



## THE THREE MINUTE RULE

Times of disruptive change call for professionals with agile mindsets, able to turn problems into opportunities, who can explore the world from different perspectives and who aren't scared to fail fast, often and forward. Communication leaders are ideally placed to awaken this creative power. All it takes is three minutes.

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e live in very disturbing times. In most industries, the VUCA world (volatile,

uncertain, complex, ambiguous) has arrived. The only constant is change. This is very frightening for most people because change is happening all over the place, all the time. And the decisions that people make are dependent upon their mindset. What's your view of the world? Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck has done a lot of research around this mindset and has discovered that there are two basic mindsets that shape our lives. The **fixed mindset** assumes that our character,

intelligence and creative ability are static characteristics which we can't change in any meaningful way. People with a fixed mindset strive for success by comparing themselves with others and try to avoid failure at all costs.

A **growth mindset**, on the other hand, thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of a lack of intelligence but as a springboard for growth and for extending our existing abilities. I call this the 'change mindset'. People with this mindset have a deep passion for learning rather than a hunger for approval. Mistakes are part of the path to learn new things.

Carol Dweck has found evidence that these mindsets are manifested from a very

early age and determine a great deal about our behaviours, relationships and capacity for happiness. The positive news is that it is possible to rewire these beliefs: if you can adapt your perspective of the world, you can adapt your mindset. If your view is mainly occupied with negative assumptions then the world is full of problems. If you can look from a more positive angle, you suddenly discover that a lot of these challenges can be turned into opportunities. What mindset do you choose when looking at the world?

Communication has the power to steer people in a certain direction. As a communication professional, you play a key role in the way that people look at the world. You can help them to explore different perspectives and show them that there is no one right answer.

## Ladders and bananas

Everybody can agree that placing a ladder on top of a banana peel is not the most efficient solution to avoid slipping on the peel. But in most organisations we have installed a lot of ladders – inefficient rules, systems, procedures, assumptions – due to uncertainty, lack of trust and fear of change.

Here are a few real business examples of ladders:

“If we want to hire somebody new, we need seven signatures from different people and departments before we can even start the recruiting process.”

“Our workflow in the editorial office at a newspaper still works in the same old way. We have morning meetings, editorial meetings, and page one gatherings – all focused on the print product while 80 per cent of our readers go for multimedia solutions.”

“It takes me around an hour of work to fill out the right documents to get three euros of reimbursement for a bus ticket for a meeting in the city.”

A lot of these ladders keep us away from the change mindset because we focus only on following the right procedures and making sure that we don't make any mistakes. We collaborate with other departments and partners, but only under strict conditions and procedures in order to make sure that we can control the process. This leads to more complexity and more paperwork, which is compounded by the fact that people aren't stimulated to think outside the box, making them stick to the relationships that they already know. This resistance to change becomes bigger and all new ideas are welcomed with an idea killer. Idea killers are reasons why an idea isn't going to work: “no budget, no time, we've already tried that, it's nothing for our clients, since when are you an expert?”

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## Three minutes to boost ideas and collaboration

One of the fundamentals of allowing a change mindset to grow is suspending your judgment. If you can go from a ‘yes but’ to a ‘yes and’, you've already conquered one of the biggest challenges to change. To make it even more practical, I came up with the three minute rule. This rule works as follows: in a meeting, explain to your colleagues that humans don't like to suspend their judgment, but it's a necessary skill if you want to create new ideas. For that reason, you invite them – for three minutes – to get into the ‘yes and’ mindset.

Instead of responding with an idea killer to a new idea, they have to answer with ‘Yes and...’. You then accept the idea and even add something to it. During the three minutes, no judgment is allowed and quantity is more important than quality. You'll notice that in three minutes you will have a lot more ideas



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than in a normal meeting – as well as some crazy ideas, no doubt, but that's not a problem because you don't need to implement all of them. Maybe you can use some elements of an idea that might be feasible and combine different small ideas to create one or two good ones. Another big advantage of this method is that everybody has a chance to contribute, so the chance that the idea will be implemented in reality substantially grows in. It stimulates collaboration. You can download a poster with idea killers at [www.ideakillers.net](http://www.ideakillers.net).

## More collaboration across boundaries

It is more important than ever that we collaborate with partners and stop silo-thinking. If we want to stay agile and flexible, we need to cross the borders of functions; to look at other departments; learn from different

industries; explore what's happening in other cultures. Often we are stuck on our own ladders and can't find the next step to a solution. But chances are that this problem has already been solved by a different function or industry. What can we as communication professionals learn from a doctor or architect? What can your industry learn if you approach the challenge from the perspective of somebody working in the mining or fashion industry? Sometimes, just the act of imagining that you're working in another function or industry can be enough to solve your problem. But if you really start to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds, than the real magic can happen. And that's why it is very important to attend events such as the European Communication Summit, because you have a chance to meet with your peers working in different organisations and industries. The real magic happens outside of your comfort zone. ●

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