set out to discover the mindset of the effective ‘innovation manager.’ For this purpose, we conducted semi-structured interviews and observations with managers. Guiding our approach was the understanding that the study of individual mindsets requires interview data. Interviews capture senior executives’ mindset because such dialogue “enables the understanding of participants’ thought processes, values, aspirations and professional and life stories in context (Granot et al., 2012, cited in Yrjölä et al., 2018, p. 548).” In this paper we use the terms “mental model” and “mindset” interchangeably (Cabrera et al. 2020).

This study’s participants were Israeli project managers from 3 different sectors: a business corporation focused on the safety and security services, a mid-sized municipal and the Israel Defense Forces. We sampled pairs of managers, as similar as possible in demographics but with one basic difference between them: one would be a manager of an innovative endeavor within the organization and the other a manager of a usual, routine endeavor within the organization. After explaining the difference between usual/routine, entrepreneurship and innovation, in dialogue with the Human Resources department and/or the Organizational Consultant of the focus organization, we sampled the managers to be interviewed.

A preliminary analysis of the data gathered from the first round of eight interviews, we found that the relevant counterpart for innovation managers is not merely *any* other manager at the organization, but specifically an efficient manager. This led to a fine-tuning of the target interviewees. Our Human Resources and organizational consultant contacts defined such efficient, successful managers as ones who ‘deliver’ or ‘get things done.’ Thus, we frame efficient everyday, routine management (in contrast to innovation management) as a type of management that applies a ‘command and control’ mindset. This is the mindset that corporations have been grooming for decades, which allowed for those companies to thrive. Indeed, reliance on successful routine management within an organization partly explains why corporations, while advocating openly for the need for innovation, simultaneously find themselves having to recruit, promote and advance efficient command and control managers.

Given this understanding, our sampling instructions changed from: “we need to interview those managers in your organization engaged in innovative projects and other managers engaged in other organizational projects,” to “we need to interview one of your best usual/routine process managers and one of your best innovation project/process managers.”

The pursuant second round of interviews involved a total of 30 managers: half identified by their organizations as innovative project managers, and the other half identified by their organizations as effective routine (non-innovative) managers. All interviews were conducted in Hebrew, sprinkled with the English “computerese” jargon of use at the interviewee’s organization.

Interviewers began the interview by explaining to the interviewees that the purpose of the research “was to understand their management mindset.” Managers were not aware of the criteria for being chosen, only that the Human Resources department or the Consultant, considered them as “having management experience worth tapping into.”

We explained them that we want to know how a “good” manager thinks and that the definition of “good” was to be furnished by them during the interview. At a certain point in the interview, we gave a very short summary of the ‘Logical Framework’ method (Rosenberg et al., 1970. Gasper, D. 2000. Vogel, I. 2012).

Interviewers promised potential participants anonymity and asked them to provide their voluntary informed consent for participation in the research.

We proceeded then to ask the following open-ended questions:

1. What constitutes good management in your view?
2. Can you give me an example, a case?
3. What are the roles a good manager must fulfil?
4. From the mentioned roles, which one is the most important role and why is so?
5. About clients: who are your clients? What is good client management?
6. How do managers in this organization assign tasks/projects/challenges?
7. When you assign a task, how is that done? How do employees respond?
8. On the “logical framework” (as currently explained): where should be the focus of a good manager? Why?
9. The organizational climate a good manager should nurture, is a climate of…(complete this sentence). Why? How do you further this?
10. Now that you know what this interview is all about, is there anything else you think we should have asked? What? What would you be your answer to these questions?

In addition, two short hypothetical cases were presented to the interviewees. One asking what to do with a newfangled AI software program and the other dealing with what to do with a motivated employee continuously coming with ideas (mostly bad). Interviewees were asked how they would react to this cases.

Finally, we had the opportunity to observe 4 meetings, where Innovation and C&C managers participated.

# Results/Findings

Qualitative data analyses unveiled 16 main areas of mindset differences between the efficient routine managers (from here named command and control (C&C) and innovation managers (IM).

Table I summarizes the results, in terms of differences in the two type of managers’ responses. The first column presents the managerial aspect revealed, the second column presents how an effective command and control manager thinks about that aspect, and the third column presents how an innovation manager thinks about the same aspect.

