

ORANGE MINDSET SUPPLEMENT

“Information technology and business are becoming inextricably interwoven. I don’t think anybody can talk meaningfully about one without talking out the other.”

—Bill Gates

High margins, high profit protection, and increasing returns—creating the industry standard is not only the most valuable business task, it’s also the single most difficult maneuver in all of business.

Microsoft’s genesis, and Bill Gates in particular, is indicative of the skillful application of Orange capabilities.

In 1973, Gates was a freshman at Harvard living down the hall from Steve Ballmer who would later become Microsoft’s chief executive officer. It was at Harvard that Gates developed a version of the programming language BASIC for the first microcomputer—the MITS Altair. He left Harvard in his junior year to focus his energy on Microsoft, the company he formed with his childhood friend, Paul Allen. Since 1976, Bill Gates and Paul Allen have created the icon around which an industry is built.

Gates first established a language and operating system that was accessible to all users. Next, he addressed product visibility and volume through a concentrated marketing campaign. Finally, he fostered brand conversion by reducing financial, technical, and logistical barriers to his product as compared with other options, thus creating a compelling reason for users to switch systems.

When he started, there was no personal computer industry, let alone an industry standard. Gates and Allen acquired and revised an imperfect and inelegant language system with unprecedented success. They utilized a low flat fee to sell the platform to approximately 50 major hardware equipment manufacturers and encouraged them to include Microsoft’s



language with the sale of each machine. This tactic allowed programmers to reconfigure the code for multiple new applications, creating a community of code writers able to exchange new programs with each other and with Microsoft, making Microsoft’s PC BASIC language the standard for programming.

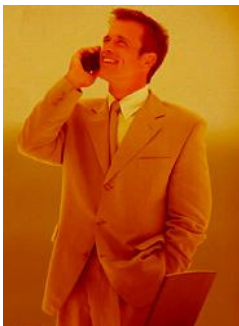
Microsoft’s greatest innovations have been primarily in adjusting its business design to follow the most profitable flow. Rather than being ingenious inventors, they strategically adapted existing technology to the demands of the emerging marketplace and embedded their technology as a part of a fundamental tactic of standard setting. This approach served to drive an entire industry, rather than merely the profit and loss of an isolated company.

It is quite interesting to note that while Bill Gates displayed very strong indicators of a predominant Orange mindset while at the helm of Microsoft, in recent years (since his retirement), his behavior and priorities indicate an increasing number of qualities associated with a Green (Pluralistic) mindset.

MINDSET

This supplement, which accompanies the Stagen Understanding People module, draws upon the multidisciplinary research referred to as “integral theory

and methodology,” as presented by integral theorist Ken Wilber in more than two dozen books.¹ The Stagen Mindsets Model provides a summarized and simplified presentation of “meaning-making systems” designed for a corporate audience.² A summary of the leading researchers, whose work is reflected here, is provided in the endnotes section of this supplement.³



Orange (Achiever) thinking, which tends to be highly rational and goal-oriented, is the dominant mindset in today’s corporate environment.⁴ The color orange can be associated with the orange glow of a contained fire that is mastered, controlled, and skillfully put to human use. Sometimes it is referred to as the Modern worldview (juxtaposed

with the Traditional worldview of Blue thinkers). The Orange mindset tends to be scientific, objective, empirical, and often materialistic. Orange thinkers believe in the perfectibility of humankind through the application of highly disciplined rationality and all its fruits—from science and technology to medical advancement.

From the Orange perspective, life is a world of opportunity that can be met and mastered if one can find the best way to act upon those opportunities. Orange thinkers are aware of themselves as independent but recognize the advantage of a community within which to seek autonomy, advancement, prosperity, recognition, and status. The Orange motto is “play to win.” Competitive industries requiring highly educated or skilled workers employ an especially high percentage of Orange thinkers. Examples are companies in the technology, communications, and professional services sector. Competency in the ability to think abstractly, a key Orange capacity, is a prerequisite for an individual to

hold a position as a corporate executive. Therefore most professionals reading this supplement are intimately familiar with the Orange mindset.

To me, it is all about winning. Money is just a scorecard that tells me I’ve won and by how much.

—Donald Trump



COMMON ORANGE PERCEPTIONS

The rational nature of Orange thinking is based on the premise that a single best way will emerge from the competition of many well-explored options. The Orange thinker is well aware of multiple perspectives and presumes a process of rational inquiry or debate will winnow out the best perspective.

