



MINDSET-CHANGE FOR TRANSFORMATION IN FINANCE

What creates sustainable
cultural transformation?

• MIF / •
MINDFUL
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial services industry has been under pressure to transform its culture and conduct for some time. It is now additionally challenged by the current pandemic and a looming recession. While change initiatives, partly triggered by new regulations, have contributed to positive development, a significant mindset shift is still needed. These include changes in the mental habits and assumptions of leaders and employees necessary to drive and carry the transformation efforts. Mindfulness, which encompasses a broad spectrum of attention and emotional regulation and awareness cultivation skills, can play a crucial role in this transformative process.

This White Paper highlights case studies, research and the experiences of leaders in the industry that demonstrate how mindfulness can support the ongoing culture change and transformation process. We show some of the important interconnections between wellbeing, psychological safety, collective intelligence, decision-making and business outcomes, and the central role mindfulness can play in shifting these key factors.

The core attention and emotion regulation skills that are associated with mindfulness training have a broad applicability for the financial sector. Mindfulness has the potential to substantially improve the wellbeing and resilience of financial services employees. The calming of the mind can increase the ability to focus and become aware of automatic reactions, which in turn are skills with broad positive effects on relationship management (being present) or the decision-making process (being unswayed by bias). Mindfulness can also contribute to the mindset shift necessary for adopting agile workstyles and collaborating intelligently.

A number of financial services institutions now offer mindfulness trainings for employees and leaders. Two financial services providers, HSBC UK and NASPA, Germany will share their experiences and recommendations about how best to integrate mindfulness initiatives in an organisation.

CULTURE TRANSFORMATION WITH MINDFULNESS

Pressure to transform

Since the last financial crisis, the banking sector has been under tremendous pressure to transform itself. Regulators, the European Commission and the general public were demanding an adjustment of goals, principles and conduct in finance.

The challenges were threefold:

- Transformation of culture and processes to avoid a repeat of some of the poor incentives and regulatory gaps that led to the 2008-9 financial crisis
- The increasing pressure from new competitors and digital innovation were forcing a rethink of both product and processes and placing a premium on innovation
- The urgent pressure to manage the transition to a sustainable economy capable of limiting the impending climate crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic has now intensified these challenges, accelerating the digitisation of processes, intensifying mental wellbeing challenges, and highlighting the role culture plays in effective collaboration and transformation.

“Fundamentally, getting culture and conduct right is not a supervisory requirement—it is necessary for banks’ and banking’s economic and social sustainability.”

Jacob A. Frenkel, Chairman, Group of Thirty²

Mindset changes support the transformation

Many measures, such as integrating new taxonomies, learning new skills or establishing new processes, play a part in this transformation. However, the financial sector cannot be transformed without (collective) mindset changes. These include changes in the mental habits and assumptions of leaders and employees necessary to drive and carry the transformation efforts, such as:

- Developing **awareness and collective intelligence** in decision-making
- Cultivating **agility and risk aware innovativeness** in business development
- Strengthening **social and environmental awareness** in investment decisions
- Building an **engaged workforce culture** which is attractive for its human values and growth opportunities and not for its perceived status or reward
- Anchoring purpose and meaning in the daily work of the financial sector – to **strengthen resilience** of individuals and the sector as a whole.

Changing mindsets, especially on a large scale, is not easy. People not only have to *want to change* – they also have to *know how to change* – and feel the benefits of changing. If they do not personally feel a change benefits them, they will not engage in it – especially in the difficult task of changing unconscious assumptions and biases.

Mindfulness supports staff wellbeing and mindset shifts

Mindfulness – the ability to regulate attention, emotions and awareness – can play a crucial role in changing mindsets. It not only addresses stress, one of the main drivers of automatic or un-reflected behaviour, but also strengthens both conscious decision-making and the ability to change habits. This can both catalyse change and anchor it in a deeper manner: this is the basis for the necessary mindset change.

For most people, the inner workings of their mind are a mystery – they may know a lot about complex financial derivatives and daily commodity prices but, at the same time, have a limited understanding of how to work with their minds.

Mindfulness-based training has an effect on a variety of outcomes because it trains core skills with broad possible applications such as attention regulation, emotional and body awareness, positive outlook and meta awareness. These skills must become core skills of people working in the financial sector – both for their own wellbeing and

resilience as well as for their ability to work and collaborate effectively.

The evidence supporting mind training is very powerful. Mindfulness training could support financial services employees to regulate their attention, increase their awareness, and cultivate deep resilience. Collective mindfulness can also play a profound role in shifting mindsets of teams and organisations.

With this White Paper we want to map the field of mindfulness in relation to its potential to affect care and performance in the financial services industry.

Based on an extensive review of the research, we have found that mindfulness is a key ingredient for unlocking human potential both individual and collectively, yet there are hardly any studies set in the finance sector. Thus, in addition to reviewing the literature, we reference recent evaluation results from a mindfulness-based workplace training provided to over 400 financial services employees: (referred to as WorkingMIND Study²).

FLOURISHING EMPLOYEES, TRUSTING CUSTOMERS

Employee wellbeing drives culture change

A sector that was not too long ago a proud employer of the very best is now struggling to retain talent and faced with up to 50 percent of mass employee cuts. A fundamental change in employee relations can support those that are driving the transformation and culture change from within.

Focusing on measures that support and improve employee wellbeing can contribute to retaining talent and improving relations. Moreover, companies that prioritise employee wellbeing and trust cope better with the stress that is caused by the process of culture transformation and achieve more lasting and positive outcomes.³ Employee wellbeing also predicts a business's ability to cope and thrive during the pandemic:

“ Treating employees well is one of the top characteristics of a resilient business. ”
HSBC Navigator report 2020⁴

The focus on wellbeing can even be widened to client relations. Behavioural finance professor Meir Statman⁵ proposed that financial advisors move beyond the limited focus on their client's financial wellbeing. Not only, but especially in times of financial turmoil, people's general wellbeing is at stake. Becoming more aware and empathic of clients' needs, thus, should be a major concern for financial advisors.

