



WHITE PAPER

Corporate Mindfulness Programs

There are so many mindfulness programs to choose from.

It's mind-numbing.

Which is right for your organization?

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Executive Summary

Google does it. Target does it. Even Goldman Sachs, General Mills, and Shell do it.

These days it seems every corporation has a mindfulness program.

And for good reason. **“Aetna estimates that since instituting its mindfulness program, it has saved about \$2,000 per employee in healthcare costs, and gained about \$3,000 per employee in productivity,”** according to *The Atlantic*.¹ Other companies are reporting similar extraordinary results.

But **what exactly is mindfulness?** Why are so many companies offering it? What are the benefits?

With the surge of corporate mindfulness programs comes the proliferation of programs to choose from. How is a corporate sponsor to decide?

What are the best practices? What are the next practices?

How can a company be sure it's getting the most from a mindfulness curriculum?

The Common Definition and Benefits of Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment. ... and is strongly correlated with well-being and perceived health.”²

That’s how Wikipedia defines mindfulness. And it’s a good enough definition as far as it goes.

Mindfulness, as practiced in the workplace today, is derived largely from work pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. In the 1980s, Kabat-Zinn began working with patients who were experiencing various kinds of pain and who had tried a number of different treatments to alleviate the pain, but to no avail. In a clinical setting, he applied mindfulness techniques that he derived from Eastern meditation traditions. They worked.

Kabat-Zinn consequently created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which became the foundation for many corporate mindfulness known today, including, famously, one at General Mills. In 1991, Kabat-Zinn published his book *Full Catastrophe Living*, which has become a foundational text for secular mindfulness programs. Because of Kabat-Zinn’s influence, corporate mindfulness programs have largely focussed on bringing health and wellness techniques to overwhelmed and stressed employees.

At their best, **these mindfulness programs produce happy and healthy employees**. But the emphasis on making the individual responsible for staying focused on themselves and on their own wellbeing can have a couple of unforeseen repercussions:

First, the focus on individual responsibility can lead to managerial blame, as in hypothetically telling an employee that, “If you’re not happy, then you need to ‘search inside yourself’ more.”

Second, the focus internally on the individual misses out on the innovative and creative engagement aspects of mindfulness.

The New Definition and Enhanced Benefits of Mindfulness

Another definition of mindfulness comes from Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer, who literally wrote the book on Mindfulness, called *Mindfulness*, in 1989. She recently explained mindfulness in a *Harvard Business Review* article:

“Mindfulness is the process of actively noticing new things. When you do that, it puts you in the present. It makes you more sensitive to context and perspective. It’s the essence of engagement. And it’s energy-begetting.”³

This definition expands the possible **applications of mindfulness to productivity and innovation.**

New mindfulness programs, being rolled out at places like Google and Shell Oil, take this broader definition to heart.

These programs have released the emotional intelligence and neuroscientific possibilities that mindfulness can offer corporations.

What follows are descriptions of the three basic forms of mindfulness programming available to corporations today.

(1) Foundational Mindfulness Programs

As described above, most corporate mindfulness programs today are based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs, pioneered in the 1980s and '90s.

The hallmark MBSR program is eight-weeks. It is led by trainers certified through the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts. Weekly commitments by participants include attending two-and-a-half-hour long group classes each week and up to an hour per day of outside class work. As the program's name suggests, the emphasis of these programs is on stress reduction. You can find more information at the Center for Mindfulness web site here: www.umassmed.edu/cfm.

Other practitioners, not affiliated with the Center for Mindfulness, have also created effective programs derived from the MBSR curriculum. See the section on What to Look for in a Mindfulness Program.

(2) Enhanced Mindfulness Programs

As mentioned earlier, companies like Google and Shell Oil have expanded on the MBSR programs.

Google, in particular, created the Search Inside Yourself (SIY) program in the 2000s.

This program was primarily a collaboration between self-proclaimed "Jolly Good Fellow" Google employee number 107 Chade Meng-Tan and Stanford scientist, CEO (and Zen Master) Daniel Goleman.

Goleman's neuroscience background incorporated ideas for how to begin to turn mindfulness outward to relating to other people. Since Goleman literally wrote the book on Emotional Intelligence, called *Emotional Intelligence*, emotional intelligence is a key component of these new mindfulness programs. **Unleashing the emotional intelligence capabilities of mindfulness moves the focus from individual well-being to corporate well-being.**

Search Inside Yourself later spun off from Google as its own institute. More information on the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute can be found at www.siyli.org.

