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What Are the Demonstrated Impacts of Mindfulness/Meditation/ Energy Management' on Individual and Organizational Performance?

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What Are the Demonstrated Impacts of Mindfulness/Meditation/Energy Management' on Individual and Organizational Performance?

Abstract

[Excerpt] Organizations are increasingly becoming interested in mindfulness and meditation. In a recent study, sixty one percent of companies said they have either implemented mindfulness solutions or considered implementing them in the past two years. The amount of interest in this topic leads many to believe that mindfulness is a cure all to their organizational problems. But is mindfulness really impacting business results?

Mindfulness has many definitions. For the purpose of our research we narrowed mindfulness down to these characteristics. Mindfulness strengthens present moment attention, intentionality, attitudes of self-compassion, and clarity. It makes individuals more likely to detect changes in their environment as well as corresponding opportunities for action.

Keywords

HR, human resources, mindfulness, meditation, energy, wellness, health and wellness, work-life balance, burnout, stress, productivity, energy management

Comments

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Research Question

What are the demonstrated impacts of mindfulness/meditation/energy management' on individual and organizational performance?

Introduction to Research

Organizations are increasingly becoming interested in mindfulness and meditation. In a recent study, sixty one percent of companies said they have either implemented mindfulness solutions or considered implementing them in the past two years.ⁱ The amount of interest in this topic leads many to believe that mindfulness is a cure all to their organizational problems. But is mindfulness really impacting business results?

Mindfulness has many definitions. For the purpose of our research we narrowed mindfulness down to these characteristics. Mindfulness strengthens present moment attention, intentionality, attitudes of self-compassion, and clarity.ⁱⁱ It makes individuals more likely to detect changes in their environment as well as corresponding opportunities for action.ⁱⁱⁱ

Business Value of Mindfulness

Health

Mindfulness has multiple health benefits for employees. Mindfulness practice has been shown to reduce high stress level^{iv} and decreased blood pressure^v. Mindfulness meditation practices both improved energy levels and enhanced the immune systems of employees in high-stress jobs^{vi}. Not only does mindfulness positively impact physical health but also mental. The most commonly cited psychological benefit of mindfulness practice is reduced stress. According to Chaskalson^{vii}, mindfulness is positively linked to these workplace outcomes:

- Increased creativity and innovation
- Productivity
- Work engagement
- Reduced conflict
- Decreased absenteeism
- Positively linked to a decreased turnover

If workers are in poor health, it will affect the business with increased healthcare costs. These come in the form of increased absences and decreased productivity and performance^{viii}. With mindfulness programs and trainings, companies can not only save money but time in lost productivity.

Health – Burnout

Research shows that stress impacts us physically and emotionally in negative ways. It also affects behavior. Burnout rates caused by stress in the workplace are on the rise. A recent Gallup study of 7,500 workers found that two-thirds of full-time workers experience burnout on the job^{ix}. When employees are burned out, it can lead to hazardous decision making, demotivation and low morale – all negative impacts on employee well-being and business outcomes. Mindfulness can help lessen burnout rates in the workforce. A review of mindfulness-based training found consistent evidence of decreases in emotional exhaustion and symptoms of burnout and increases in mood, positive affect, and satisfaction^x. Last but not least, mindfulness will protect employees and organizations from burnout, saving the company money and productivity declines.

Leadership

Mindfulness can be useful in influencing leadership behaviors and employee outcomes. For example, evidence suggests that leader mindfulness relates to increased employee job performance, job satisfaction, and reduced employee emotional exhaustion.^{xi} Here are some examples of how mindful leaders affect employee outcomes:

1. Increase in leader presence improves follower commitment and engagement.
2. Greater knowledge of and attention to subordinates' strengths, weaknesses, and challenges.
3. Resilience allows leaders to be persistent in attaining organizational goals.
4. Less bias and ego involvement in leader decision making
5. Mindfulness can create behaviors that show up in the authentic, charismatic and servant leadership styles.^{xii}

Case Studies

Google:

In 2007, Google began offering mindfulness trainings in the workplace. By partnering with external mindfulness experts, they soon founded the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. Currently SIYLI is its own entity that provides mindfulness and emotional intelligence training to individuals and workplaces. Participants have seen many benefits as a result of the programs that SIYLI conducts.

- 78% of participants began to use tools to decrease their stress levels post training.
- The number of participants who felt emotionally drained at work dropped by half.
- The number of employees who felt they could be resilient in the workplace after training increased.
- Increase in self-reported leadership capabilities such as complex problem solving and conflict resolution.^{xiii}

Aetna:

Aetna has been advocating mindfulness for many years. They have a Chief Mindfulness Officer who has been championing mindfulness in both the workplace and for consumers. Aetna has implemented a meditation space at HQ, a mindfulness month (mindfulness content sent in emails to employees plus mindfulness practices and drop-ins), mindfulness champions (employees with a personal mindfulness practice who are chosen to lead mindfulness awareness in their workplace community and provided with a 10 week training).^{xiv} They have also partnered with emindful.com and the Potential Project to bring mindfulness content to their employees and to study the effects of mindfulness in their offices. At Aetna, mindfulness trainings have resulted in:

- Reductions in perceived sleep difficulties and stress levels^{xv}
- Improvements in somatic measures such as breathing, and heart rate.

Best Practices for Implementation

Use the following best practices to ensure your company sees the beneficial impacts of mindfulness that we have outlined above^{xvi}.