How mindfulness training improves wellbeing and flourishing

There is robust evidence that mindfulness contributes to wellbeing, for example by increasing the amount of positive emotions a person experiences, including greater calm, happiness and life satisfaction.⁶ Frequent experience of positive emotions and meaning can in turn kick off an upward spiral to other kinds of positive experiences.⁷ Leaders that frequently display positive emotions are viewed as more effective and more fun to be around.⁸ When a person experiences more positive emotions, they also tend to feel more connected to others and use better strategies to cope with stress.⁹

A person is flourishing when all three aspects of wellbeing reach high levels: emotional wellbeing (feeling happy, interested and satisfied), psychological wellbeing (feeling good about oneself and having a sense of purpose and meaning) and social wellbeing (feeling part of a larger community).¹⁰ When a person scores high on all three aspects of wellbeing, they are considered flourishing.

In the WorkingMIND study¹ of a mindfulness-based training with employees within Financial services sector, the percentage of people flourishing increased after the training by 21 percent.

Interestingly, pre training the social wellbeing of financial services employees was lower compared to norm data. Feeling connected to others, sharing a sense of common humanity is an important dimension of wellbeing. The lack of social connectedness, loneliness, is a societal issue and a risk factor for a number of mental and physical health issues.¹¹

The WorkingMIND study found that practicing mindfulness increased the feeling of connection with others, perhaps by providing a supportive group setting and developing compassion towards others and oneself. In this way, mindfulness is a practice that can be beneficial to others just as much as to oneself.^{12,13}

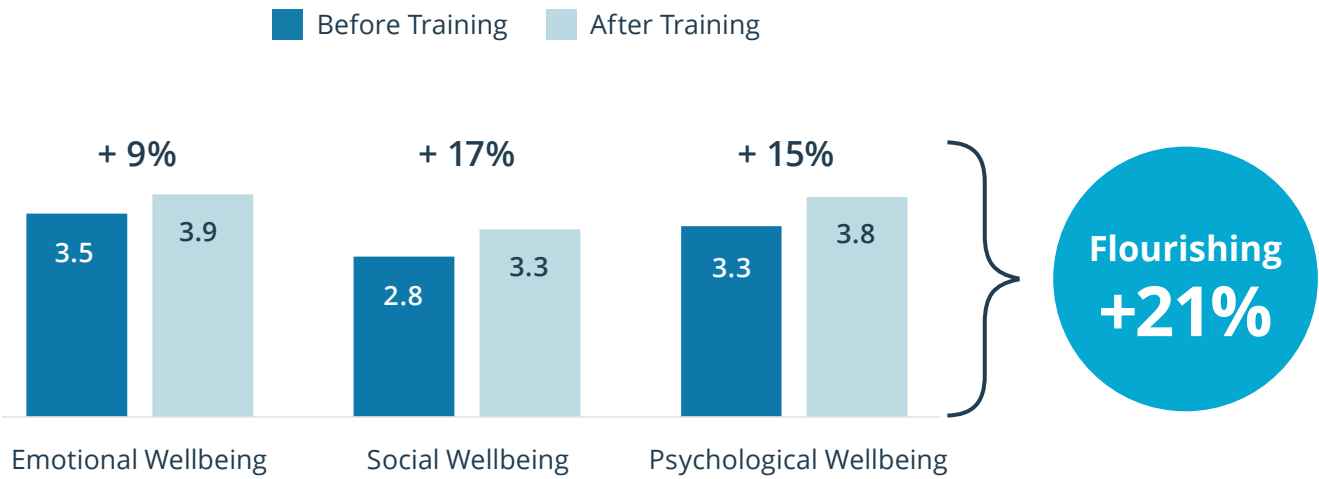


Figure 1
Mindfulness training improved the wellbeing of financial services employees significantly (N=202, p<.001).
Change scores may differ slightly due to data transformations.
Source: WorkingMIND study²

TAMING THE MIND

Improving productivity & relationships by checking out of multitasking

Much of the work in financial services depends on building or maintaining relationships and processing and integrating knowledge for decision-making. Relationship managers need to weigh the institution's conflicting interests and requirements against the client's interests and expectations. At the core of this work is the ability to be present and stay aware.

“ **Concentration is the key to economic results. No other principle of effectiveness is violated as constantly today.** ”

Peter Drucker, Austrian management consultant

Multitasking is a sign of weak attention regulation

Periods of deep work with sustained focus are key for handling the high demands of knowledge work and relationship management. In modern times, it seems increasingly difficult to steady the attention: About half of the time, people's minds are typically not focused on the task at hand but wandering in the past or the future.¹⁴

Multi-tasking may on the surface seem like a necessary and required way to deal with multiple demands but studies show it is more likely a sign of a lack of ability to block out distractions and focus on a singular task – often as a result of being tired.¹⁵ A Stanford study showed that those who

frequently multitask are surprisingly the least skilled at attention and memory tasks, and are the most highly distractible.¹⁶

How mindfulness affects attention and awareness

Research has shown that even short mindfulness exercises reduce the negative effects of multitasking on attention¹⁷ and longer meditation practice is associated with significant improvements in cognitive abilities.¹⁸

Meta-awareness is the ability to notice when concentration is lost, and to bring the attention back to wherever a person wants it to be. In mindfulness exercises, participants are often focusing their attention on the breath and sensations in the body. Crucially, they also practice becoming aware when their attention has wandered. In this moment of awareness, there is a choice to disengage with the thought and refocus the attention. Over time, this practice develops a greater familiarity with thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations¹⁹ and leads improvements in awareness. It is also a training of the mind's ability to stay present and to sustain focus, for example when talking to a client, attending a meeting, or engaging with family members.

Moreover, becoming aware of unhelpful narrations about the past or future is a step

for training the ability to refocus the mind²⁰. By refocusing on helpful narrations, anxiety and stress can decrease, leading to a greater ability to discern whether a threat is imagined or real and freeing up space to respond appropriately. In this way, attention regulation can also play a key role in preventing rumination and depressive relapse.²¹

Sustaining attention and training meta-awareness are key mechanisms through which mindfulness practice can improve attention regulation. They allow a person to both zoom in for deep work and zoom out to see a situation in a fresh and curious way.²²

These attention and awareness skills can be useful for financial decision-making. A short mindfulness practice can suffice to decrease irrational decision-making. For example, the sunk cost bias can be minimized and financial decisions can improve as

a result. A study showed that when participants engaged in a short mindfulness exercise prior to completing a task measuring this bias, they made more sound financial decision compared to a control group.²³ The mindfulness exercise enabled them to take a step back and choose the best option without being swayed by the cost already incurred (sunk cost).

