

# The Two Steps to Building a Winning Mindset

## Jon Acuff

+ Leadership Expert; *New York Times* Best-Selling Author



Jon Acuff is the *New York Times* best-selling author of seven books, including his newest release, *Soundtracks: The Surprising Solution to Overthinking*. For over 20 years he's helped some of the biggest brands in the world tell their story, including The Home Depot, Bose, and Staples. He's an *Inc.* magazine Top 100 Leadership speaker, and has spoken to hundreds of thousands of people at conferences and companies around the world including: FedEx, Nissan, Microsoft, Chick-fil-A, Nokia, and Comedy Central.

Jon Acuff examines the impact that overthinking—when what we think gets in the way of what we want—has on our mindset, and our ability to accomplish our goals. He shows us three ways great leaders work with internal soundtracks—repetitive thoughts that we engage in—to reduce overthinking and free themselves up to accomplish more.

## Understand the Cost of Overthinking

In his talk, Jon shares that overthinking is “when what you think gets in the way of what you want.” It is a sneaky form of fear that steals time, creativity, and productivity.

Thinking about your own life and leadership, consider what overthinking has cost you: have you ever talked yourself out of an idea before you gave it a chance? Take some time as a team and share your responses.

## Owning Our Soundtracks

Jon says that we have soundtracks—repetitive thoughts—for every part of our lives, and that these soundtracks have powerful effects on our understanding of ourselves, our identities, and our abilities. What's more, through neuroplasticity, we know that if we can change these thoughts, we have the power to change the physical structure of our brains, and thus change our lives.

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Thinking about the different areas of your life and leadership, what do some of your broken soundtracks say to you? Jot a few of them here:

1.

2.

3.

What impact on your life would it have if those soundtracks were reduced or replaced? How would your life be different? Note some of your thoughts below.

## **When It Comes to Overthinking, Do What Great Leaders Do.**

A. Leaders **retire** broken soundtracks.

Jon offers examples of some broken soundtracks:

- "That's not how we do things here."
- "There's never been a day that turned out the way it was scheduled, so why do we talk about the schedule?"
- "We never reach our goals, so why do we set them?"

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Which of these statements resonate with you? What are some broken soundtracks in your organization? Take some time to brainstorm them with your team and note them below.

To help retire a broken soundtrack, Jon recommends asking three questions:

1. **Is it true?** Do not make the mistake of assuming all your thoughts are true.
2. **Is it helpful?** Just because a soundtrack is true, it doesn't mean it helps us move forward.
3. **Is it kind?** Does it create psychological safety? Can you (a) ask questions, (b) suggest new ideas, and (c) admit you are wrong *without being treated unkindly*.

If possible, take a broken soundtrack that may be a part of your organization's culture, and ask these three questions together as a team.

Broken Soundtrack:	
Questions	Team Notes
Is it true?	
Is it helpful?	
Is it kind?	

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As a team,

- What was revealed by this process? Or what did you learn about that soundtrack?
  
- What will you do in response to this information?

B. Leaders **replace** broken soundtracks.

Jon suggests replacing our broken soundtracks with *empathy*, which means knowing what someone needs *and* doing it. In other words, we learn to care about what the people we care about, care about.

Jon also points out that sometimes organizations get caught up in providing goods or services to their customers because they *think* the customer cares about something when they actually don't. The cure for this is "ask more questions and read less minds."

What is your team or organization doing because they *believe* it's important to your customers or community, when it actually may not be? There is no wrong answer.

Brainstorm below ways to get helpful feedback from your community or customers, in order to get a more accurate understanding of their needs?

## Act

Commit to one thing you can do different as a result of this talk.