Table I. A comparison between the Command and Control (CC) managerial mindset and the Innovation Management (IM) mindset

| ***Management aspect explored*** | ***Command & Control C&C Managerial Mindset*** | ***Innovation Management IM Mindset*** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The main role of the manager | Control & Efficiency | Add value[[2]](#endnote-1) |
| Manager’s self-image | Leader & Enforcer | Facilitator & Enabler |
| Approach to Task Accomplishment | Tasks will be accomplished. The simpler, the easiest, the better. | There are always different ways. It is not always clear which is the best way. Is there a way to do this better? |
| Approach to suggested changes in task accomplishment | “if it works, don’t fix it” | “Let’s see how it works”[[3]](#endnote-2). “Let’s tweak/hack this” |
| Logical framework focus | Outputs | Results. Impact |
| Organizational climate fostered | Seriousness. Professionalism. | Playfulness. Curiosity. |
| Time focus | Past then present. Managers draw from previous experience and decide on present issues. | Future then present[[4]](#endnote-3). Managers focus on the long term and then decide on present issues. |
| Risk taking and mistakes approach | Avoid, reduce, “damage control.” | Risks are exciting. Amazement. |
| Meaning given to mistakes | “We aren’t paying attention” | “When dealing with new ideas, mistakes come with the territory.” “We are trying in earnest.” |
| Approach to mistakes at work | Minimize, manage, it takes an emotional toll. | Curiosity, embrace. Mistakes as learning opportunities. |
| Challenges chosen | Achievable | Big and small, but interesting. |
| When presented with a new idea, ask: | Worthwhile? Feasible? | How? What if? Importance? |
| When managers ask questions, they expect: | Clear cut black or white, either-or answers. | Myriad of different, good answers. |
| View of the client | “Always right.” The most important. Satisfaction is important. | Partner and decision maker. Relationship is important. |
| When in need of advice/help, ask: | An expert, the best the better. | An heterogenous team, discussion helps. |
| How diversity is viewed | Nuisance, better standardize | Valued, is interesting, challenging |

## How these differences are enacted?

C&C’s voice is one of getting things done, apply wisely past experience, use efficiently resources and do not take risks. IM’s voice, by contrast, is one of let’s apply our imagination, develop opportunities to enhance experience, and point to other possible directions. The dialogue between these two voices is extremely delicate and full of potential.

As an example of how different mindsets elicit different managerial behaviors and thus outcome, comes to mind an organizational scene, similar in terms of the facts but very different in terms of the managers response. At the beginning of the research, we had the opportunity to observe different managers team meetings at which a long-term project status was being updated and evaluated. When confronted with a team member questioning a decision made a couple of meetings before, we observed that while a CC manager response was “we have already settled this in the past. Get informed about that meeting,” the IM manager response was “we have decided about this in the past, do you have any new thoughts that will make us reopen that decision?”

Continuing, I provide insight into the differences identified and how they affect managers’ behavior. The mindsets of Command and Control and Innovation managers widely differ. The differences elicited are not necessarily opposites, in most cases they are orthogonal, but clearly point to different directions.

### The main role of the manager

Interviews opened with the following question: “What constitutes good management in your view?” At first response, managers responded with very concrete, project-oriented statements like: “‘on time, on budget’ [cynically stated]; but everyone knows that to get that you have to be cheating either yourself, others, or both.” Other initial answers were: “make sure the customer is satisfied” or “justify my pay.” Which most probably are the usual and “politically correct” answers. As the interviewer probed more into what is a “good” result managers require to achieve, differences begin to florist. On further thought, participants began to produce answers like: “my role is to make sure everything runs smoothly” (CC); “make the best use of the resources” (CC); or “get my customers something better than what they have now” (IM). From this we learn that in order to tap into the mindset guiding management decisions we need to probe into, below the “surface” of acceptable responses and that initial answers do not differentiate CC from IM managers. Management mindsets differ in that CC managers reflect more the internal inputs and resources they are accountable for, “I steward resources under I am responsible for, I must be frugal, efficient.” IM managers look at a different picture, one of how we can produce value out of these resources, internally or externally to the organization, “which difference can I produce with these resources, what else can be leveraged here.”

The different mindsets were labeled accordingly: IM managers see as the main role of the manager one of adding value while CC managers view their main role as one of ensuring control and efficiency.

### Manager’s self-image

CC managers often use the term Lead-Leadership, as in “I’m a role model of leadership for the soldiers in my unit.” IM managers seldom used the term instead they stated “I’m like a sports coach, need to help soldiers give their most.” In a striking difference about how manage their boss, while a CC manager said: “I need to lead him to make better decisions,” a IM manager stated “I facilitate Her shining in front of her bosses.” In one instance, in the office of the training manager there was an evaluation of a leadership training workshop and the IM manager stated: “that does not help me, I need a workshop on how to handle group dynamics, how to make a team out of my team.” At the same instance the CC manager stated: I need more feedback on my leadership style.”

The different mindsets were labeled accordingly: IM managers see themselves as Facilitators and Enablers, while CC managers view themselves as Leaders and Enforcers.