The ability to zoom out and become meta-aware without immediately reacting is represented in activation of the executive control network in the brain. This brain network combines a set of mental skills that enable us to focus, handle emotions or stay aware of biases and assumptions. Figure 2 details a WorkingMIND² sub-study that used an attentional test to assess the executive control effect and the ability to sustain the attention by continuously correctly solving a task. Significant improvements were discernible in this test after the mindfulness training.

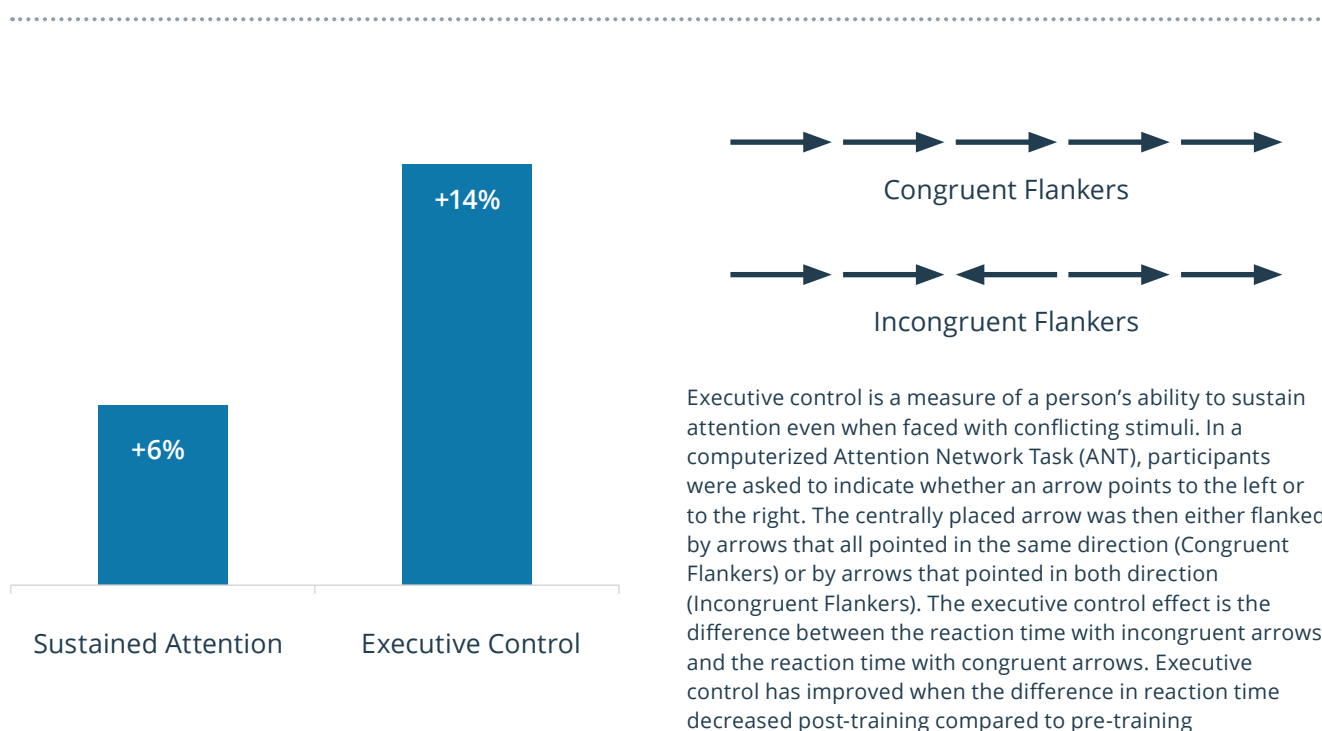


Figure 2

Strong improvements in attention regulation abilities following mindfulness training (N=42, p<.001).

Source: WorkingMIND study²

THE PLACES THAT SCARE US

Stress and fear hinder risk assessment & innovation

We regularly encounter financial services employees under immense pressure, showing symptoms of chronic stress. They often are not aware that constant feelings of pressure and fear have become their “new normal”. Studies support the impression that stress in financial services is now at critical levels contributing to a rise in burnout and other mental health problems.²⁴

“ Banking cannot prosper within a culture of fear. ”

Financial Times²⁵

A culture of fear also impacts organisational decisions and diminishes the ability of financial services providers to respond adequately to challenges.

Stress and fear adversely affect risk-assessment & innovation

Stress and fear contribute to both overconfidence and risk avoidance. In up markets, stressed actors tend to be overconfident, not aware when it might be time to stop buying. In down markets, the opposite reaction leads to risk-aversion and even all the way to a “risk-freeze” – at a time when new opportunities arise.²⁶

Stress and negative emotions like fear narrow the perception of reality: These neurophysiological responses were evolutionarily designed to quickly

respond to threats and thus limit the access to higher brain functions useful for reflection or decision-making. Under stress, we are wired to stick to safe solutions and subsequently react automatically rather than seek the most adequate response. In this way, stress negatively impacts the ability to incorporate risks appropriately into decision-making.²⁷

Similarly, in fear-based cultures, people do not have the mental space to find the best or novel solutions for a given problem. Innovation at its core requires that individuals or teams develop and nourish their ability and willingness to take sensible risks.

Mindfulness can play an important role in creating a coherent risk culture in banks. Organisational theorist Karl E. Weick has shown that collective mindfulness contributes to establishing sensitivity in risk and failure perception, helps to deal with complexity and increases calm and appropriate action under sudden pressure or threat.^{28,29}

How mindfulness reduces stress and fear

Simply becoming aware of the bodily sensations related to stress can already be a powerful intervention and calm the nervous system. As a result, we may relax the shoulders or deepen the breath. These intentional responses alone can suffice to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, the system responsible for relaxation.

There is a strong case for mindfulness training improving resilience. Studies consistently found that mindfulness reduces the amount of stress participants feel.^{30,31} Hölzel et al.³² found that changes in perceived stress following a mindfulness training corresponded with neuroplastic changes in the amygdala, the brain's stress centre. The researchers concluded that the amygdala likely fired less indicating that participants experienced less stress.

Mindfulness can also change the emotional response in stressful situations. A short mindfulness exercise decreased the amount of frustration felt in a negotiation exercise which in turn lead to better negotiation outcomes for these participants.³³ Cognitive capacities are freed up to respond more appropriately when being able to step out of the automatic stress response.

In the WorkingMind study, stress declined significantly from elevated pre-training levels.

