

Recognise the Nomadic, Builder, and Settler Mindsets

THE
nomadic
MINDSET™



Nomad means the movement of the mind.

—Batgerel Bat, Head of Secretariat, Mongolian National Branding Council—

On your journey in your workplace, negotiations, life—indeed everywhere—you will encounter different people with different mindsets. It is important to understand your dominant mindset first and then others'—if you can—so communication, understanding, awareness, and flexibility can be realised to its fullest potential



Discovering the Different Mindsets

Through interviewing anthropologists, executives, and individuals in the learning and development fields, as well as observing and experiencing life with nomads, I discovered some exciting golden nuggets beneficial for you to reflect upon. They are the three different mindset typologies: the settler, builder, and nomadic mindsets. My interviews were fundamental in collectively creating a list of qualities, behaviours, and sample avatars that can be associated with these typologies.

But before we get into all that...why is it important to understand these mindsets in the first place?

The Mindset in Organisational Evolution

Leadership is being shaken up today, not only organizationally, but politically as well. Why? Because, as Robin Alfred, CEO and Founding Director, Findhorn Consultancy Service, who has done extensive work for many organisations on sustainability and conscious, intentional leadership, says, the old ways and paradigms of the past are not necessarily working today. As Robin asserts,

Leadership needs the freshness of the mindset of the future. It (the nomadic mindset) gives you a map and a future possibility on how to examine, and not only recognize your dominant mindset, but see your whole organisation and current and potential clients with fresh eyes.

Most leaders are focused on what they have been taught in business schools and leadership courses on vision and mission and five-year strategic plans. However, in Frederik Laloux's book, *Reinventing Organisations* (the most influential management book in the past decade), Laloux explains this is not the right paradigm anymore. It is more sense and respond rather than plan and control.

Not so many leaders are working at that level in my experience. I think what people are being taught in business schools is not this type of thing. It is still old school where here's how you do spreadsheets, financial planning, marketing. It is not fresh. It is not meeting where we are, and it is not creating the future with a future-based mindset. It is creating a future based on a historic past set of paradigms.

Therefore, developing an awareness of these different typologies (settler, builder, and nomadic) will enable you to better identify the mindsets you already have or the awareness upgrade needed in your organisation at different times of its evolution by always having an eye on the future.

Understanding Assessments

As in many different personality or behavioural assessments, a generalized sampling of a broad variety of qualities, behaviours, and characteristics of different people, cultures, and societies are captured. The typologies of these mindsets are no different. There is often overlap in their defining typologies, as there is with those in this book. I caution you to look at them from an expansive perspective, understanding that not one size fits all individuals or institutions. Robin speaks about this and its potential usage.

It is not about jettisoning one mindset or another, it is about transitioning or including one of the different mindsets into the way of aware thinking. For example, if I am a leader and want to grow my people, the more I know [about] where they sit naturally, [the more] I can help to expand their awareness and lead them to create and embrace broader perspectives. So if you are a settler and if I put you in a settler position, if you want to develop the side of you which is a builder or a nomad, then this can give a sense of personal and career development process or a map for personal development.

The Value of Mapping

Mapping is helpful when observing, communicating, and working with others. It develops a greater understanding of self and others. Robin expresses this well.

I think it can be useful to map my own organisation and other organisations and see potential collaborators, competitors. I can see where potential conflicts might emerge, not necessarily because of conflict, but more around mindset. If I am aware of the mindsets of people when we are in dialogue, then I can look at the field I am part of and say if this is where my organisation is in respect to these mindsets. For example, Apple, Samsung, and Nokia—what are the mindsets operating there? What collaboration can become possible or what do I have to watch out for? It can give a mapping of what is around me: threats and successes.

You have all three mindsets swimming around inside you, as does everyone in your company and everyone around you. It is important, then, to recognize that in your organization, you need a balance of all three mindsets to be successful. They are all needed and important.

What are the threats and risks if a corporation consists of only one dominant mindset typology? The short answer is this: A dinosaur just might appear!

Innovate or Dinosaur?

