

on skillset rather than mindset. In part, he says, this is because of the current weakness of the sector. "Three or four years ago our mindset sometimes came into it," says Brooks. However, today with more candidates to choose from, rather than picking someone who can learn and adapt and who has transferable skills, he says employers' default position is to choose candidates based on their skills and qualifications.

Julie Markey, head of HR at Ocado, argues that the relative importance of mindset and skillset for recruiters varies according to the role. "For certain roles, such as IT and engineers, certain skills are essential, she says. "The difficulty comes, she adds, when, for example, someone is technically very competent, but is reluctant to work as part of a team. "If the ethos of the organisation is working as a team and someone wishes to work in isolation, then you have a problem. Is the person going to fit in with that culture?"

In addition to tools such as Reed's 3C mindset tool, which measures the three main mindset categories, defined by employers (grit, global and good — see box below), other psychometric tools available in the market purport to do the same job.

Wynn Davies, commercial manager of Talents, a global publisher of workplace assessment and psychometric tests, says that tools such as GLOTTO, a test of personal integrity that assesses an individual's strengths and weaknesses, and SOSIE, that focuses on behaviour and motivation, can be effective at measuring a candidate's mindset. Davis says the research indicates that the majority of tools intend to seek out "very similar profiles" to Reed's 3C mindset. "Tony Vardy, managing director at executive search firm Korn/Ferry Whitehead Mann, says he has "some sympathy" with the view that mindset has become more important because of the ever-increasing pace of change, which makes skills obsolete faster than ever. "Nature gives you a range of possibilities, such as language ability. Mindset can make a big difference to where you are on that spectrum," says Vardy. "It might be assumed that those at the top, almost by definition, must be in possession of the winning mindset." However, Vardy says that for more senior positions skillset "probably becomes more important". As he explains, CEOs tend to move from one CEO role to another. "They have to be ready to go on day one," he says. "For individuals at the top to succeed, he says, they must be task-oriented, which is where skills such as cost cutting come in; must manage other people well, and know their own capabilities and limitations. "Those people who get to the top have at least to be at a high standard in each of these, and without one they are in real trouble," says Vardy.

Hoffman adds, "It would be nice to think that you would rise through the because of your mindset, but I am not sure your mindset and your hierarchical position are linked. People progress for a variety of reasons and some people, such as receptionists, for example, can have an amazing mindset." Despite the plethora of psychometric tools available on the market, Allison Humphries, a director of Amelius Consulting, a specialist consultancy coaching and training business for recruiters, says that mindset is notoriously difficult to identify and measure. "Occupational psychologists would like to be able to design an exercise to identify a particular mental approach to a problem," she says. However, the difficulty is that hirers need to be able to identify what the appropriate mindset is, she explains. "Only sophisticated HR departments that have the time and money to devote to it are in a position to take this approach," she says. "You need to go through the diagnostic stage first, otherwise you are just guessing what constitutes success," adds Humphries, echoing the approach taken by both Philby and Hoffman. It depends on the team you are hiring for, says Richard Protherough, director of IT recruiter Spring

3C mindset

GRIT: tenacity or determination
GOOD: ethics and morality
GLOBAL: lengths taken to understand and address everyday challenges and issues

Here is an example of the 3C mindset, according to James Reed, chairman of Reed Global: "A candidate who writes on their CV 'I am training for a marathon with 10 colleagues to raise money for charity'. This says much more than 'I love running'."

'Hire for attitude, train for skills' is a quote attributed to Herb Kelleher, the founder of Southwest Airlines. However, according to Reed, mindset is deeper than attitude and less prone to shifting. "Mindset is the lens through which you view life," he says.

Technology. For example, a software development team might value innovation, but an IT support team might be more looking for those who fitted into a 'business as usual' culture. For recruiters that don't use psychometric testing, Humphries suggests that interview questions can provide real insight to a candidate's mindset. Ask about their worst career mistakes, she suggests. "Do they take responsibility for it or blame others? And how quickly do they move on?" Interviewers should focus on how the candidate feels about their failures, and indeed their successes, and not just on the facts, advises Humphries. However, she says the whole topic remains mired in difficulty. Clients who come up with the person specification often think back to the person who has just left the job, she explains. And they also have a tendency to provide agencies with a pre-packaged list — for example, must be a graduate with previous industry experience. "There will always be recruiters who are at the mercy of clients who say 'This is my model CV'," she says. For Humphries, a good staffing company should be looking beyond this to include the style and culture of the organisation, and then to make recommendations about skills.

With skills arguably becoming obsolete faster, recruiters are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of mindset. In response many are now turning to sophisticated psychometric models. But perhaps, ironically, spotting those with the right mindset often boils down to nothing more than old-fashioned recruitment skills. As Hoffman says: "We all know when we meet people who have got it."



Tony Vardy, MD, Korn/Ferry Whitehead Mann

Nature gives you a range of possibilities, such as language ability. Mindset can make a big difference to where you are on that spectrum



Roger Philby, founder and CEO, Chemistry Group

There are some people who will fly in a culture where there are other people who will hate it



Hugh Andree, founder, ForceSelect

Yes you need skills, but you need attitude, a mindset, drive and determination ... the team with the attitude and determination wins