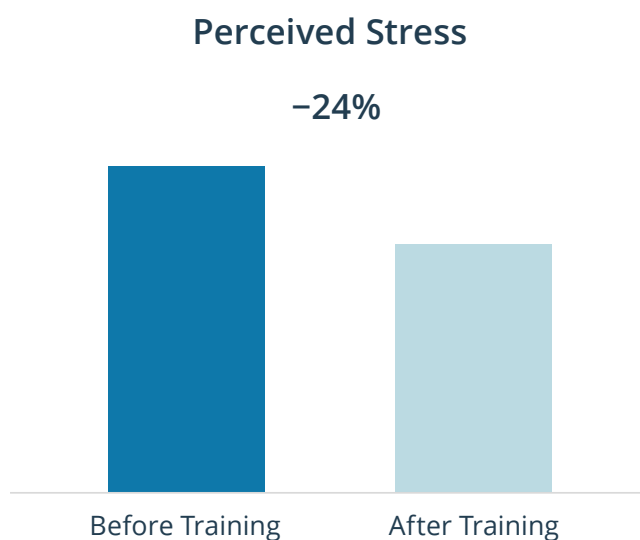


Figure 3

Stress decreased significantly following mindfulness training (N=207, $p < .001$).

Source: WorkingMIND study²

COLLABORATING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A new risk culture for greater collective intelligence

Learning to collaborate effectively poses a special challenge for the financial sector. After decades of prioritizing and rewarding individual performance, collaboration skills need to be strengthened. To respond to the pressures to transform, a wide range of expertise ranging from relationship management, legal and compliance to sustainability management needs to be integrated.

Responding to challenges like digitalization and automation require the collective intelligence of cross-functional teams. Collective intelligence is higher when integrating and harnessing team members' diversity, in terms of areas of expertise, cognitive styles and world views.

“ Diversity must become an imperative for the industry as it improves outcomes for all stakeholders. Diversity in thinking, problem solving, and leadership styles helps organizations achieve better results. ”
Group of Thirty²

Amy Edmondson from Harvard Business School found that teams collaborate best when team members feel safe and encouraged to speak up and teams are able to integrate diverse experiences and ideas.³⁴ Google's Project Aristotle³⁵ came to the same conclusion: Psychological safety is a key driver for team performance. All team members must feel psychologically safe to take

risks such as sharing opinions and ideas and, in turn, be receptive to their colleagues' viewpoints. But creating this new kind of risk culture takes combined effort and new behavioural norms.

“ A risk culture can be described by the behavioural patterns that are typical in an organisation such as the extent to which it is normal to talk about ones own mistakes, the extent to which colleagues point to each other's mistakes, and the extent to which they are addressing misconduct, admitting doubts or given the opportunity to discuss dilemmas. ”

Moritz Römer,
Supervisor for Behaviour and Culture at DNB³⁶

How Mindfulness Improves Collaboration & Collective Intelligence

Mindfulness trainings can contribute to becoming more aware of team or leadership patterns that silence team members or encourage group think (when the desire for harmony in the group results in poor-quality decisions).

This type of awareness can also arise collectively at the level of the team. Researchers found that mindful teams, defined as teams that are more

attentive and non-judgemental, have fewer relationship conflicts, but not fewer task conflicts.³⁷ Task conflicts are necessary to avoid group think and challenge team members to find the best solutions. Relationship conflicts, however, diminish group morale and motivation.³⁸

Mindfulness may also improve emotional intelligence, the ability to be aware and regulate emotions of oneself and others.^{39,40} In a team setting, this ability is related to a more effective communication, characterised by deeper listening skills and more curiosity and openness.^{41,42}

A study by the Boston Consulting Group and Awaris⁴³ showed the collective intelligence can be improved by mindfulness training. Following training, the teams performed better in a range of tasks measuring collective intelligence increased by an average of 13 percent. The greatest improvements on a single task were achieved in moral reasoning and judgment (17%). Teams mirrored this finding in a self-report question: There was a 14% increase in agreement with the statement: “In our team we take time to develop new ideas”

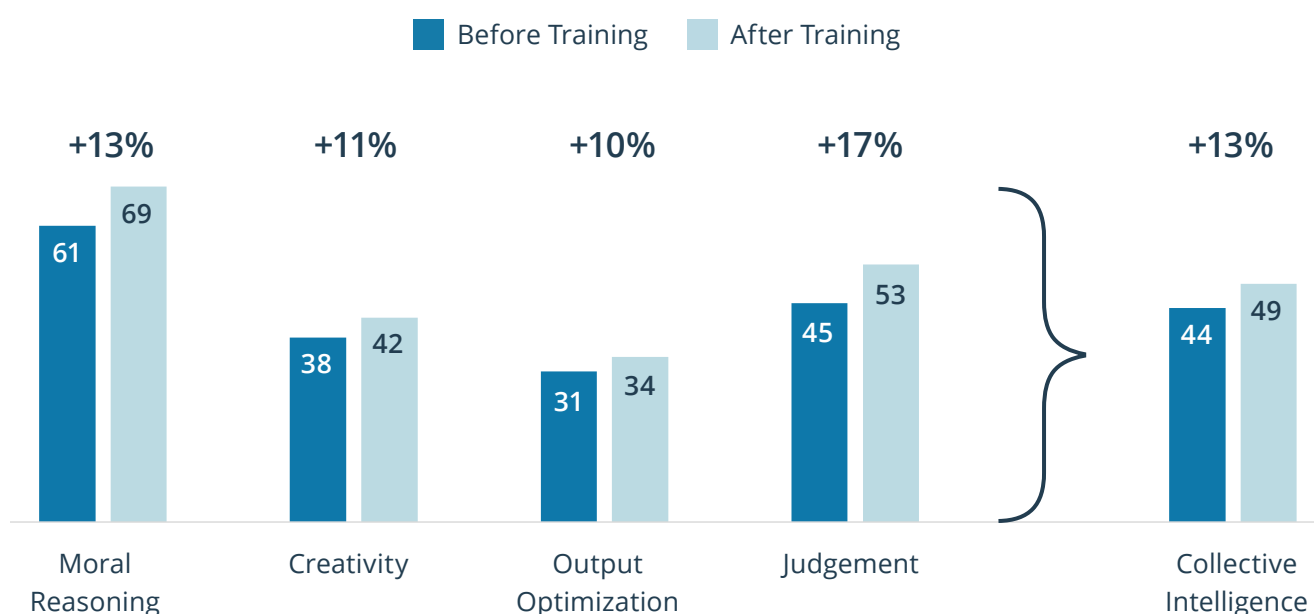


Figure 4

After mindfulness training, teams' collective intelligence improved on average 13 percent (N=222, k=31 groups).