### Task accomplishment

C&C and IM managers, perceived task accomplishment in very distinct ways. The first difference being that task accomplishment was central for C&C managers, but secondary for IM managers. C&C managers repeated many times, in different ways, that “is what they are being pay for” and “that’s the essence of management.” While IM managers viewed task accomplishment as “side effect” of doing their job: “Yes, of course they will accomplish the goal, but my main contribution was to show them there are alternative ways and think through how to choose one for the task at hand.” Second, C&C managers viewed their role on applying a kind of Occam’s razor approach: “apply the KISS (keep it simple, stupid) rule, “the easiest the better” and “how can you get it done cheaper.” On the other hand, IM managers saw a richness and potential in “playing” with different ways to approach tasks, regardless of resources used: “I do not like the “but this is how we do this always” and “wow, so this is routine, let’s see in how many different ways we can do this.”

The different mindsets were labeled accordingly: when it comes to task accomplishment, IM managers perceive different ways to accomplish tasks and not always is clear which way is the better one, while CC managers view task accomplishment as a value in itself and strive for simple easy ways to accomplish them.

### How changes on tasks are approached

When employees came with suggestions on how to improve their work, C&C managers usually viewed this as a waste of time (“we have been doing this like this 2000 years, why change?” “Not in my shift, I am in a hurry”). IM managers approached suggestions with curiosity and with motivation to “play” with them “just for the sake of it.”

The different mindsets were labeled accordingly: IM managers are open to ways to hack/tweak how tasks are approached while CC managers who earlier strived for a simple and easy way to accomplish task, prefer once they found one way, not to change according to the phrase: “if it works, don’t fix it.”

### Logical Framework focus

The Logical Framework (Rosenberg et al., 1970. Gasper, D. 2000. Vogel, I. 2012) is a conceptual model of the flow of the work/management, in 5 steps: beginning at inputs, next to processes, to achieve outputs, which in turn become results (when outputs are used by someone else) and these in turn, scaled up, show up as impact (Rangan & Gregg, 2019). It is a common thinking model taught to managers and frequently required by impact funding agencies. Most CC managers pointed at the outputs stage as the main focus of their attention: “my responsibility is to place the engineering product (output) in the hands of the user (client), and that’s it. What he does with it is his problem.” IM managers would state as main focus of their attention how the output will change their customers life: “developing the software I keep trying to figure out how this will make the users’ task easier and not always I come with an acceptable answer, but I will keep trying.” At one discussion about some glitch in a software developed the CC manager winked and said “let’s call it a feature” to which the IM manager answered: “that’s great for us, but what about the user’s issue?”

CC mindset focuses on outputs, the immediate result of the processes. CC mindset has a mastery of resources (inputs) and processes in depth knowhow, therefore is natural they focus on outputs/high performance as their contribution to the organization. On the other side, IM mindset goes one and two steps further in the logical frame. The disregard inputs and processes and manage to place their employees focus on trying to achieve results – what is achieved when the ouputs are put to use and even further to create an impact – what will the community/customers/society achieve as a result of leveraging the results.

### Which organizational climate is fostered?

Regarding the organizational climate they strive for CC’s managers’ answers included: “one that makes sure employees take the tasks seriously”; “a businesslike [formal] climate”; “one that would not allow employees to take the project lightly”; and one that emphasizes “how important is the project is and the need for a professional approach.”

In contrast, IM managers responded to the same prompt with answers like: “this is a game of how to make the project a success”; “we are competing with other teams within the company, (or at competitor ‘enemy’ companies), let’s win”; “a climate where employees feel free to explore different ideas and approaches and are not constrained by a specific company specifications.”

This leads the different mindset managers to manage differentially. While CC mindset managers will positively view a serious professional invested in hard work, IM managers will view positively a curious, playful employee, who may be having fun at work. While both mindsets may observe the same behavior, for example employees having a “nerdy” discussion among them about who’s approach is better for a problem, the CC manager will see her role to foster a learned, disciplined, sequential, convergent discussion, the IM manager will see her role to foster a divergent, often leading to dead ends, unruly discussion.

The different mindsets were labeled accordingly: IM managers see themselves as Facilitators and Enablers, while CC managers view themselves as Leaders and Enforcers.

CC’s managers, accordingly to their role perception and managerial focus, foster an organizational climate of professionalism and seriousness. IM managers, also accordingly, foster an organizational climate of playfulness and curiosity.

### Time framing by the different mindsets

Another clear example of how the mindsets view different worlds, is how managers respond when presented with an idea or an issue. CC managers will delve into their experience (past) for similar situations and then apply this to the issue at hand. Decisions, then are made by the CC’s mindset using Herbert Simon’s (in Cristofaro, M. 2017) conceptualizations. IM managers will use the time heuristic differently: they will consider future outcomes of their decisions and then decide based on the desired future. One comic instance observed when the local news featured a governmental political crisis, which could have an effect on a big project for the company. A CC manager stated “so what’s new? We had similar cases in the past, what we need to do is sit and wait, it won’t take long.” An IM manager commented on the same crisis “Wow, this opens up plenty of alternatives, I will ask for a budgetary meeting, to find how can we benefit.” While the reader may easily ascribe this to a pessimist-optimist difference (and perhaps you are right!) this use of time frames overlaps the ones used by managers responding to how they react to employees presenting an idea. A CC manager would state, “I know in the past something similar failed, so what’s the use?” while a IM manager would state, “Imagine what could happen if this works!, let’s see what we need at hand now to test this.”