It is also wise to recognize that during an organisation's evolution, it will go through different stages or phases associated with these mindsets. This is dependent on a variety of factors, such as the vision of the company and CEO, long-term objectives versus short-term, market share, innovation, needs of the outside world, politics, and more.

Sometimes you will have a nomadic phase and will then settle and build or vice versa. The red flags start to go up when you settle for too long. Then it might be too late for your company and extinction may begin. This has happened in many companies, even great ones such as Kodak, Nokia, Toys ‘R Us, Sears, MySpace, and Borders.

Kodak, for example, was the great creator of film and the “Kodak Moment.” Hugely successful, after 128 years, the world’s largest film company claimed bankruptcy in 2012 (Usborne 2012). It became a dinosaur as people were not using film anymore, choosing, instead, digital cameras. If we track its historical dominant mindset typologies, we can see they were once great nomads and then built (builder mindset) on this success for years, maintaining the bulk of global market share for decades. In 1975, a scientist/innovator at Kodak designed and presented the first digital camera (nomadic mindset). It was not accepted by leadership as it would dampen their film business, so they didn’t create it (settler mindset). They didn’t believe in the new pastures as they were holding onto the past (settler mindset). Ultimately, they were too late. The digital space was too far ahead, they lost massive market share, and, they became a dinosaur.

Companies like Kodak all started with a nomadic mindset, experiencing success with their mandate, vision, and products. They built and built on this initial vision with adaptations during their evolution. Then settlement set in due to a variety of factors such as complacency, potential ego, loss of vision, shareholder value, leadership holding onto the past and becoming comfortable in the market space they owned, and pressure for quarterly returns and growth numbers.

Generally, these corporations have fallen into the numbers traps and forgotten to peer into their crystal ball to find new pastures ahead, i.e., using only narrow thinking. Then new players were born and the old players that had settled were generally not flexible, adaptive, or fast enough to transition back to a nomadic mindset again. Hence, the key players became dinosaurs.

Do you want this for your organisation? I don’t think so.

The Mindset of the Leader

From my research, and as all those in the leadership space suggest, the biggest deciding factor in the success of an organisation in today’s rapidly changing disruptive environment is the intrinsic dominant mindset of the leader, leadership team, and board of directors. This must then cascade from the top downwards, keeping in mind the extrinsic mindset risks and threats.

The questions are, are you nimble enough to change direction, and how fast can you move? How fast can you pack your bags and move to the next destination like a nomad without letting go of the successful parts of your corporation? Is your thinking expansive enough or too narrow? Or, is it not fluid enough to flow from expansion to narrowness and back again?

In Ulan Bator, I met a wonderfully astute, young millennial student, Binderiya, who said, “Nomads ‘think vastly; act narrowly,’” which I mentioned earlier. When considering a strategic move, a new location, or the welfare of their livestock, a nomad thinks and sees with

an open and wide view of the situation (thinking vastly), and then makes a plan, a decision, and zeros in with intense focus (acting narrowly), realising the risks that might be at stake. This happens quickly.

With this in mind, let's have a look at these mindsets with an open mind as a way of mapping your organisation and yourself to find what is needed for now, Industry 4.0, and for the future. Your journey begins now.

Mapping the Individual Typologies

When considering these typologies, remember there is a spectrum of extremes within each typology and the qualities or behaviours within each person who exhibits a specific dominant mindset. One person may be more fearful than another, less caring, more demanding/arrogant, more innovative, or less able to embrace change easily, etc. Personalities vary, so the variables are immense.

The qualities can be referred to as values, beliefs, and behaviours. Like all the mindsets, they are formed through family, education, politics, peer groups, societal norms, age, needs, etc. There is no right or wrong way to see a mindset. Your dominant mindset might be beneficial in some situations and a hindrance in others. For example, you may be settled in the way you approach finances and hate the risk of the stock market, yet you may be innovative when it comes to new products, ideas, and leadership. Simply put, everyone has an overall dominant mindset, and this can change over time.

Readers Caveat!

I want to be careful not to give you the impression that there is a hierarchal order, a particular bias, or one mindset more important than another. That will be your decision in the way you look at them, and it depends on many factors such as culture, class, education, physical geography (urban versus rural), and more (Although, you will discover a particular bias towards the nomadic mindset qualities in Part 3: Discovery.)