Change scores may differ slightly due to data transformations.

Source: BCG-Awaris Study

SAILING THE WINDS OF CHANGE

An agile mindset for agile workplaces

Introducing agile ways of working is an important step for financial services providers. Agility allows companies to adapt more flexibly to rapid changes, collaborate more efficiently and adopt a continuous learning orientation focused on client or stakeholder needs.

In fact, there is evidence that truly agile companies were more resilient during the pandemic. They tended to stay more aligned to their purpose and better able to sustain a culture of innovation.⁴ The European Banking Study even found that agile principles are related to increased profitability.⁴⁴

Doing Agile vs Being Agile

While a majority of financial services providers regard agility as highly relevant, only 6% have implemented agility across the company.⁴⁴ One obstacle to a company-wide implementation is that this kind of transformation requires agile mindsets (being agile), not just agile tools (doing agile).⁴⁵

“ I estimate that 75% of all organisations using Scrum will not succeed in getting the benefits that they hope for from it. ”

Ken Schwaber⁴⁶

To develop agile mindsets require individuals and teams to enter what Amy Edmondson calls the “competitive imperative of learning”⁴⁷: An organisational and individual mindset

that is characterized by curiosity, continuous development and 360° feedback.

How Mindfulness Supports Agility & High-Performance Teams

Mindfulness practices can support agility by developing agile minds and behaviours. In one study, agile teams noticed an impact of a daily team mindfulness exercise on effectiveness, decision-making and listening during stand up (Scrum) meetings.⁴⁸

Typically, participants of mindfulness trainings are introduced to a range of practices and methods to increase mindfulness skills like acting with awareness and self-compassion⁴⁹ As follows, we highlight five mindfulness skills measured in the WorkingMIND study and show, how they are linked to an agile mindset:

Acting with awareness is important because it increases cognitive flexibility and behavioural self-regulation. By acting with awareness instead of automatically, participants approach everyday tasks with a novel curiosity and interest that arises from being fully present. This cognitive skill is needed for both the agile principles of focusing on innovation and customer orientation.

Non-reaction, another mindfulness skill, helps people refrain from automatically acting out inner experiences. Non-reaction works through the application of meta-awareness (Am I or are we as a team still on task? Is the task still in line with

changes in the environment?) and with emotion regulation (noticing emotions without having to act them out immediately).

Emotion regulation is reflected in two mindfulness skills: *Describe* – recognising and naming of emotions and thoughts – and *Non-judgement* – developing a non-judging mindset towards emotions and thoughts. Describing helps with increasing clarity while non-judgement can increase our ability to gain insights into biases and to stay open to novelty.

Finally, *compassion* practices can positively impact social connectedness by becoming aware of the shared humanity even when experiencing difficulty.⁵⁰ *Self-compassion* is necessary for allowing oneself to make mistakes and for

acknowledging weakness and failure in order to learn and move forward – what Brené Brown calls the power of vulnerability.⁵¹

Recent research at the Max Planck Institute highlighted that different types of mental training lead to distinct structural changes in the brain and subsequently to distinct behavioural changes.⁵² Studies like these show that the brain's neuroplasticity can be harnessed by choosing the right kind of practices to support the inner shift necessary.

Taken together, these mindfulness skills develop a kind of self-awareness and continuous learning orientation useful to become aware of biases and assumptions and be better equipped to regulate responses to internal and external changes.

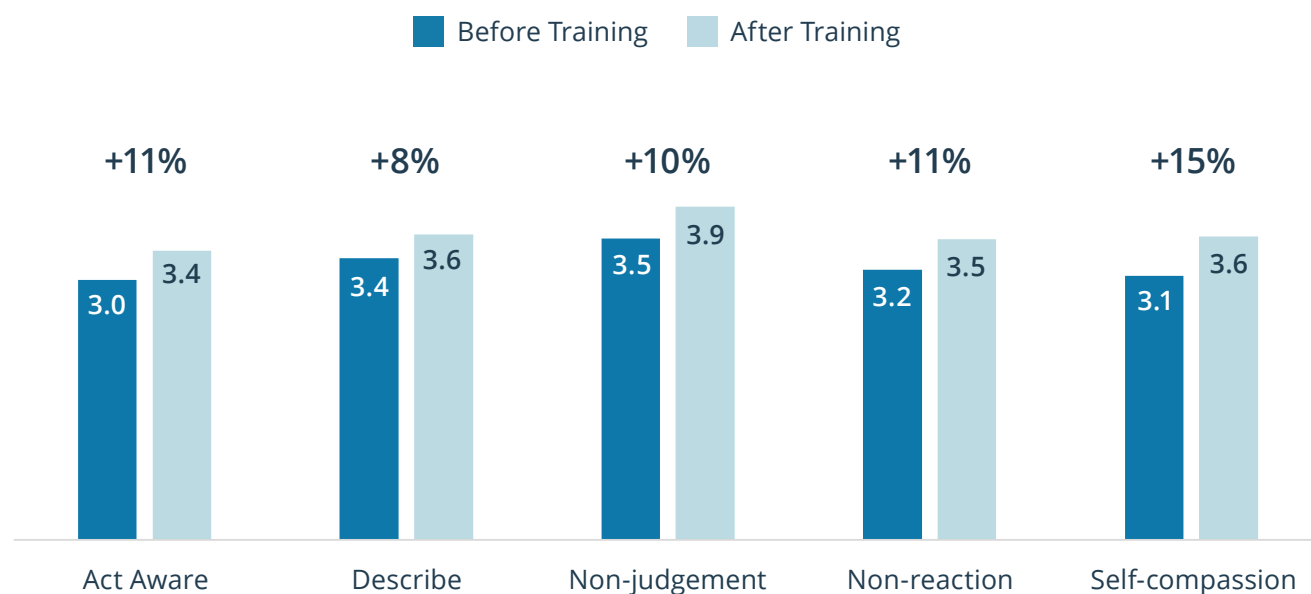


Figure 5

Significant gains in aspects of mindfulness and agility following mindfulness training (N=202, $p < .001$).

Change scores may differ slightly due to data transformations.