1. Introduce the history or value of mindfulness before the intervention.
2. Have a passionate leader of the mindfulness intervention.
3. Make practices and adoption optional.
4. Share leadership of the practices.
5. Create a space for discussion and reflection.
6. Show participants the connection to organizational goals.

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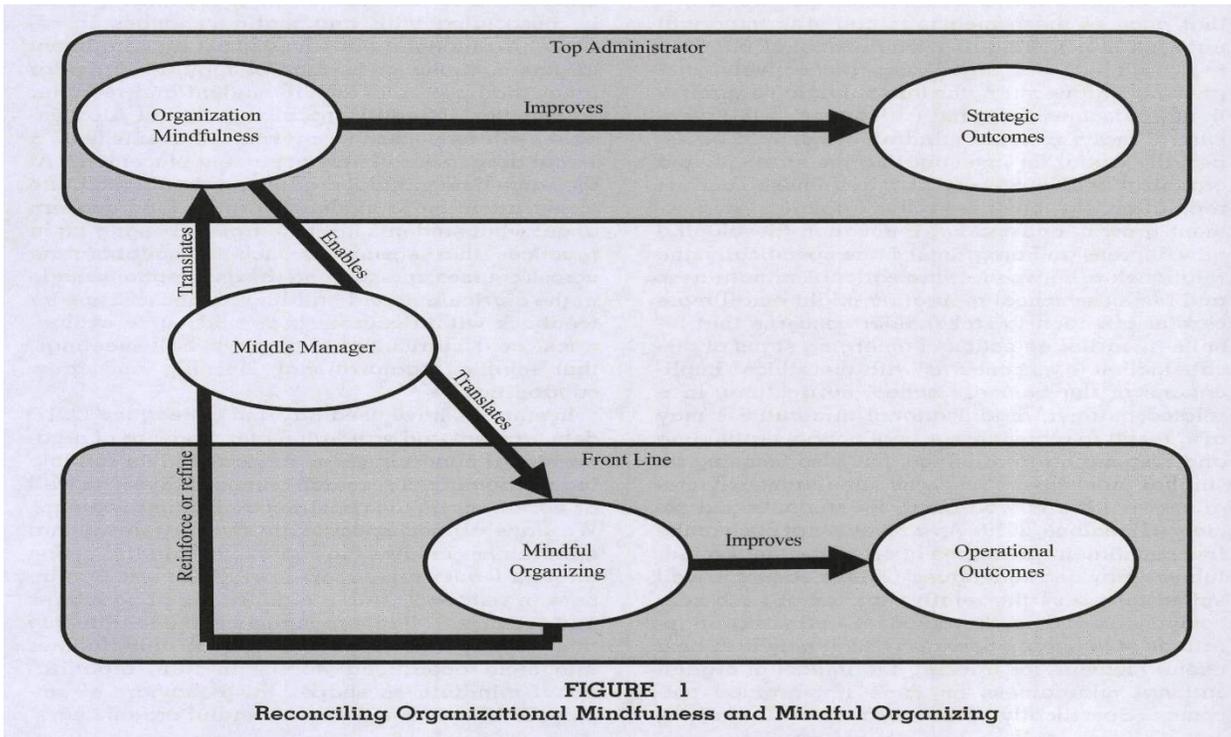
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PRE/POST DATA RESULTS 2016–2018

Results from the 29-question assessment:

	Before	After
I notice when my mood begins to change.	69%	83%
When I experience strong emotions, I am aware of the physical changes in my body.	58%	71%
I am able to notice when my attention has been pulled away and return it to the present moment.	39%	65%
I am able to pause before reacting.	47%	67%
I use a deliberate technique to calm myself when I am in the middle of a stressful situation.	37%	66%
I am satisfied with my job.	72%	77%
I lead a meaningful life.	74%	83%
Most days I make time to prioritize what's most important.	57%	74%
I feel that I can bounce back quickly after an emotionally challenging situation.	39%	60%
I anticipate problems and think about how to deal with them ahead of time.	63%	70%
When faced with a difficult situation, I focus on potential opportunities.	56%	71%
When someone I work with is hurting in some way, I feel comfortable offering assistance or help.	68%	76%
When interacting with others, I feel aware of their emotional state.	66%	75%
When working with someone, I consider that individual's unique work style preferences.	60%	75%
Before giving someone feedback, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in his/her place.	54%	64%
finished speaking.	40%	20%
I feel I actively contribute to the well-being of others.	58%	70%
When in conflict with someone, I take time to fully understand what is driving their perspective.	45%	64%
I am able to find workable solutions to difficult problems.	69%	78%
I experience difficulty sleeping, either falling asleep or staying asleep.	25%	14%
I experience tension in my body due to stress.	51%	35%
I more often have positive than negative emotional experiences.	70%	80%
I am able to let go of negative thoughts when I become aware of them.	34%	52%
I feel emotionally drained as a result of doing my work.	23%	13%
I tend to find myself running on automatic, without much awareness of what I am doing.	17%	10%
I find myself habitually checking my phone or email without a clear purpose.	49%	30%
I find it easy to keep my attention focused on a task from start to finish.	35%	48%
My mind is often occupied with other thoughts while I am listening to someone.	28%	18%
I feel so distracted that I have difficulty sorting out what is essential from what is unnecessary.	13%	7%





Source: Vogus, T. J., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2012)^{xvi}