

Finding headspace

The idea of a meditating Managing Director sounds more like cartoon theme than a clear-headed business practitioner. But the age of the mindful manager is upon us, as shown by the growing number of global organisations, like Google, booking their employees in mindfulness training courses.

Why is this important to us as communicators? Because many others have found that [having a clear head is good for business](#). Essentially, a mindful leader will be a better communicator, better able to engage fully with their people, brand journeys and strategic direction – all things which are increasingly important in the challenging economic environment which is seeing numerous organisations experience significant change.

Mindfulness has nothing to do with spirituality or any form of religion - instead it's a trait that can be developed through focused training. When you're driving to a meeting and you realise you need to focus so you don't get lost – that's mindfulness. But if you're thinking about three other things and pulling out your phone to respond to a text...you're distracted and more likely to miss your turn.

As local corporate mindfulness [training expert Stephen Archer](#) says, a leader's capacity to be self-aware – or mindful - is key to being more effective in the workplace, particularly in the information-rich environments of our modern-day workplaces where mental demands far exceed physical demands, putting major strain on our powers of concentration and attention.

In the workplace, a distracted and agitated mind is more likely to result in compromised performance communicating with other staff, productivity and creativity compared to a clear, open and focused mind.

One of the key problems is that technology means we're constantly tempted to multi-task or more precisely, pay only partial attention to lots of different things at once. How often do you flick between tasks - texting while talking, checking emails while writing, tweeting while walking, and so on? Scientists now know that this is an extremely inefficient use of brain energy resulting in "intense mental exhaustion".

So when you feel brain dead at the end of the week – it's close to the truth. Your poor pre-frontal cortex – which is the part that does all the problem-solving work all day - is quite literally burnt out as it's only built to do one thing at a time.

According to neuroscience, taking a little time out each day to get some headspace [increases grey matter in the brain](#), making it more efficient and/or powerful at processing information.

Archer says mindfulness training is also particularly effective for leaders whose presence and ability to “tune-in” or “attend mindfully” are key factors in promoting dynamic innovation... “Mindful presence personally and in conversation has the power to open people’s hearts and minds to recognise the core question at stake and to energise new creative responses.”

Makes sense. It’s well known that the number one reason people leave work is not being underpaid or overworked but because of their manager. They leave because of the ripple effect of working with a distracted and agitated direct report.

After all, if you can’t manage your own mind how can you expect to manage others?

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