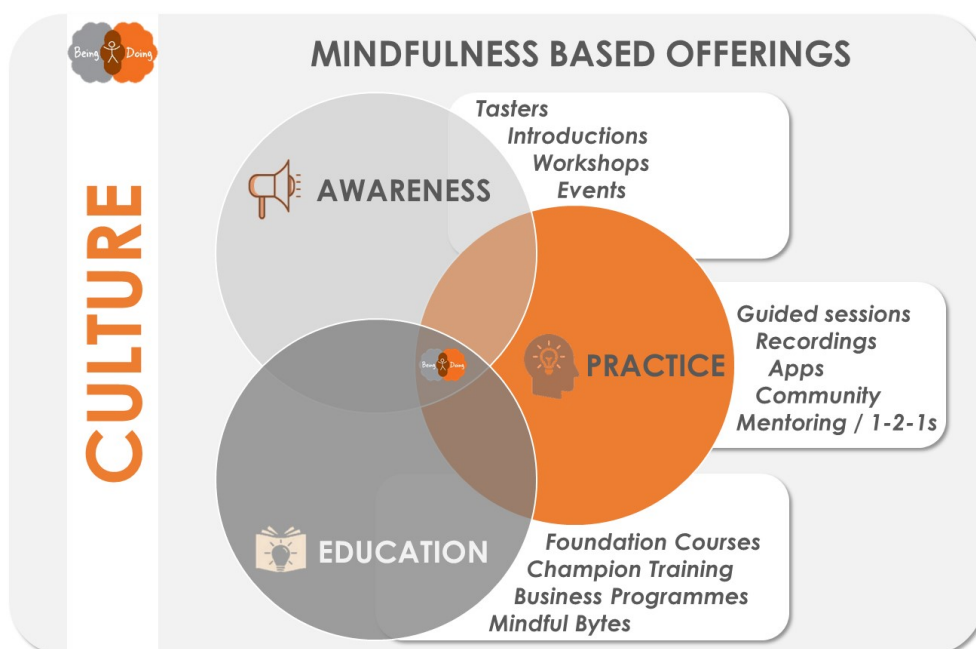
Source: WorkingMIND study²

CASE STUDY 1:

HSBC – Sustainable, Employee-driven, Mindfulness Ecosystem

Within HSBC global, there is a community known as the “Mindfulness@hsbc”. Born out of a small number of employees offering local mindfulness practice sessions in 2011, the network was formally launched in 2014, with the aim of creating a community to provide support and access to mindfulness resources (regular guided sessions, tasters, talks etc) to **all** interested staff, regardless of work area, grade, background etc.

Demand has grown rapidly and quickly surpassed the network’s ability to meet it. In 2016, the network proposed a model to scale, safely and sustainably and received initial funding to pilot a more formal programme of offerings. Supplemented with further funding in 2019, this has evolved into 3 main categories of Mindfulness Based Offerings, wrapped with a Protection stream, a Research stream and the community Charter:



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To date the measurable impact from the approach has been impressive:

Headline figures since 2018 are:

- Over 10,000 colleagues reached via events, tasters and regular practice sessions.
- 1000's of positive testimonials and feedback for MBO's
- Global sponsorship as demand expands
- 45% cost savings and ability to scale responsively with high quality. (see Spotlight)

Grass-Roots and Champion-led

To help foster a practising community that can **scale authentically** across HSBC, a 'champion-led' model forms the corner-stone of how the MBO's are delivered.

First piloted in 2017, HSBC was given an award for its innovative approaches from UK Parliament's

Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) in recognition of its pioneering 'internal-led' models, thought to have the best chance of embedding mindfulness concepts and mindsets into an organisation's culture.

The Mindfulness at Work Champions model (M@WC) created has evolved to have 3 training levels, all under-pinned by a 6-week Mindfulness Foundations course:

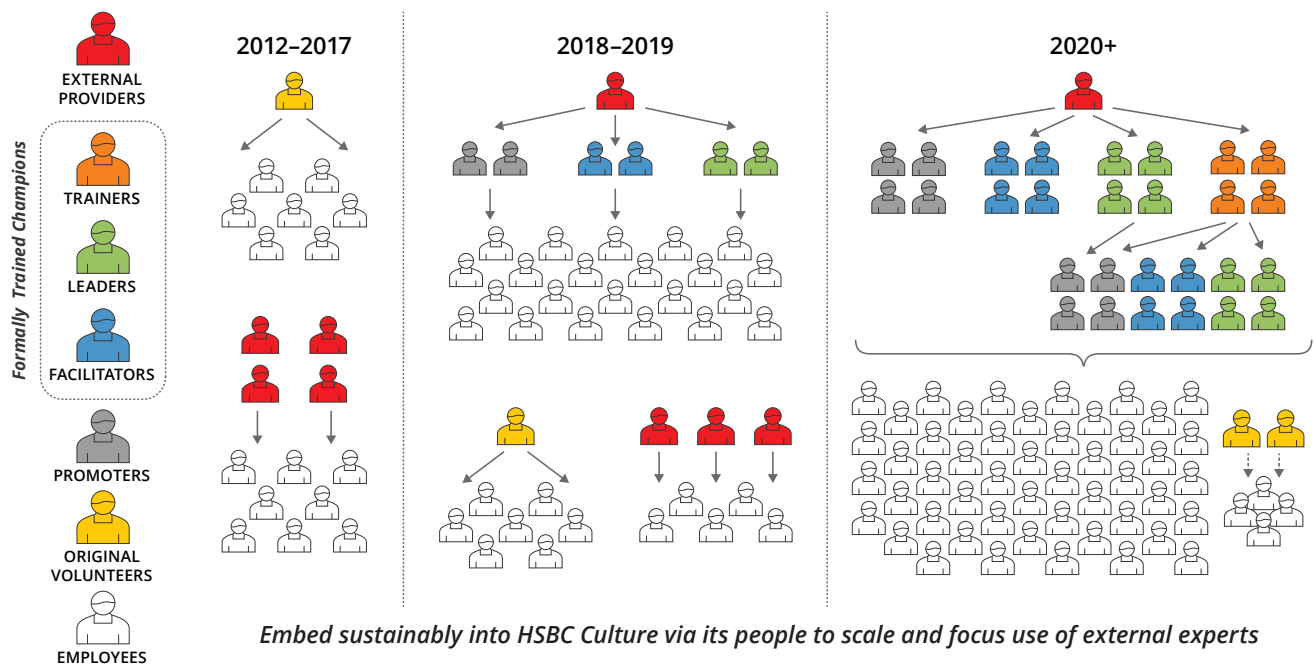
Facilitator – trained to confidently and safely lead guided mindfulness sessions and deliver 'Mindful Byte' talks and intros by request.