### Risk taking is in the eye of the beholder

“Risk management,” “Mitigation” and “Damage Control” appeared often in the responses of C&C managers. They viewed their role as minimizing risks. IM managers spoke about the excitement of dealing with risks: “I like those adrenaline spikes,” “I did not realize how complex the issue would become, in retrospective it was an incredible experience.”

Data analyses surfaced that while CC managers apply risk avoidance tools, IM managers embrace risks, almost as if they are risk prone.

### Mistakes were made, now what?

Another prominent difference between the mindsets was the approach to errors. While both samples clearly stated that in the complex project environment they were working, errors are inevitable and “the best way to avoid mistakes is to do nothing,” different mindsets view errors at work very differently and react (even emotionally) differently towards its occurrence.

CC mangers perceived mistakes as a nuance and their role to manage risk taking and minimize the occurrence of mistakes and once, they happen they ask questions like why this happened? and who was in charge? and proceed to take 2 parallel actions: “do damage control” and find ways “to avoid future mistakes.” They expressed pain and stress just of thinking about dealing with mistakes. Usually, their approach to avoid future mistakes were jolt down a normative and inform everybody to avoid this in the future.

IM managers viewed risks as “it comes with the territory” and mistakes as “if you cannot take the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Once mistakes do happen, they embrace them with a sense of curiosity, they ask questions like: how did this happen? and leverage them to extract lessons, which they would like to discuss with other team members, as for their view on the case. While discussing managers attitudes toward errors we detected an attitude of this is interesting, let’s see how can I deal with it.

The striking difference of those mindsets can be exemplified by the following anecdote. At a session where we were presenting some of our findings with two managers (one of them CC the other IM) an employee entered and said, “this is urgent bad news: we have purchased an (expensive) wrong piece of equipment for the project.” The CC identified manager immediately responded: “check with the purchasing officer what we need to do to return it, immediately” while the IM identified manager said after a short delay “wait, let’s see what can we do with this equipment, then we can decide on its return.”

### Priority Challenge is…

Managers in the organizations studied tackle many different challenges at once. At times they have not finished dealing with one challenge and already other or others land in their “to do” folder. Prioritizing challenges is THE managerial skill and continuous prioritizing is a way of life. Yet, the different mindsets prioritize using different criteria. When asked about how they assign tasks, CC’s managers in their search for efficiency rank higher achievable challenges, they want to solve them, to open up managerial energy to deal with the next set of challenges. They would state “if it seems unsurmountable, I will set it aside, sometimes time helps dealing with that task” or “I prefer tasks where the horizon of results is around the corner and not too far away.”

IM managers would use a “interesting” criterion, to prioritize tasks, at times disregarding their level of challenge. For example they state: “I know this is a small issue, but somehow it intrigues me how it will unfold” or “It is a fearsome huge task, but I cannot thwart my curiosity, it keeps “bugging” me.”

### Ideation

All managers work in organizations fostering the adoption of new ideas, so employees from time to time approach their managers with an idea. “Certain employees will approach me (most frequently on Sundays! (First day of the workweek in Israel)) an said I have this idea…” CC’s managers, understanding that innovation is part of the organization’s strategy would listen to these ideas and begin to ask feasibility and/or worthwhileness questions like: “I hear you, but how can we mass produce this?” or “All right, let’s assume with deploy this, wouldn’t the amount of required resources overweight the outputs?” IM managers would respond with “O.K. and how do you suggest we apply this?,” “wow! What if we can do this with other produces.”

CC’s managers, seems will use frequently Feasibility as an idea screening criteria, while IM managers would screen ideas by the possible impact/importance they might have.

### Answers needed here

A big part of management work is to obtain knowledge from their employees and colleagues, as they understand that those close to the field may have valuable information to input into their decision-making processes. CC’s managers were impatient with “nerdy” employees who when asked will open up a long and divergent range of possible answers. They would “I like it when they answer clear cut, this OR this.” IM managers, prefer a myriad of answers, they “I will approach those (employees) I know will think thoroughly about the issue and come back with a few good answers, it is my role then to choose.”

### View of the Client

A striking difference between managers was their approach to clients. All managers knew the mantra “we are here for our customers.” This hold true also at the army unit explored, which was not a for profit organization. The two groups adopted very different approaches to how to “be there for the customer.” The trite phrases “The customer is always right” and “customer satisfaction is a priority” appeared frequently at the CC’s managers interviews. IM managers approach customers as “partners in this endeavor,” “relationship nurturing is an important part of my role here,” and “they can tell me what they want and together we decide what they really need.”