As you read through the list of qualities and behaviours, one to thing to remember is that some strengths or shadows are situational and may or may not apply to you. There is variance: “think vastly and act narrowly.”

TYPOLOGY

1

The Settler Mindset



Typology 1: The Settler Mindset

You need glue people in any organisation, otherwise you have chaos.

–John Russell, Managing Director of North Head, Beijing China–

The settler mindset is the glue John Russell is speaking about in the quote above. This is the most prevalent mindset on the planet. Russell’s global corporate knowledge helped me understand the important place the settler mindset has in societies and organisations to keep the systems humming through all the ups, downs, bumps, and grinds. I am confident the connotation and meaning of the word “settler,” has caused images and thoughts to rise within you.

A settler is someone who makes a nest, creates a space that is welcoming, supportive, caring, more people orientated...a relational space, the base from where I journey [that] creates structure that is [about] belonging, nurturing, focusing more on the belonging than the becoming.

–Robin Alfred, CEO and Founding Director, Findhorn Consultancy Service–

Historically, nomads migrated around the world or from pasture to pasture before settlers came into existence. The settlers came about as people would migrate to one location and begin to build a life for themselves and their families. They would settle and harvest the land, trade in communities, and hold the fort, so to speak, while “nomads” within the community would go out and seek new land or trade or even make war. This is what you see in today’s world, and in nomadic cultures, where they have settled and become comfortable with their surroundings, products, daily activities, and social networks.

The settler to me is someone that gets comfort out of staying nested, so they build kind of an environment around them, and they are most comfortable in that level of competence, which might not end up being competent because you are not evolving. I think the settler is closer to that status quo, which is the value of keeping things as they are and maintaining the protected lands, protecting the community, and [being] comfortable with the way things are.

–Claire Smith, VP Sales and Marketing, Vancouver Convention Centre–

If you recognise your organization, or others, are in this mindset, you may want to question your vision or direction for the future because an organisation with a settler mindset is not going anywhere rapidly—they are greatly influenced by their dominant qualities to resist change and avoid potential risks. A person with a settler mindset is comfortable with the status quo. And this is all okay! As a leader, you just need to know this and help your settler employees slowly shift their thinking patterns to expand their horizons—if you can.

A person with a settler mindset is here for the long term with deeply rooted connections within the organisation. They will always be grounding themselves and can be ambitious, but within the context of their own country, community, or organisation. They tend to bend their behaviour to be accepted, so they can grow in that space.

–Hema Sedahey, Head of Security Services, Mauritius Commercial Bank–

Potential Avatar of a Settler Mindset

Employee “A” (the settler) shares their story with a human resources director:

I was born in this community and have only lived here. I don't have a lot of interest in venturing too far because my community is rich, and I feel comfortable in my surroundings. Things don't change much around here, which I like a lot because it is predictable, and that makes me feel safe. I like to do things in my own little way as this makes me more efficient. My whole family lives here and has for many generations. Our little house we have had since the beginning of our now 20-year marriage.

My focus is community and family, and what I enjoy about working in a company is team spirit. I am very diligent and committed to 9 to 5. When I work, I am systematic and do it repetitively as that gives me great comfort. It is rare that I am sick, so you can rely on me. I am grateful such a big company has set up here because I am not moving and [am] yours for the long term. What my attributes are for staying the long course for you is that my organisational history is vast, and I am able then to engage with new employees with joy to help nurture their talents. I am not that keen on taking on movements up the ladder as I am comfortable in my position. I am certainly keen to learn, yet what makes me nervous is change, doing things that I don't know, and asking me to lead or make decisions.

Qualities and Characteristics of the Settler Mindset

As you read through this description, you might identify people and institutions in this dominant mindset. Be careful, though, not to judge people with different mindsets and label them as is the tendency with typology assessments. Remember this is a mapping tool that allows for more awareness, leading you to make strategic decisions on a variety of issues. Below are few of the qualities associated with the settler mindset.