Common Orange perceptions include:

- Knowledge is power.
- Money is the scorekeeping system. You can see how well I am doing by what I wear, what I drive, where I live and where I work.
- The person who holds the power should make the decisions.
- The marketplace of ideas is essentially Darwinian, or based upon the principle of “survival of the fittest.”
- Work is an extension of what you know and who you are.
- Hard work and excellence are rewarded by “the good life.”
- A well-managed company runs like a well-oiled machine.

BEHAVIOR

Achiever thinking can infuse a pursuit of excellence in nearly any domain where this system manifests. Professional athletics, especially in the United States, epitomize Achiever behavior and are rewarded with the astronomical salaries common to sports superstars. Within corporate culture, men and women executives the world over strive to recreate the success of Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Paul Allen by throwing themselves into their work in the pursuit of “the best way to (fill in the blank).” In education, it is the pursuit of degrees and tenure. In medicine and science, it is the pursuit of accolades and research endowments. The acquisitive nature of Orange is neither positive nor negative in itself, but can lapse into greed when left unchecked and become frustrated when applying effort to a goal that is inherently unreachable.

There are countless examples of Orange in our largely “modern” culture—films such as *Chariots of Fire* and *Wall Street*, the pop music industry, futures and stock traders, and the “dot com” rise and fall being prime examples. Examples of prominent Orange exemplars include Tony Robbins and other motivational speakers, books such as Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*, and many aspects of the university system.

CAPABILITIES

While mindset and capabilities are not one hundred percent correlated, some useful generalizations can be made to better understand people whose primary mindset is Orange.⁵ An Achiever mindset is inherently problem solving in its orientation. Those operating from this mindset are capable of seeing and engaging systems of people who possess different perspectives. Although recognizing there are many legitimate ways to think and behave, to Orange, there is always one best way.

Orange thinking also allows for increased respect for different skills and approaches, although the preference for challenge and acquisition (of knowledge, money, experience, physical prowess) is sometimes over-emphasized.

The increased tolerance of the Orange worldview provides the capability of genuine mutuality—the give-and-take exchange of ideas or sentiments between independent people or groups that is highly prized by Orange. This leads to an increased ability for skillful negotiation, debate, and the exploration of new strategies. The Orange way of thinking sets it apart from the Blue mindset, which tends to be confined to its own limited subjectivity (“our way is the one right way”).

Orange thinkers tend to be aware of themselves and others as changing over time. This awareness, combined with typically strong capacity for analysis, allows individuals with an Orange mindset to effectively analyze and question business strategies and decisions, structures, and components.

The Achiever mindset is capable of doing something Blue thinkers cannot. Orange thinkers can work with abstractions as though they were tangibles—arbitrage rebates, capital assessment, and so forth are not objects as much as complex ideas associated with concrete objects. This ability can be a tremendous strength—except for when it leads to “over concretizing,” or attempting to see as tangible, those things that are, in fact, intangible.

SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Almost any field of human endeavor can suit an Achiever mindset provided there is room for improvement, advancement, and success. What appears to a Blue thinker as a daunting hierarchical organization chart appears through the Orange lens as a jungle gym for personal advancement—an Achiever “meritocracy.”

Historically, Orange created social structures such as the corporation, the research hospital, and the university system. Because doubt and opposition are less threatening to Orange than some other mindsets, the Achiever thinker expects the leader of the group to serve as a repository of multiple perspectives. This can be seen when members of an Orange team offer competing ideas and suggestions, and then sometimes negotiate and/or jockey for position in search of the best alternative among many.

Orange thinkers are not bound to a static set of rules or obedience to an outward authority; rather, they can differentiate an external societal point of view from their internal experience that may or may not be at odds with the larger cultural order. Orange mindsets consider the viewpoint of the umbrella system from which they are operating (company, church, nation, global marketplace) and define roles and rules based upon these factors, determining their individual relationship to others in the context of the overall system.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

“Up or out” is a corporate mantra heard in some Orange organizations. Until recently, Microsoft would tell its workers it would burn them out and work them until they dropped, promising that when they left the company, other organizations would be fighting to employ and reward them for their hard-earned qualifications. Having become increasingly concerned about employee retention, Microsoft has softened its tactics, but for many years, the promise held true.

Another version of the Orange mindset is the adage “you’re only as good as you’re last movie,” meaning that results driven to the bottom line is the primary indication of success. This perspective can seem overly harsh, but to the Achiever mindset, it can be a powerful motivator. Orange thinkers are driven by success, autonomy, advancement, and status. Frequently highly competitive in nature, their aim is to be the most successful competitor in the field. An Achiever’s primary measure of success is an increase in profits, because from this perspective, “money is life’s report card.” Rather than responding to positional or authority-based leadership, Orange thinkers respond to the leader with the most influence and to those who embody personal excellence and achievement.