CC’s managers responses surface a known perspective of the customer: always right and strive to make them happy. While IM managers would surface the customer as a relationship, partnership to be nurtured and as decision makers by themselves.

### When in need of help, who do you ask?

CC managers held in high regard “expert” opinions, they would easily name experts in their field and seek out for their perspective when confronted with important issues: “one of the perks of this place is that I have free access to the best professionals in this area.”

Confronting important issues, IM managers, on the other hand prefer discussion and diversity of teams: “in those instances I love to gather different views and follow the discussion unfolding, many times adding my own “oil to the fire”.” On one instance an IM manager applied his superior suggestion: “ask “so and so” he is THE authority in these issues” by gathering 3 “experts” and having a ride participating in their discussion.”

### How diversity is perceived?

Diversity, in many areas: ideas, processes, Human Resources, issues and more, is perceived differently by the different managerial mindsets. Here mindsets are opposite: C&C’s opt for standardization, prefer uniformity and homogeneity, and IM clearly prefer variety, heterogeneity. For example for setting out meeting agendas, C&C try to put together (putting urgency aside) “similar items to discuss” and invite to certain meetings “only those whose professional background will allow them to make a contribution to the topic(s). IM, on the other hand prefer to have “a variety of disciplines in the room to discuss tough issues” and “invite different points of view into the room, it makes for a more interesting one.”

# Practical Implications from this understanding

This section will include three areas by which top management can leverage the unique characteristics of each mindset.

These understandings should inform organizational staffing, promotion and training efforts and have an impact on the dialogue between C&C managers – who will still required and in high proportion in organizations – and the new also critically required new kids in the block: Innovation managers.

## Value will be found in: Recognizing and legitimizing the different mindsets

Organizations usually do not pay attention to what they are really fostering. As Steven Kerr (1975) eloquently expressed, organizations want A but reward B. To extract value from the different mindsets, organizations require to explicitly acknowledge that there are 2 different (among many others) mindsets, both equally valuable (therefore rewarded) and both required. Solberg et al. (2020) recommend management (in the area of digital transformation, but equally applicable to innovation) to “Develop greater self-awareness about one’s own digital mindset.” (pp. 119). They also suggest to “Pay attention to, manage, and leverage the diversity of mindsets within the organization.” (120)

## Nurture the different mindsets

A natural human tendency is to praise my own way of thinking and belittle other ways. This tendency is detrimental. One way to enhance both states of mind is by having public discussions about a challenge and ask participants from different mindsets to present their mindset best case to approach the challenge. Following with a map of the consequences of applying their mindset and then ask them to switch “sides.”

Along the process of strategic Human Resources management which begins with the branding of the organization toward potential employees, through the selection, placement and advancement process, an important criteria to attract and keep talent can be the required mindset the organization needs to thrive. As Liu (2022, pp. 79) stated “solutions are likely to require access to a diverse set of capabilities and experience beyond those available.”

How do we engage different mindsets leverage the best of each and reach synergy? Is there a right balance of mindset differences within the organization, to optimize performance? As a rule of thumb, a corporation may require 80% of their managers with a C&C mindset and 20% IM. Which positions require whom? Perceiving mindset as a state and not a trait, perhaps certain managers can be trained into the different mindset as required.

There is a need to research a valid answer to these questions. This will take time. In the meantime, top management can map critical decisions within the organization, assign which of those require which mindset and which require both and at which stage of the decision making process it would be better to apply which.

# Limitations

Managers sampled for this research were chosen based on their own managers’ perception regarding their success in management (CC) or their engagement in managing an innovative project/process (IM). Hence, this sampling may be biased on the senior managers’ personal perceptions of the managers interviewed and their tasks they are engaged in. The size of the sample makes it difficult to generalize across industries. Another limitation to generalization is culture-country specific. This research has been conducted with a sample of managers in the “Startup Nation (Senor and Singer, 2011)” and perhaps innovation managers in other cultural contexts may hold different mind sets.

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# Conclusions

The present study is a preliminary field exploration, showing that being a successful ‘command and control’ (routine) manager does not immediately imply that one would be an effective innovation manager. These two mindsets are very different.

Further research should look into these mindset features to inquire, among other issues, whether the command and control mindset and the innovation management mindset are at opposite ends of a spectrum, and an individual can hold only one set of features. Or, rather, are these mindsets orthogonal, such that and we can find individuals holding either one of these mindsets or both mindsets at once, ambidextrous thinking managers. The innovation management literature points to instances of ambidextrous management, defined as the capacity to hold both mindsets simultaneously (Leonard-Barton, 1995).

Moreover, this paper points to the need for research-based data to help establish recruitment and promotion procedures that screen out for the innovation mindset. Additionally, research should address the question of whether an IM mindset can be taught or trained for (Sung and Choi, 2014), and if so how.