Strengths

- are the glue and stability of the organisation
- like a repetitive task
- are content
- are predictable
- enjoy doing a job well
- are loyal
- are 9-to-5 workers, rarely more
- have an institutional memory and history
- are empathetic
- are detailed

Shadow Side

- are resistant to change
- are risk averse
- are often narrow thinkers
- are fearful
- are attached to established ways
- are slow moving, can slow down processes
- work in silos
- can complain and spoil things
- want a fixed place to work in
- rarely journey or travel outside the nest

If you identify as a settler, you may disagree or not relate to or identify with some of the strengths or shadow qualities. That is all well and good because these are general qualities and behaviours that *can* show up, not necessarily *will*. In fact, you may also identify with qualities of the builder and nomadic mindset typologies. If you have an uncomfortable response to some of the qualities, though, I encourage you to muse and ask yourself tough questions, such as is your response true or false and what do you need to do to change your view of that quality?

1. When you look at your organisation, can you mentally identify who the settlers might be? If so, how?
2. In what ways do your settlers add value to your corporation?
3. What are some ways you can communicate better with those with a dominant settler mindset typology?

TYOLOGY

2

The Builder Mindset



Typology 2: The Builder Mindset

The builder mindset should be the one that drives the operations because they're the ones that say 'we know what we're gonna do: let's do it really, really well.'

–Steen Puggaard, Investor and Former CEO 4 Fingers Crispy Chicken–

If the settler mindset is the most prominent mindset on the planet, the builder mindset is a close second. As the word “builder” suggests, this mindset is one that builds—they consider themselves or their company in a state of evolving.

The builders are certainly the ones that you need in medium stages. These are people that are well-needed because they are responsible. They are the ones that really know how to manage processes, build relationships with the different stakeholders, and have the capacity to move our objectives forwards in a way that allows our organisation to be steady, going into the right direction.

–Genoveva Ruiz Calavera, Director of the Western Balkans, European Commission–

The builder mindset is truly representative of the C-suite—but can also appear in other roles—of an organization, such as the COO, CTO, CIO, and CFO (sometimes), who are taking the vision and cascading it downwards, or laterally, to managers, who put it into action through teams, departments, sales, production, and marketing. They strategically make choices that will develop and grow the corporation. What happens, though, in many institutions, is that the cascade gets stuck at the top or at the management levels.

With a builder mindset, you take long-term perspectives and build out in one location or one focus of endeavour. It is the builders that build the cities and the nomads don't—builders take great pride and self-worth in digging deep to whatever [they] are doing—they are the pillars of society. [In] company sector culture, they almost tend to have attributes for focus—styles of friendships and community.

–John Russell, MD North Head–

Those with a dominant builder mindset can be incrementalists, which means they look at each detail and work on the bits and pieces, and sometimes the innovative big picture eludes them. The builders are fast movers and make action happen.

The builder mindset to me is kind of the builder, the bricks and mortar, it is putting down the infrastructure and building this sort of permanent or semi-permanent shell around you. I think it is much around the mindset where you need to put your focus [on building] success, and you need to put down some roots and build strong relationships. In order to do that, then you are in it for the long term, so that evokes from me kind of a long-term interdependency; you know a builder is very much dependent on others for success and for sustenance, they require people to take on different roles in order for the community to be successful. A builder would be a methodical thinker, a planner.

–Claire Smith, VP Sales and Marketing, Vancouver Convention Centre–

Potential Avatar of a Builder Mindset

Manager “X” is an energetic, vibrant, fast-talking, A-type personality holding a team meeting to go over the status of projects:

The manager enters the board room where everyone is waiting. It is 8:30 a.m. The manager is late and seems rushed. Manager “X” launches directly into giving congratulations to Joanna on leading her team to success on the Advantage project. The Manager looks around the room and continues to speak:

“You could all learn from her and her team, who have been self-reliant, creative, focused, sticking to the milestones and deadlines, and producing a worthy outcome for the company. However, for the rest of you and your projects, there is much to be desired. This leads me to this update and some decisions I have had to make on the existing projects you are all involved in.

