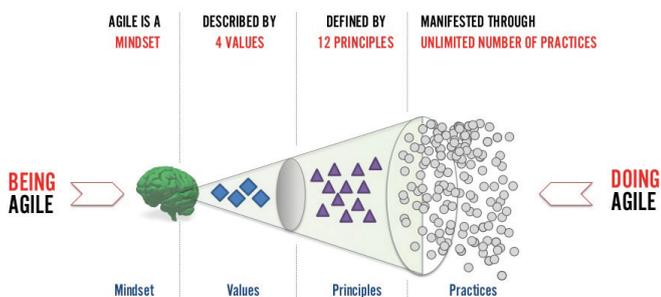




## Being **Agile** is not just a **Mindset**, it is an **Outward Mindset**

As the world gets more Agile, companies will have to find different ways to keep up with the pace of change. To do that, companies have to tackle their culture and the deep-rooted mindsets of their people.



There are many reasons and explanations cited in literature on why Agile in organisations fails. One of the primary reasons for failure can be contributed to the fact that companies that ‘do’ Agile and are not ‘being’ Agile. ‘Doing Agile’ implies simply adopting the practices (behaviours) of Agile without committing to or demonstrating living the principles and values of Agile.

‘Being Agile’ is what Agile is all about and it implies living and breathing Agile principles and values through Agile practices day in and day out.

Agile implementation values centre around (1) individuals and interactions over processes and tools; (2) working software over comprehensive documentation; (3) customer collaboration over contract negotiation; and (4) responding to change over following a plan. Differentiating between the terms ‘doing Agile’ and ‘being Agile’ is critical for any successful Agile implementation process.

‘Being Agile’ is more about who we are, as opposed to what we do. So, Agile has to do with our consciousness or way of being – the mindset of everyone involved in the process. Being Agile is also about how we perceive ourselves; how we relate to each other; what we value and how we behave.

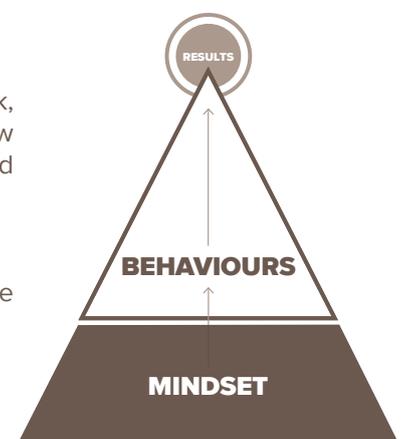
## So, what is Mindset?

Put simply, mindset is how we see things. It is the lens through which we see our work, our relationships, and our world. It is at the foundation of all that we do and shapes how we act. Mindset informs our behaviours, which ultimately has an impact our own and others’ results. The Arbinger Institute provides a diagram to illustrate this idea.

### Two Mindsets

Arbinger’s research goes further and indicates that people operate at any given time primarily from one of two mindsets:

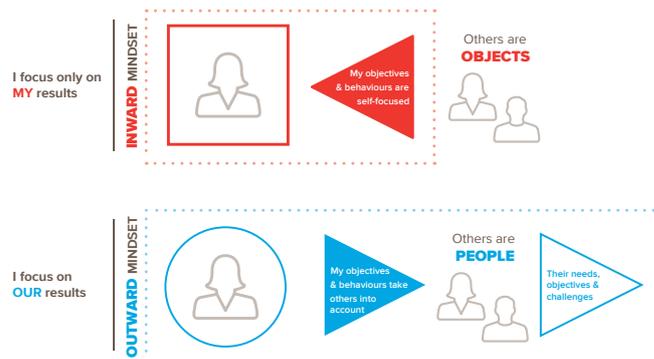
An **INWARD MINDSET** or an **OUTWARD MINDSET**.



From an Inward mindset, people focus only on their own personal goals and objectives, without consideration of their impact on others. With this self-focused Inward mindset, people see others not as people with their own needs, challenges, and objectives; but as objects.

They see others primarily as:

- Vehicles to achieve their own objectives and results
- Obstacles that are in their way or causing problems
- Irrelevancies that can be ignored



With an Inward mindset, we are blind to what others need and therefore can frustrate others or create conflict. We might blame others for our frustrations or failures. Focused only on our own objectives, we might even hamper our organisation’s effectiveness or results, while thinking we’re doing a good job!

With an Outward mindset, however, we see others as people who matter, like we do. We consider the needs, challenges, and objectives of others. And we focus on collective results. We feel responsible for doing our jobs and we do them well. We also do our jobs in a way that supports others in doing their jobs—because we know their jobs contribute to the organisation’s results, just like ours do. When we have an Outward mindset—when others matter to us—we naturally want to be helpful to them. So, we adjust our own efforts to make others’ work easier in whatever way we can. Rather than blaming others for our frustrations or feeling like victims of our circumstances, we begin to see new possibilities and solutions to our most vexing or long-standing problems.

## What kind of Mindset Change is needed for an Agile Organisation?

Yes - you’ve guessed it! An Agile organisation requires its members to change from having an Inward mindset to adopting an Outward mindset.

Organisations can only resolve problems associated with Agile and achieve breakthrough, if they adopt an Outward mindset. When working with an Outward mindset, people consider their impact on others, and plan and execute their work in such a way that they focus on the results of everyone around them.

Shifting to an Outward mindset is the one change that most dramatically improves performance, sparks collaboration, and accelerates innovation and agility in organisations.

## How can Outward Mindset help with common organisational challenges like implementing an Agile Process?

With an Inward mindset, organisations and the individuals in them may think only about their own needs, challenges, and objectives relative to a given problem. Organisations may become more siloed and conflict-prone, as departments and offices focus on solving their piece of the puzzle. Organisations might try to protect their resources—at the expense of organisational interests – and they may blame others for their inability to solve the problem.

With an Inward mindset, people tend to avoid having difficult conversations because those conversations may be uncomfortable, potentially contentious, or simply too far in the future to worry about.

With an Outward mindset, organisations and individuals focus on collective results. Difficult conversations about resource allocation, roles, and responsibilities can take place without individuals feeling the need to protect their silos, defend their decisions, or appear in certain ways. Problems are framed differently, allowing new possibilities for solutions and new directions for problem-solving.



CALL TO ACTION

Contact the **Arbinger Institute** at [southafrica@arbinger.co.za](mailto:southafrica@arbinger.co.za) for more information on how we equip Agile practitioners and organisations with the frameworks and tools necessary to consciously help things go right, when adopting and implementing an Agile process within your team and/or organisation. Our work is to provide you with the knowledge and tools, and develop the skills, that will help you to become competent and confident with others, regardless of the challenge. **We will work with you to grow an Agile culture of active collaboration in your organisation.**

