

MINDFULNESS IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

"We took typical, middle-class Americans trying to cope with the demands of an active work life and active family life who reported being relatively stressed out. And what we found out is that after a short time meditating, meditation had profound effects not just on how they felt but on their brains and bodies."

Dr. Richard Davidson, neuroscientist and researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Business Week, August, 2004

"If businesses were clever, what they would do is simply put time aside [and have] a quiet room for people to carry out a meditative behavior of their choice." Herbert Benson, President, Mind/Body Medical Institute, Harvard Medical School, Business Week, August, 2004

Improving work performance

Mindfulness Meditation also increases the soft skills required of today's leaders including empathy, compassion and the ability to correctly gauge a complex range of facial and bodily expressions. This increased awareness can help executives excel at forming alliances, negotiating contracts, building interpersonal relationships and motivating team members. When used by executives and key managers, it can positively impact an organization's health and financial performance.

Case Studies

- After implementing a wellness program which included meditation, Seven Oaks General Hospital in Winnipeg, MB:
 - Reduced employee turnover, the lowest for a health care facility in that city
 - Reduced Workers' Compensation Board rates from 3.8% to 1.97% per employee, the lowest for this kind of facility in the province
 - Increased participation in health risk assessments—two wellness teams reached 50% coverage in their divisions
 - Received recognition from Maclean's Magazine as a top 100 employer and the Manitoba Gold Award for Human Resources Leadership
- John Kabat-Zinn has done extensive research into the health benefits of Mindfulness Meditation and he and Richard Davidson collaborated on a recent study of workers in a high tech company who took a two-month training program in meditation. It showed significant changes in brain activity, declines in anxiety and beneficial changes in immune function. (Reported in the Shambhala Sun, September, 2005)
- In another study of a company, significant improvements in relations with supervisors and co-workers were noted after an average of eleven months practicing meditation, in comparison to control subjects. And while meditators reported that they felt less anxiety about promotion, their fellow employees saw them as moving ahead quickly. Job performance and job satisfaction increased while desire to change jobs decreased. People at every level of the organization benefited from practicing meditation. (Reported in Academy of Management Journal, 17: 362-368, 1974.)

- A three-month study of managers and employees who regularly practiced meditation in a Fortune 100 manufacturing company and a smaller distribution-sales company in Philadelphia showed that meditation practitioners displayed more relaxed physiological functioning, greater reduction in anxiety, and reduced tension on the job, when compared to control subjects with similar job positions in the same companies. (Anxiety, Stress and Coping International Journal, 6: 245-262, 1993.)
- In two companies that introduced meditation, managers and employees who regularly practiced meditation also reported significant reductions in health problems such as headaches and backaches, improved quality of sleep, and a significant reduction in the use of hard liquor and cigarettes, compared to personnel in the control groups. (Anxiety, Stress and Coping International Journal, 6: 245-262, 1993.)

Companies offering their employees meditation training include:

- Aetna International
- Apple Computers
- Lucent International
- Prentice-Hall
- Toyota
- Sumitomo
- Volvo
- Puritan Bennett
- General Motors
- IBM.

Companies offering meditation facilities include:

- AOL
- Raytheon
- Nortel Networks
- Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton
- Keane Canada Inc.
- Toronto City Hall

To learn more about the practice of Mindfulness Meditation please visit these suggested links below:

Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine: Massachusetts General Hospital
<http://www.mbmi.org/basics/whatis.asp>