I am being pressured by my bosses on the remaining projects for this quarter, and I need you all to step it up. Over the next two days, I will be reassigning all your positions and will be taking some people off who I feel are under performing—some of you may know already who you are. We can have a conversation one to one on that. I am splitting up Joanna’s team and sending them to the other teams to motivate and drive the projects as they have shown the right tenacity and competencies. We all need to up our game if we are going to make the deadlines of this quarter, and that means working long hours, so clear your plate.

I know you can all manifest; it’s now urgent to show this. I am not personally going to take the blame on this if you aren’t performing; that is your responsibility. I am committed to helping you all go the extra mile, and I will be available from 7 a.m. to midnight to make sure everything is done. If there are any questions, let me know, otherwise I need to meet with my boss. Start upping your game right now. The reorganisation of the teams will be ready by the end of the day. At that time, I will hold another meeting at 7 p.m.—no questions asked. Thanks, and talk to you all later.”

Qualities and Characteristics of the Builder Mindset

Strengths

- are the builders of an organisation
- are detailed and big-picture thinkers
- are methodical thinkers
- are A-type personalities
- are fast workers
- are focused, results driven
- are energetic, reliable, committed, hard working
- will adapt to a given vision

- strive to move forwards
- are the typical workforce that makes things happen

Shadow Side

- have a tendency to be impatient, bossy, restless
- are competitive
- are petty, blamers, stubborn, skeptics
- can get nasty if something is not going their way
- can lean towards being high maintenance.
- Are demanding: my way or the highway
- tenacity can lead to burnout
- are perfectionists
- are okay with doing things that might not be ethical or legal
- can work too fast sometimes

If you have too many builders in your organisation, you might open yourself up to building rapidly but without the sustainability of the settlers to keep it humming. If you have a builder as CEO, innovation or risking new pastures may be challenging, or your corporation may have too narrow a vision. They will often use the bottom line, quarterly returns, and short-term thinking as their guide. On the other hand, if you don't have enough builders, you will struggle to flourish or be competitive as a company. You need a balance of mindsets for different periods of growth and development.

1. When you look at your institution, can you mentally identify who the builders might be? If so, how?
2. In what ways do your builders add value to your organisation?
3. What are some ways you can communicate better with those with a dominant builder mindset typology?

TYPOLOGY

3

The Nomadic Mindset

Photo by Hicham Zemmer



Typology 3: The Nomadic Mindset

Nomads have the mindset of exploring because it is through exploration that you can discover new opportunities, and now with all this transportation, it allows us to explore even further and faster.

–Kwek Kok Kwong, CEO, NTUC Learning Hub, Singapore–

The nomadic mindset is the key focus for this book. Outside of this book, it's the least explored, yet it is growing globally.

The word “nomadic” likely creates images and impressions of what this mindset typology represents. Remember, as Batgerel Bat, Head of Secretariat for Mongolian National Branding Council, stated, “nomad is the movement of the mind.”

I would say an internal guiding compass, your mindset, are the principals, the experiences, your frame of references in how you approach various things, so it's very much an internal framework. The nomadic mindset doesn't physically have to be on the move, but I think it's almost like the movement within yourself that you are always moving to the next thing. It might not be a place, but it would be to a new idea [or] to a new concept. I think it is that kind of new, fresh renewal.

–Claire Smith, VP Sales and Marketing, Vancouver Convention Centre–

Even if this is your dominant mindset, remember you have all three mindset typologies motoring within you, rising up to the top, like cream, in different situations. There is a steady flow between the mindsets, yet people are normally more influenced by one of the three more than the others.

It is the 'whisper of the future'—the nomadic mindset is best placed to do this—because there is stillness of listening, I can hear the call, which is very quiet, it is a whisper, it's there, and I need to have the internal stillness; so, stillness is part of the nomadic mindset—[the] capacity to still the mind and listen attentively to what needs to unfold next. [There's] a magical quality to it. [It's] a sensing place—it senses the deeper rivers running in me, it senses the environment, it senses the company, it senses—it is kind of a telepathic communication; I don't need to know how you feel as I feel you in me. It is a different set of competencies.