Further research steps should include the gathering of across countries quantitative data, if possible, about the mindset of the innovation managers. Questions should focus on the suppleness of the managerial mind, how to ‘activate’ the appropriate mindset in lieu of tasks at hand, how to develop its features within the organization’s management ranks, what can be a right balance of C&C and IM managers, how to enrich their interaction and how to develop the IM mindset to best serve the forthcoming needs of innovative organizations. Ideally, a follow up quantitative research, should be conducted, with a wider and varied management sample. In addition, if results can be measured, perhaps a follow up research could tackle the kind of tasks, their success (or lack of) the different mindsets perform and are adequate for.

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working with leaders, we’ve found that they rarely possess a single mindset. Instead, they have a portfolio of mindsets, and each one — as well as the overall mix, which varies from person to person — influences a leader’s decisions and behaviors and can thus alter the direction, focus, and performance of the organization (Maidique & Hiller, 2018)

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2. The ‘add value’ concept may be akin to the ‘customer value creation’ concept (Valtteri et al. 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
3. This approach to changes on how to accomplish task – ‘let’s see how this works out’ mindset, may be akin to the ‘Audacity to generate new ideas’ concept (Samarah et al., 2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
4. The ‘future then present’ time mindset may be akin to the ‘drive for long-term goals’ concept (Samarah et al., 2019).

   **Selecting for Innovation: Methods of Assessment and the Criterion Problem**

   * **January 2014**
   * [**Kristina Potočnik**](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kristina-Potocnik?_sg%5B0%5D=nwmBThp1K2Ergzn6vhZjHPSIi_N1XmMj6Y5jZeZAT3J8I9cc-g_LufQ8RrsEjrs08hP-cBk.CkX_EdF1Ow5Le3Wh9DT2YuXuB2kCaMODM3-DQrlw-KYwJa6RrVAMbV_FwLwn8gl2DrSHHwIahLuCDgxxSZ9Qiw&_sg%5B1%5D=DKbol4FnWz3iRNLIWB7fZruwW8Gk1csS8bGuiipl0hOpJNpCeSVCPrwMIrvARuzHtl551a4.31vNG_MHmVPzabCGj51tH7eyvfqd9LhYsRSXjLHhxn9nq1BQ4wmBr__oKZN6tM5awiO-NJghgUsjd4SCuS6LxQ)
   * [**Neil Robert Anderson**](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Neil-Anderson-14?_sg%5B0%5D=nwmBThp1K2Ergzn6vhZjHPSIi_N1XmMj6Y5jZeZAT3J8I9cc-g_LufQ8RrsEjrs08hP-cBk.CkX_EdF1Ow5Le3Wh9DT2YuXuB2kCaMODM3-DQrlw-KYwJa6RrVAMbV_FwLwn8gl2DrSHHwIahLuCDgxxSZ9Qiw&_sg%5B1%5D=DKbol4FnWz3iRNLIWB7fZruwW8Gk1csS8bGuiipl0hOpJNpCeSVCPrwMIrvARuzHtl551a4.31vNG_MHmVPzabCGj51tH7eyvfqd9LhYsRSXjLHhxn9nq1BQ4wmBr__oKZN6tM5awiO-NJghgUsjd4SCuS6LxQ)
   * [**Maria Felisa Latorre-Navarro**](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Maria-Latorre-Navarro?_sg%5B0%5D=nwmBThp1K2Ergzn6vhZjHPSIi_N1XmMj6Y5jZeZAT3J8I9cc-g_LufQ8RrsEjrs08hP-cBk.CkX_EdF1Ow5Le3Wh9DT2YuXuB2kCaMODM3-DQrlw-KYwJa6RrVAMbV_FwLwn8gl2DrSHHwIahLuCDgxxSZ9Qiw&_sg%5B1%5D=DKbol4FnWz3iRNLIWB7fZruwW8Gk1csS8bGuiipl0hOpJNpCeSVCPrwMIrvARuzHtl551a4.31vNG_MHmVPzabCGj51tH7eyvfqd9LhYsRSXjLHhxn9nq1BQ4wmBr__oKZN6tM5awiO-NJghgUsjd4SCuS6LxQ)

   **https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260275541\_Selecting\_for\_Innovation\_Methods\_of\_Assessment\_and\_the\_Criterion\_Problem**

   **Assessment of Innovative Job Performance (IJP): The Criterion Problem**Individual-level innovative job performance (IJP) comprises the generation of novel and  
   useful ideas in the first stage (also called creativity) and their implementation in the  
   second stage (Hülsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009). Compared to overall job  
   performance (OJP) which refers to fulfillment of assigned duties and tasks, IJP implies  
   something novel, unexpected or unknown beforehand that can occur anytime and  
   therefore it is extremely hard to predict (Potočnik & Anderson, 2013).

   (Godinho, 2019). From Shira Slutzky

   sTart uppers more flexible thinking, risk takers, self managed, self motivated, oppeness to experiences

   Govindarajan, V. and Srinivas, S. (2013). [Capturing the Innovation Mindset at Bally Technologies](https://hbr.org/2013/10/capturing-the-innovation-mindset-at-bally-technologies). Harvard Business Review.

