



Creating a Mindful Workplace

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Mindfulness continues to be one of the most popular movements across the world to improve lives and business environments. Many of the best companies, large and small, have adopted mindfulness to improve their workplaces. While mindfulness has roots in many different spiritual and contemplative practices, it is utilized in the business environment as a completely secular practice that, when done properly, can reduce stress, increase productivity, improve focus, boost creativity, and make people more accepting and tolerant, improving diversity and inclusion.

Mindfulness helps with recruitment because employees are attracted to organizations that are known as mindful companies who also have mindfulness training programs. It helps with retention because mindfulness programs create tremendous benefits for employees who participate, increasing both job and life satisfaction.

Most simply, mindfulness is being present and aware in the moment, without judgment. Mindfulness allows one to focus on a task or conversation at a high level. Mindfulness is different from meditation. One does not have to meditate to be mindful. However, meditation is a tool that can help someone improve their ability to be more mindful.

Meditation is merely an exercise in focused attention. Generally, one focuses their attention on the breath. When their mind wanders off, they redirect their attention back to the breath. This act of redirecting their wandering mind back to the area of focus, the breath, is the act of meditation. It is a practice of disciplining the mind to focus. It has the result of training the mind to focus, which allows the practitioner to be more mindful when trying to focus on a difficult task at work, or a conversation with a co-worker, or a long meeting. Concentration is important in a world full of constant distractions.

A mindful workplace is an organization full of people who are less stressed, more engaged, more productive, more profitable, more cooperative, and more fulfilled. The benefits of mindfulness are powerful. There are important ways that an organization can cultivate mindfulness.

Cultivate Awareness

Awareness is at the heart of both mindfulness and emotional intelligence. Mindful organizations create cultures in which employees are highly aware of its vision and values. They are more than signs on the wall but are lived and acted on daily. The organization is aware they have a responsibility to exist and act with social awareness to all stakeholders. Leaders have both self-awareness and other-awareness. Everyone is treated with dignity and respect. They maintain awareness of internal and external strengths and weaknesses to the organization and act on them appropriately.



Opposite: The opposite of awareness is **obliviousness**. Being completely unaware or unconcerned about what is going on around you. Many times people are oblivious because they lack the concern to pay attention. They are self-absorbed. This can be at the personal or organizational level. Some organizations are only concerned about their immediate mission and are too short-sighted to realize the benefits of expanding their scope of awareness.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of awareness is **propaganda**. Workplaces can espouse vision and values through marketing but not align their actions with those statements. Leaders and employees say the right words but act selfishly.

Rate: How would you rate the overall awareness of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Oblivious 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Aware

Cultivate Focus

A mindful workplace is focused on the purpose of the organization and executing its strategies and plans. It does not get distracted with constantly changing methods, directions and plans. It does not get preoccupied with internal conflicts and disputes. It engages in healthy debate, makes decisions, and executes on them. Its employees are able to stay focused on their work without getting sidelined by unimportant meetings and tasks that keep them from the strategic focus of the organization. Products, services and talent are all equally enhanced to achieve viability.

Opposite: The opposite of focus is **distraction**. Workers are regularly interrupted by things that are not important to the strategic mission. Leadership is constantly changing its mind about its direction and who is in charge of projects and business units.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of focus is **activity**. It is easy to mistake being busy for being on task. Mindful workplaces pay attention to the difference between getting a lot of things done and getting the right things done.

Rate: How would you rate the overall focus of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Distraction 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Focus



Cultivate Order

Lack of organization and misinformation creates chaos and anxiety. Mindful workplaces have clear lines of reporting and communication. They are clean, safe and everyone knows what to do, when to do it and how to do it. They also know where to go when they don't know one of those things. Files, electronic or otherwise, have a system and place. Policies and procedures are clear, updated and followed, but not overly bureaucratic. Process improvement is frequent and a priority to remain efficient and competitive.



Opposite: The opposite of order is **chaos**.
Disorganization and inefficiency reign when people are confused about systems and methods. Down time and waste kill profit and create dysfunction.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of order is **bureaucracy**.
Systems and processes are good. When they are not updated and modernized, or are governed by authoritarian dictatorship, they lose their efficiency.

Rate: How would you rate the overall order of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Chaos 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Order

Cultivate Peace

Many people spend a majority of their waking hours in the workplace. They need as much peace as possible. Good conflict can be healthy to bring the best ideas forward. Dysfunction, however, is a recipe for disaster and is eliminated in mindful workplaces. Teams are encouraged to collaborate with healthy communication. Toxic leaders and team members are removed before they poison the whole organization. Even in open office spaces people are provided with the space and time to quietly focus on deep work as needed. Everyone is respected as individuals and feel free to bring their whole selves to work in a safe environment.



Opposite: The opposite of peace is **turmoil**. People feel disturbed and uncomfortable when they are in an environment which is unhealthy. It is a condition one can only endure for so long before they decide to remove themselves from the situation.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of peace is **affluence**. Many organizations will attempt to purchase one's lack of peace with rewards of compensation or other benefits. Eventually time runs out when the lack of peace eats away at the employee and no amount of rewards are worth staying.