–Robin Alfred, CEO and Founding Director, Findhorn Consultancy Service–

Potential Avatar of a Nomadic Mindset

Organisation “X” is at a turning point financially. Leader “Y” is taking a moment to reflect upon the fully packed day of meetings, calls, and conversations with different employees.

Sitting looking out their office window on the thirty-second floor, “Y” contemplates and explores, from a wide angle, the new directions the company needs to move towards to stay globally relevant. “Y” has already entertained the ideas of the executive team.

“Y” is curious about each element of the proposed ideas presented earlier and looks at what is further needed to make a decision and whether the idea is bold or innovative enough. Also, “Y” asks if these ideas align with their vision and sustainable perspective over the next five years. “Y” further contemplates how important it is to adapt to new and changing times with speed and agility. And how can “Y” convince everyone to move forwards together?

Leader “Y” decides to leave the office and take a walk through different departments to observe the different teams and question different employees regarding their needs and the company’s future direction. “Y” believes simple, clear communications are vital to making a decision and then influencing others to travel the journey together. Leader “Y” returns to their office and makes some clear, intuitive, bold, strategic decisions and calls for a meeting of the executive team, staying open to the potential conflicting conversations.

Qualities and Characteristics of Nomadic Mindset

Strengths

- are visionary, curious, big-picture thinkers
- are aligned with a deeper sense of purpose, meaning, and vision
- considers future possibilities, looks for opportunities, takes risks
- are creative, innovative, resilient, strong, eager
- are energetic, independent, interconnected
- are inquisitive with a deep sense of listening
- never settle but pioneer and explore
- are flexible, adaptable, agile
- are bold, brave, courageous
- are focused, strategic, driven

Shadow Side

- lack focus
- are unpredictable
- are too independent
- are lone rangers
- are skeptics
- move too fast and leave people behind
- can seem arrogant or aloof at times
- can get anxious
- can get frustrated
- are flighty, not keen on seeing things through

Which Mindset Do You Want?

The nomadic mindset is the mindset of the future for organisations, governments, and the population at large—a sentiment echoed by 100% of the executives I talked with while writing this book due to the global seismic shift of Industry 4.0 surrounding artificial intelligence, major digital transformations, the gig economy, climate change, Fintech, and many other changes affecting humanity. Many think you now need to begin shifting your mindset away from the comfort and status quo of a settler or a builder mindset towards a nomadic mindset if you are to survive the evolution.

1. When you look at your organisation, can you mentally identify who the nomads might be? If so, how?
2. In what ways do your nomads add value to your institution?
3. What are some ways you can communicate better with those with a dominant nomadic mindset typology?

You Need All Three Mindsets!

If you have a plethora of nomads, the company may not grow or build effectively and strategically. On the other hand, if you have a company without nomads, you may not grow fast, be innovative, or see opportunities clearly. You need all mindset typologies in your organisation and government today. Everyone is important. It is even more crucial now because humanity needs to become more adaptable to the changes in today's world.

Remember what happened to the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous Period. They couldn't adapt to the dramatically changing climatic, environmental, and continental shifts. Is there a distant parallel today? Reflect upon this.

That is why in Part 3, with the awareness of Part 2, you will discover the qualities that most typify a nomadic mindset. You are the self-guide in discovering these qualities I believe are familiar to you. It is up to you whether you believe, behave, and act with the knowledge of them as part of your personal or organisational DNA. The choice is always yours. Let's discover the real meat of *The Nomadic Mindset, Never Settle...for Too Long* together.

Leadership Rethink

Essential nomadic leadership qualities to embody:

leadership, mindset, nomadic, builder, settler, balance, organisation, dinosaur, typologies, framework, mapping, perspective, communication, insight, clarity, evolution

Final Questions

1. What mindset does your organization need more of right now? Why?
2. How can understanding these mindsets help you as a leader?
3. What do you want to do with this information?



Creative Performance Mastery International Pte Ltd

20 Maxwell Rd, # 09-17 Maxwell House, Singapore, 069113

connect@thenomadicmindset.com | +6590665010 / +16046712477

www.thenomadicmindset.com