Leader – trained to deliver the Mindfulness Foundations course to colleagues and train new Promoters/ Alumni as well as mentoring new Champions.

Trainer – deliver Facilitator Champions & Leaders training as well as serve as a mentor, providing supervision and consultancy for innovations



mindfulness@hsbc – Envisioning the Champion model...

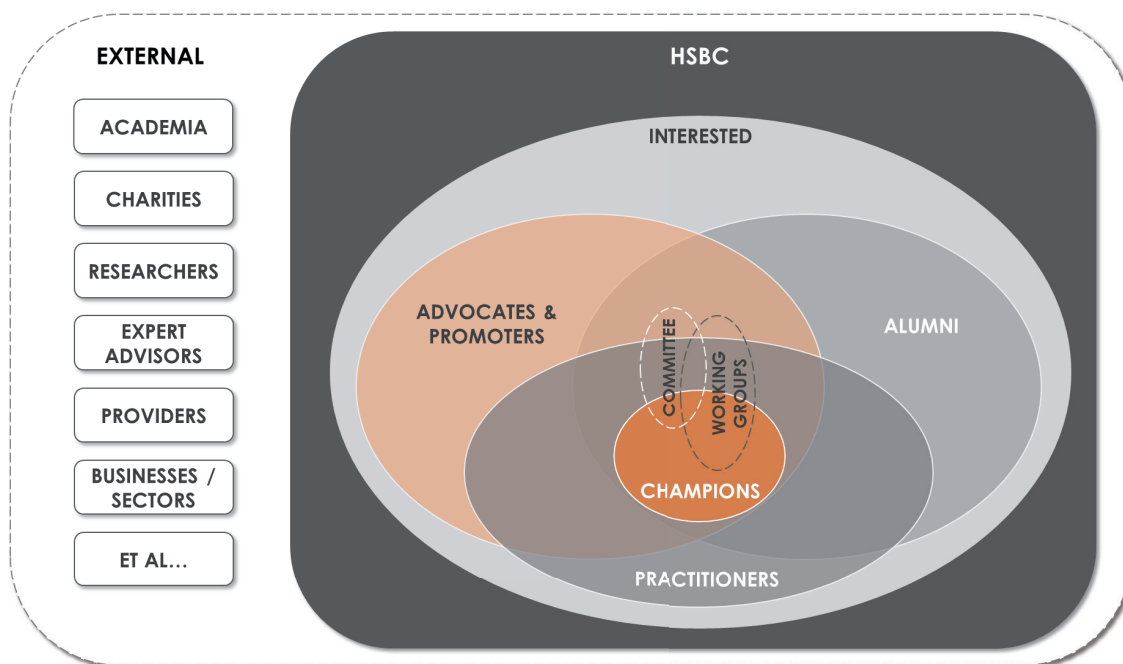


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Change via Community Practice

The creation and management of ***Inclusive, Collaborative and Connected communities*** is the central success of the HSBC approach.

Specifically, this draws on the insight, that lasting change only ever occurs with repeated and supported practice. To this end, the delivery of any of the MBO's is supplemented with a community model:



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Community members have fed back that areas of the Bank (for example Geographies, Branch/ Call centre, Business Unit) may have distinct internal working environments and needs, and so the content and delivery style may need to be

adapted. The communities model forms the basis for adapting the MBO's to these different contexts, without compromising the underlying authenticity and quality.

Authentic, Agile and cost-effective

“ What impresses me about this approach is that it evolves organically through the commitment of dedicated enthusiasts, who wish to communicate the benefits to others. Spread in this way, the introduction only succeeds if there is enough interest among colleagues. Also, being initiated by employees, it is hard to argue that it is being introduced for faddish reasons, or that mindfulness is being hijacked to suit corporate ends; a frequent criticism of corporate programmes. ”

Paul Barrett,

Head of Wellbeing, Bank Workers Charity

It also ensures quality and depth in the way mindfulness is shared and taught, in order to avoid dilution. Everyone involved can participate in the mindfulness programme at a level that they choose, alongside their full-time job, supported by a small central function that provides co-ordination and consultancy for new innovations, the formalising of tested MBO's so that they can be rolled-out globally.

Innovate; Test, Learn, Adapt

A key tenet of the M@H approach is for it to be **research-driven**. As part of avoiding being swept up in the current hype surrounding mindfulness, all aspects of the MBO's are tested via an 'innovation' pillar, and new approaches, gaps in offerings and different perspectives are constantly sought. The group is not afraid to 'put its money where its mouth is' and looks to put hard data, feedback and KPI's behind any decision to then formalise and globalise any MBO's more widely.

Among several aspirations that M@H are interested in testing and learning are:

- How to deepen the concepts & practice and learning of Champions and Alumni, balancing a more spiritual element with the secular approach adopted;
- Exploring and testing different mediums of delivery such as Self-Serve via Apps, blended and instructor-led;
- Aligning & integrating with HSBC's Future Skills curriculum;
- Developing a Research As A Service concept; &
- Partnering with Community Sustainability on how M@H can potentially share its format and learnings for customers and communities that HSBC serves to benefit from.

Spotlight: Response during Covid-19

All organisations have found themselves needing to respond to the significant impacts on their workforces during COVID lockdowns and the aftermath. HSBC has been no different in this, and as a global company has been supporting staff since the earliest outbreaks.

In March, M@H had scheduled to offer a further Mindfulness Foundations 6-week course to around 80 staff. As soon as registration opened, it became clear that demand was spiking as various lockdowns came into in force. Piloting of Leader Champion training had just been completed in January, and this provided the means for scaling the course availability.

Using a blended model of internal Leader Champions and external partner trainers, the

programme was able to quickly respond and increase availability five-fold: from 2 courses to 10 parallel courses offered in April / May, enabling over 450 staff to take up a place.

Increased Resilience, wellbeing and engagement

Delegate feedback via standard pre and post surveys showed not only high confidence in the quality of the newly trained Leader Champions, but also consistent improvements across a range of mental wellbeing and mindfulness measures. In the context of general population stress levels rising^{53,54}, this has been seen as a significant vindication of the M@H model.