This new level of mindful engagement creates stronger leadership, more powerful executive presence, and **more harmonious workplace environments.**

But mindfulness has even more to offer corporations.

While foundational and enhanced mindfulness programs deal with transforming the employee, the next wave of mindfulness can transform the company.

(3) The Next Wave of Mindfulness Programs

Are you seeking executives who are talent multipliers?

Are you looking for fully engaged team players?

The next wave of mindfulness programming promises to provide workplaces not merely with stress reduction, emotional intelligence, and productivity.

They **unleash corporate innovation**.

New mindfulness programs release the innovative aspects of mindfulness—both continuous and disruptive—and **boost overall corporate performance**.

Engaged Mindful Leadership™ (EML) engages two aspects of mindfulness that are often overlooked in foundational and enhanced mindfulness programs: (1) Innovative Leadership, and (2) Full Team Talent Engagement.

Engaged Mindful Leadership is being pioneered by innerOvation.

For executives, Engaged Mindful Leadership helps them become talent multipliers. EML helps them to listen better, ask questions in more empowering ways and bring out the best in their team members. This releases employees' innate creativity for the benefit of the entire organization and boosts overall corporate performance, including the bottom line.

For employees, Engaged Mindful Leadership helps them become more engaged and innovative corporate performers. Using EML helps these contributors better understand how their creativity can make a difference, how to align that creativity with larger goals of the organization and how to become more confident in their ability to advance their best ideas. The result is that employees feel like they are truly making a difference, which increases work satisfaction, which further increases constructive engagement at work. It's a win, win.

EML trained executives report increases in performance from as much as 2 to 8 (out of 10) in six months. Businesses that have employed EML have realized an average of 25% increase in revenue over a year.

More information on EML can be found at www.innerOvation.com.

What to Look for in a Mindfulness Program

With a plethora of mindfulness training programs available, it helps to have some guidelines for determining which may be best for your organization. Here's a few guiding questions:

- (1) Does the program have qualified trainers?** Be sure to see if those presenting your mindfulness programming have corporate experience, academic insight, and actual practice with mindfulness.
- (2) Do the trainers understand the corporate applications of mindfulness?** Mindfulness is all well and good in any and all circumstances. But does the program being offered understand how mindfulness applies to making a corporation great?
- (3) What do you want mindfulness to do for your company?** It is important to ask yourself and your company what exactly you want from a mindfulness program. Is it wellbeing, productivity, emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation, and/or team work? Get clear on the outcome you want.
- (4) Does the program you're considering create the desirable outcome?** Check to see that the programs you are looking at address the outcome you are seeking.

What is the Right Mindfulness Program for Your Organization?

Here's a table to help distinguish between the various types of mindfulness programs:

		FOUNDATIONAL MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS	ENHANCED MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS	ENGAGED MINDFUL LEADERSHIP
STRESS REDUCTION	Stress Reduction	✓	✓	✓
	Employee Satisfaction	✓	✓	✓
	Health Improvement	✓	✓	✓
PRODUCTIVITY & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	Self Awareness	✓	✓	✓
	Emotional Intelligence		✓	✓
	Productivity		✓	✓
INNOVATION & PERFORMANE	Executive Presence		✓	✓
	Talent Multiplication			✓
	Team Development			✓
	Innovation			✓

The Mindfulness Advantage

With mindfulness being incorporated into more and more corporations, it's becoming not just a “nice to have,” but a necessity.

Over the years, introducing mindfulness has helped many companies gain an advantage over their competition.

With the theory, methods and applications of mindfulness advancing, any corporation can take advantage of the next wave and boost innovation and performance.

In the spirit of mindfulness, take a moment, sit, breathe.

Take a moment to think about what you would like your workplace to be like in six months or a year.

Then think through what kind of mindful leadership programs might help you get there.

Next, let all that thinking go.

Just sit. Breathe.

Let answers arise or not arise as they will.

Then pull out your research on mindfulness programs again—this white paper or other materials—and attend to the task with a fresh eye.

What comes up? What feels certain? What is surprising that you'd like to explore more?

Decide next steps.

¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/03/corporations-newest-productivity-hack-meditation/387286/>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindfulness>

³ <https://hbr.org/2014/03/mindfulness-in-the-age-of-complexity>

From innerOvation LLC:

We published this white paper to help corporate executives understand the benefits of mindfulness and how these programs can be applied in their organizations.

In our experience, not all mindfulness programs are alike. It can make a big difference to your organization which one you choose.

We're mindful that you want the best for your organization. We're here to help.

Contact us at info@innerOvation.com.



Leadership Inside Out