Rate: How would you rate the overall peace of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Turmoil 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Peace

Cultivate Balance

Companies make profit. They have to stay in business. If they are not profitable, they cannot provide jobs or create products or services. There is always a drive to be profitable, even in non-profits. They must pay the bills. Mindful organizations are great at balancing that drive with the well-being of their employees. Increasing productivity and efficiency is important. There is a limit to the capacity of human productivity. Measuring productivity is only as important as measuring human well-being and job satisfaction. Tracking reduction in overtime worked year-to-year is as important as tracking increases in efficiency.



Opposite: The opposite of balance is **volatility**. Companies that lack mindfulness may be explosive in growth, profits, speed and energy but have a tendency to burn up many of those they employ to create those results. They often have a mentality that only the strong survive.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of balance is **perfection**. Neither organizations nor employees are always going to have exactly what they want or need. During different seasons each will need to give and take some for the benefit of each other. Some will try to seek a perfect scenario rather than working on the imperfection of balance.

Rate: How would you rate the overall balance of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Volatility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Balance

Cultivate Compassion

It is uncommon to think of compassion in the competitive arena of the business environment. Even more reason for mindful workplaces to emphasize compassion. It can easily be confused with being soft or letting people get away with everything. Compassion is seeing humanity amid the policies and procedures. It is doing hard things in a human way and treating everyone with dignity and respect. Compassion is recognizing there are exceptions to rules and finding the right way to apply them. It is taking action towards helping people when you are able and it is appropriate.

Opposite: The opposite of compassion is **apathy**. Workplaces that lack mindfulness are those where people don't take others into consideration. Leaders and employees alike are only concerned with themselves.

Counterfeit: The counterfeit of compassion is **talk**. People say they care but do not act on anything. They have media campaigns on social issues but do not change their behavior. They pretend to care.

Rate: How would you rate the overall compassion of your organization on a scale from 1 to 10?

Apathy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Compassion

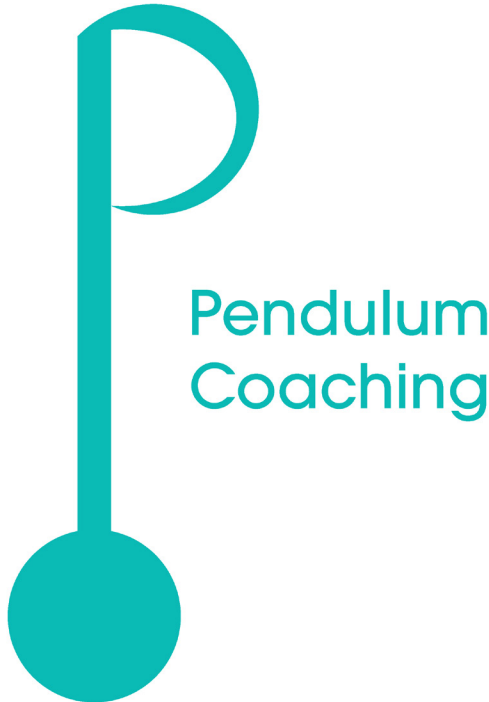


A perfectly mindful workplace sounds like a utopia. And it would be. Most organizations are always in a state of trying to achieve a sense of mindfulness in many of these areas. We are more or less mindfully aligned as we pursue these goals. If we are not daily striving for these results, we will not achieve them.

Organizations do not actually reach goals. Individuals do, which allows the organization to collectively reap the benefits. Our workplaces become more mindful when each of us, as individuals, become more mindful. To create a mindful workplace, we must each become more mindful.

At Pendulum Coaching, LLC, we are certified to help organizations and individuals create mindful workplaces as well as improve their emotional intelligence. In addition to coaching and consulting, we provide keynotes and workshops and topics such as:

- The Mindful Leader
- The Mindful Team
- The Mindful Organization
- The Emotionally Intelligent Leader
- The Emotionally Intelligent Team
- The Emotionally Intelligent Organization
- How to Have Meaningful Conversations
- Coaching for Growth
- How to Meditate



David B. McLaughlin, M.Ed, SHRM-SCP, is the founder of Pendulum Coaching, LLC. He has over twenty-years experience coaching and consulting. He has been committed to mindfulness and meditation since 2012. He has a M. Ed in Adult Education and B.S. in Accounting from the University of Central Oklahoma. He is also a Ph. D student at Kansas State University researching the intersection of mindfulness and emotional intelligence. David is the host of The Mindful Leader podcast.

David served at a large insurance company on the Fortune Best Companies to Work For list in Oklahoma City for 18 years where he was an executive in charge of Learning and Development. He has also served on the boards of the Oklahoma City Human Resources Society and Central Oklahoma Chapter of the Association of Talent Development as well as many other business and community organizations. David is also a former tax accountant as well as a frequent event speaker.



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