   The innovation mindset is a game-changing asset for companies as well as individuals. Innovative companies like Bally Technologies create the structure, systems, and culture to enable their people to think and do things differently in order to achieve extraordinary success.

   **Innovative companies create systems, structures, and work environments to encourage resourcefulness and initiative [the first lanzadera/barrier are those managers to whom employees/customers/suppliers present an idea]**

   (The company) Its return on assets tripled, from an industry-lagging position below 4% to an industry-leading position above 12%. ….uses innovation as a means to get the employees energized.

   **Innovative companies create an environment that fosters the right balance between current and future with “and thinking.”**

   **Innovative companies focus on the right set of outcomes. They tailor what is measured, monitored, and controlled to suit their focus, and strike the right balance between performance and innovation.**

   ---

   Mindsets are shaped by the organizational culture and in turn shape the behaviors that shape the organizational culture in a complex cyclical process. [.] Mindsets are pivotal, literally, around them organizational culture can either change or get fixed. [.]

   Kao, J. (2007). *Innovation Nation*. Free Press, New York. Up is from him??

   - - ---

   Double check this

   D. Layne Coppock. (2013). Collective Action, Innovation, and Wealth Generation Among Settled Pastoral Women in Northern Kenya. Rangeland Ecology & Management., 66(1).

   There has been research on mindset in the Entrepreneurship/Innovation frame. A too frequent issue with existing research is the confusing interchangeably use of the term Entrepreneurship with the term Innovation, see for example: Ireland et al. (2003), Nauman (2017), Sidhu et al. 2016, Urban (2019). As the author stated elsewhere “there is an urgent need to untangle frequently confused terms: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Startups (Amsel, 2019, pp. 26. In the same chapter discerning definitions for each phenomenon are presented). As academicians in the areas of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, it behooves us to use clear and distinguishing definitions to guide our research and conclusions.

   Kuratko, D.F., Fisher, G. & Audretsch, D.B. (2020). Unraveling the entrepreneurial mindset. *Small Bus Econ*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-020-00372-6

   prior research on entrepreneurial cognition has suggested that founders and other entrepreneurs  
   “think” differently than other individuals or business executives (Kuratko et al. 2020)

   \_\_

   Confusion see:

   Naumann, E. (2017).Entrepreneurial Mindset: A Synthetic Literature Review. EBER: Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review. Vol. 5-3.

   Sidhu, I., Goubet, J-E & Xia, Y. (2016). Measurement of the Innovation MindSet: A Method and Tool within the Berkeley Innovation Index Framework. *Proceedings of 2016 International Conference on Engineering, Technology and Innovation/IEEE*. Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

   Ireland, R.D., Hitt, M.A., Sirmon, D.G., 2003. A model of strategic entrepreneurship: the construct and its dimensions. *Journal of Management* 29, 963–990

   Urban, B. (2019). Entrepreneurial Alertness and Self-Efficacy: a focus on Social Values and Innovation performance*. SA Journal of Human Resource Managem*ent, 17(0), a1132.

   Mitchell, R., Busenitz, L., Lant, T., McDougall, P., Morse, E., & Smith, B. (2002). Toward a theory of entrepreneurial cognition: Rethinking the people side of entrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, 27*(2), 93–105

   *[what are]*

   *Social cognition theory* introduces the idea of knowledge structures—mental models (cognitions) that are ordered in such a way as to optimize personal effectiveness within given situations—to the study of entrepreneurship (Fiske and Taylor [1991](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11187-020-00372-6#ref-CR31))

   the entrepreneurial mindset (Naumann [2017](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11187-020-00372-6#ref-CR69); Kuratko [2020](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11187-020-00372-6#ref-CR53)). This mindset allows and empowers us to come up with new ideas, solve problems, generate creative solutions, and take action to pursue opportunities. It is the mental perspective that precedes our actions and feeds our emotions, allowing us to innovate.

   Mitchell et al. ([2002](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11187-020-00372-6#ref-CR65)): 97) defined *entrepreneurial cognition* as “the knowledge structures that people use to make assessments, judgments, or decisions involving opportunity evaluation, venture creation, and growth.”