ENDNOTES

1. Research that has been incorporated into this supplement includes the work of Ken Wilber, Robert Kegan, Susanne Cook-Greuter, William Torbert, Clare Graves, Jane Loevinger, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jenny Wade, Don Beck, Chris Cowan, and Paul Ray. Within their respective fields, each investigator conducted independent research and analysis into the nature of varying mindsets and their correspondent values. The models these researchers created to map their discoveries exhibit startling similarities. Despite employing differing terminologies, these models point to an underlying commonality demonstrating the reality of categorical worldviews common to varying human groupings. These underlying, organizing similarities and the principles implicit to them are supported by extensive empirical data and peer-reviewed scientific evidence. A summary of these and nearly a hundred other models is provided in Wilber's book *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011) and elaborated upon in many of his other academic works.
2. The Stagen Mindsets Model represents an intentionally simplified presentation—a teaching convention—designed to allow nonacademics, especially business professionals, to use some of the most practical and impactful insights of cognitive science, developmental psychology, and neurology without having to possess a working knowledge of these fields. Individuals interested in exploring what lies behind these mindsets can find a treasure trove of state-of-the-art research in the fields of constructivist developmental psychology, cognitive neuroscience, biopsychosocial systems theory, value theory, and consciousness studies. While the Mindsets Model is informed by developmental studies and supported by cross-cultural research demonstrating the complex interface between various systems of meaning-making, it is beyond the scope of our user-friendly model to delineate these nuances. The question of why a person constructs the world through a particular mindset, and how these constructions evolve over time, is a consideration reserved for in-depth, academic investigation and analysis. For practical purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that individuals exhibiting a wide range and great depth of personal and professional competencies have access to multiple—and often all—mindsets reviewed in this material. Versatility and competence—and therefore success—is directly proportional to the number of meaning-making systems an individual can recognize and embody.
3. Independent research of diverse methodologies and populations conducted by leading theorists Loevinger, Kohlberg, Graves, Kegan, Wade, and others resulted in conclusions that are remarkably consistent with regard to this mindset. Wade has summarized dozens of independent researchers' findings showing a strong correlation between left-hemisphere brain activity (the center for analytical, linear, linguistic, and mathematical functions) and the Achiever (Orange) mindset. Similarly, much research correlates right-hemisphere brain activity (the center for visual-spatial, musical, aesthetic, and intuitive functions) with the Relational (Green) mindset. The Orange mindset has more in common with the Green mindset than the others due to the fact that both of these mindsets draw heavily on the brain's neocortex (left-hemisphere and right-hemisphere respectively), while the Red and Blue mindset draw more heavily from the brain's limbic system (as discussed in the endnotes to the Red and Blue supplement). Graves, Charles L. Hughes, and Vincent S. Flowers describe this mindset as follows: "To achieve their goals, [people with the Achiever mindset] will manipulate things and people within their environment and within constraints imposed by society. They thrive on gamesmanship, politics, competition, and entrepreneurial effort, and measure their success in terms of material gain, status, and money. ... [This mode of thinking] provides for the beginning of dispassionate, objective, hypothetico-deductive, non-moralistic-prescriptive thinking. This leads to thinking in a multiplistic, not absolutistic manner—that there are many ways to think, but only one best way, rather than only the right way or the wrong way. ... All life [is] a game with the end being to discover how to circumvent the rules to one's own advantage, but not so much as to raise the ire of others." Kohlberg's research illuminates the multiplistic perspective of Orange. He points out that "right" becomes an awareness that people hold a variety of values and opinions, so that many "rules" are relative rather than absolute. These relative rules should usually be upheld owing to the overarching reasons for constructing the social contract. According to Kohlberg, to take this perspective, a person must be capable of a high level of abstract, rational thought integrating "perspectives by formal mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process."
4. As seen in Wilber's seminal textbook, *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011), professors Beck and Cowan and associates, originally developed the color-coded scheme for integral theory and methodology. This convention has proven to be extremely useful and has seen widespread adoption among integral researchers, theorists, and practitioners, as the use of color-coding highlights the categorical similarities of different worldview models while deemphasizing the varying names and terminologies employed by each.

5. The subject of capabilities is addressed at length in the Stagen Human Performance module under the categories of cognitive capacity, emotional capacity, relational (interpersonal) capacity, ethical capacity, wisdom capacity, and wellness capacity. People's capacities in these areas are not strictly correlated to mindsets; however, there are some useful generalizations about what a person is likely to be capable of based upon their primary mindset.