

5 Ways To Create a More Mindful Team

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In order for an organization to implement effective change strategies employees must be able to adapt to ever-changing situations and environments.⁵² For over 20 years, researchers have observed workplaces where individuals and teams reliably thrive in the face of constant change and challenge.

That research shows that when individuals and teams routinely engage mindfully with each other, mindfulness becomes a social norm and mindful practices become processes and routines that turn entire workplaces into mindful organizations, which then perform more reliably than other comparable workplaces.^{53 54 55}

Collective mindfulness does not typically involve individuals and teams meditating together. Instead, everyone in the workplace applies mindfulness collectively to the task of implementing the organization’s strategy and goals. Workplaces that cultivate collective mindfulness can be described as “organizations that pay close attention to what is going on around them, refusing to accept distraction as the norm or to individually function on ‘autopilot’: Mindful organizations include a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capacity for action.”⁵⁶

Quantitative evidence about the effect of mindfulness as a social practice within and across teams is not just about the individual’s mental health or ability to “reduce stress.” Research points to a much wider array of other benefits which critical to the company’s health as well, including:

- increased customer loyalty and customer satisfaction⁵⁷
- improved safety outcomes for organizations as a whole^{58 59 60}
- reduced employee emotional exhaustion and turnover^{61 62}
- increases in innovation and financial performance⁶³
- reduction in malpractice claims.^{64 17}

The research cited here is largely based on case studies and on organizations that had ‘naturally’ or ‘serendipitously’ evolved to become mindful organizations. Organizing mindfully across teams and departments in workplaces requires many individuals to consistently pay attention to the actual reality that unfolds for the organization, and respond with awareness.

Research for teams of any size also suggests that unless everyone is committed to responding mindfully, the organization is prone to reverting to ‘mindlessness’, accepting ongoing distraction as the norm, and reaping less effective and sustainable outcomes over the long term.⁶⁸

How Collective Mindfulness Can Be Developed For Your Team

Teams and organizations as a whole become mindful when mindfulness permeates their strategy and culture – ‘the way we do things around here’. Collective mindfulness has five social “mindful organizing” practices:⁶⁹

1. Paying attention to change and variation in how people work and how work is organized
2. An attitude of openness towards discussing problems or issues that could affect individuals, teams, or the organization as a whole
3. Intentionally welcoming and encouraging critical dialogue at all levels of the organization
4. Encouraging flexibility and fluid organization of work tasks and people acting on the understanding that expertise changes across different tasks and situations,
5. Deferring to actual expertise rather than to structural hierarchy.

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View References

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