   [why] [many mindsets]

   [**Modesto A. Maidique and Nathan J. Hiller**](https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-mindsets-of-a-leader/#article-authors)May 25, 2018, T[he Mindsets of a Leader](https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-mindsets-of-a-leader/)

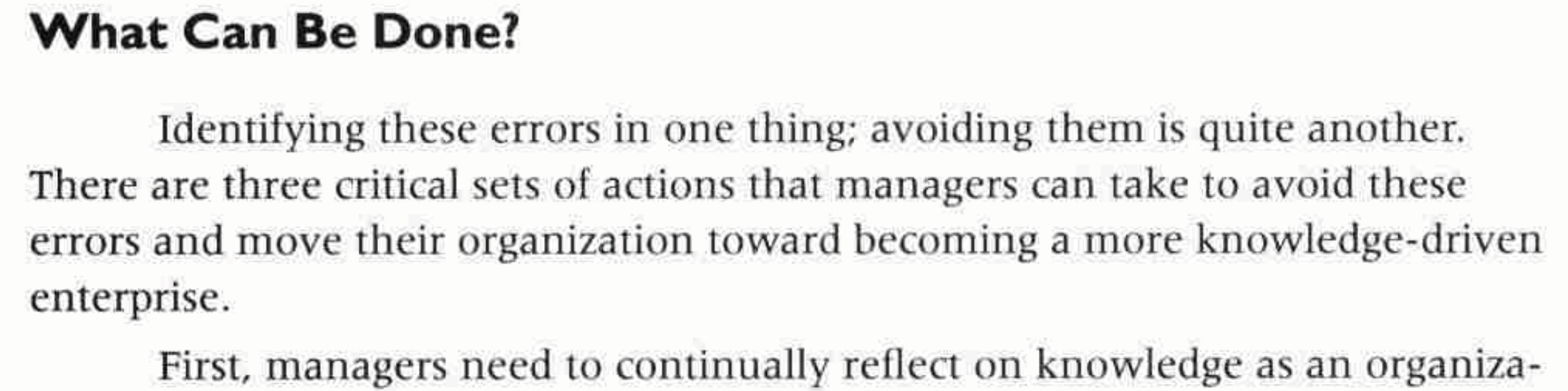
   MIT Sloan Management Review.

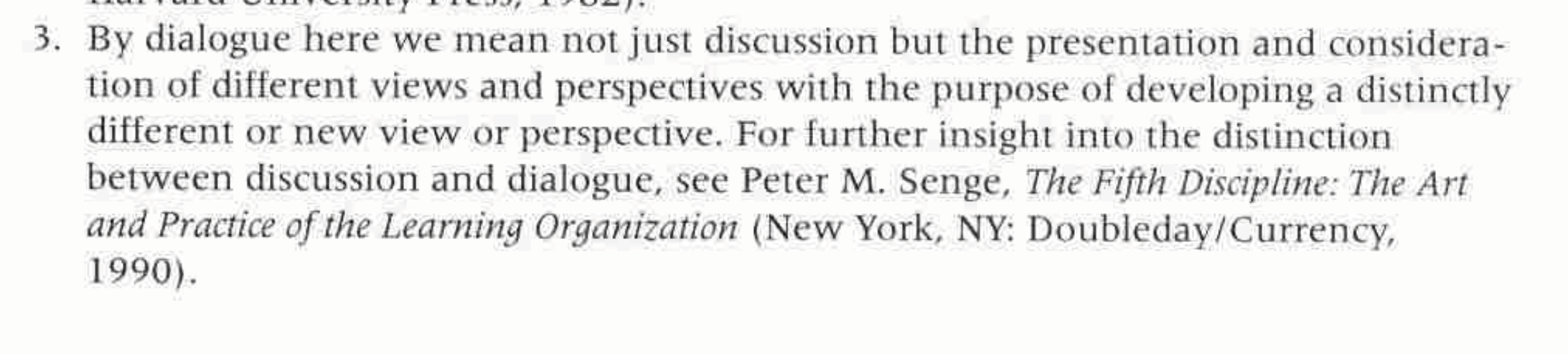
   working with leaders, we’ve found that they rarely possess a single mindset. Instead, they have a portfolio of mindsets, and each one — as well as the overall mix, which varies from person to person — influences a leader’s decisions and behaviors and can thus alter the direction, focus, and performance of the organization

   Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). Social cognition (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill series in social psychology. Mcgraw-Hill Book Company.

   The variety of mindsets that can exist at the individual level—and that both contribute to and counter a shared understanding of what is strategically important in the organization—is often overlooked in these  
   accounts of digital mindsets. (Solberg, 2020, pp. 107).

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   **The mindsets of Command & Control and Innovation managers widely differ. The differences elicited are not necessarily opposites, in most cases they are orthogonal, but clearly point to different directions**. The challenge is how to establish a positive dialogue between those (and other) mindsets, in a way that both, further develops each mindset and the collaboration between them in the pursue of common goals.

   The C&C mindset have been with us for a while, we are used to it, perhaps too used. C&C mindset is what allows for “things to happen.” IM mindset is relatively new in the managerial landscape. IM is the mindset that can prompt new ideas that will require the C&C mindset to real-ize. Both are equally required, legitimate and most of require a delicate integration between them.

   **Organizations will need to calibrate their right balance between placing innovative ideas on the table, having the capability to leverage them and extract applicable lessons to make the next round of idea and idea implementation better.** [↑](#endnote-ref-3)