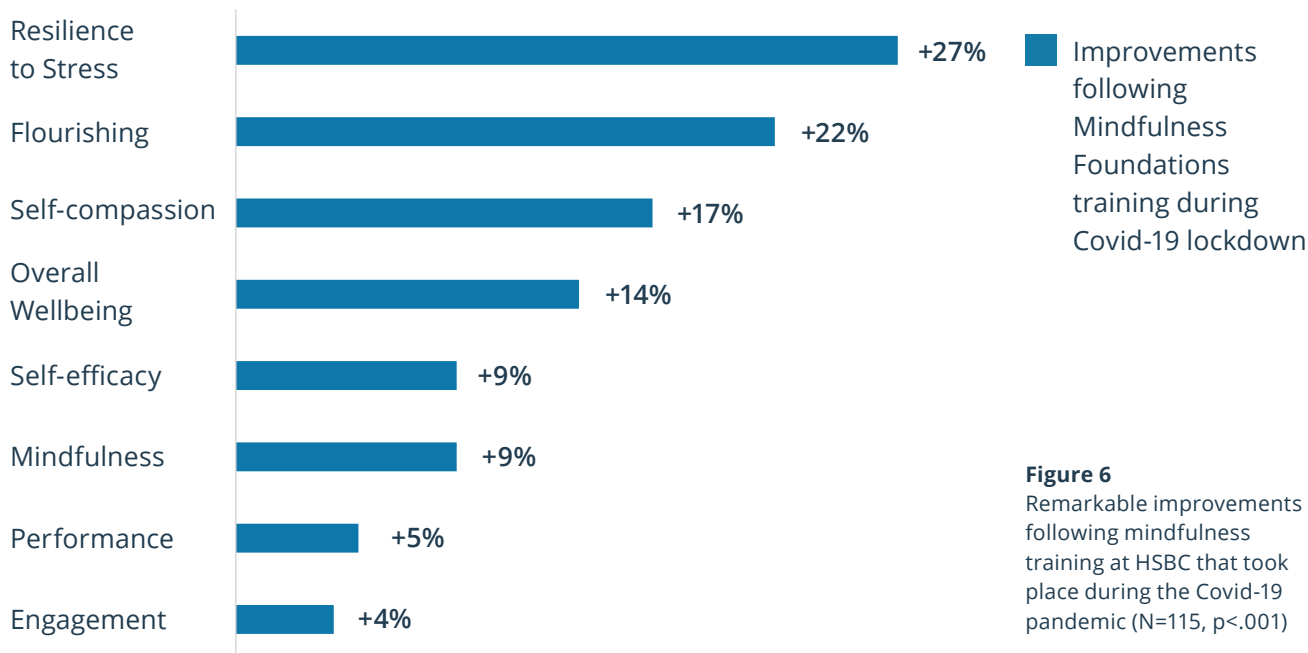


Figure 6
Remarkable improvements following mindfulness training at HSBC that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic (N=115, p<.001)

Author: Mari Thorman is the Co-Founder and Chair of Mindfulness@HSBC, alongside her job as Senior Enterprise Architect for the Corporate part of HSBC. She is also a co-founder of the MWC, Member of MIFI and mentors peers in other companies interested in launching similar Mindfulness-Based Initiatives. She is regularly asked to speak at Wellbeing conferences and volunteers with the Bank Workers Charity to provide tasters and information to other Financial Institutions. If you would like to reach out to her please contact her via LinkedIn.

CASE STUDY 2:

Naussauische Sparkasse – Building Mindful Leaders with Peer Support: 2016–2020.

Nassauische Sparkasse (NASPA) in Wiesbaden is one of the 10 largest savings banks in Germany with total assets of EUR 12 billion and 1,600 employees. Its business area comprises 2 million inhabitants including the Rhine-Main region.

For years, the Naussauische Sparkasse has been undergoing a far-reaching transformation process which targeted changes in culture and values, sales and efficiency and transparency.

“ We understood early on that managers play a key role in the transformation process and decided to mentally prepare managers for these challenges in resilience programs. ”

Alexandra von Dziegielewski,
Head of Human Resources Development

In 2016, a first program „Being Mindful – Leading Effectively“ was introduced to fifteen managers from all divisions. So far, more than 55% of managers have taken part in the three to four months training programs, and the fifth program has started in September 2020.

“ We wanted our managers to develop curiosity, calm and composure in coping with the complex and dynamic changes and to set an example to our employees. Mindfulness and resilience training plays an important role in this respect. ”

Günter Högner, Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors of Nassauische Sparkasse

Our goals for the mindfulness and resilience training programs were:

- Increasing individual resilience, concentration and productivity
- Better handling of high work pressure, stress and emotionally difficult situations
- Intensification of cooperation in the management team
- Contribution to the development of a productive and healthy corporate culture

At NASPA, it became clear to us that brief mindfulness trainings would not lead to the kind of mindset shifts we were hoping for. Instead we opted for integrating mindfulness long-term as part of our leader development. Between 2016 and 2019, four development programs, each lasting three to four months, were conducted with the following structure:

- Introductory training day with basic neuroscience and initial assessments (surveys and attention task)
- Six modules of three hours each covering topics such as attention management, emotional intelligence, communicating and listening, resilience, self-leadership and building collaborative teams from a mindfulness perspective.
- Final training day for deepening the practice and final assessments (surveys and attention task)
- Webinars for review and refresher

“ The evaluation results showed significant and measurable improvements in the managers’ ability to cope with stress and to focus and manage their attention. A notable side effect was that managers’ openness for new things also increased. ”

Alexandra von Dziegielewski,
Head of Human Resources Development

The importance of peer groups

The participants in the training programs organized peer groups after the end of the training in order to continue to cultivate mindfulness practice in the group and to transfer it into everyday work.

In fact, we consider the formation of peer groups one of the contributing factors for the ongoing success of this program. Over the years, it has become clear that such groups guarantee the

sustainable integration of mindfulness into leadership and everyday work.

A common challenge for the participants was to establish a mindfulness practice (about ten to twenty minutes daily) while juggling the demands of work and family life. Naturally, not everybody managed to immerse themselves in home practices, yet, the program dropout rate was almost zero. Practicing mindfulness together and reflecting on leadership resilience and practices were considered useful in themselves.

Conclusion: In financial institutions like the Naussauische Sparkasse, which have been under particular pressure to transform for years, the resilience of managers is one of the key factors for the success of change processes. In the course of the project, mindfulness for strengthening and developing resilience has emerged as one of the core competencies of leadership.

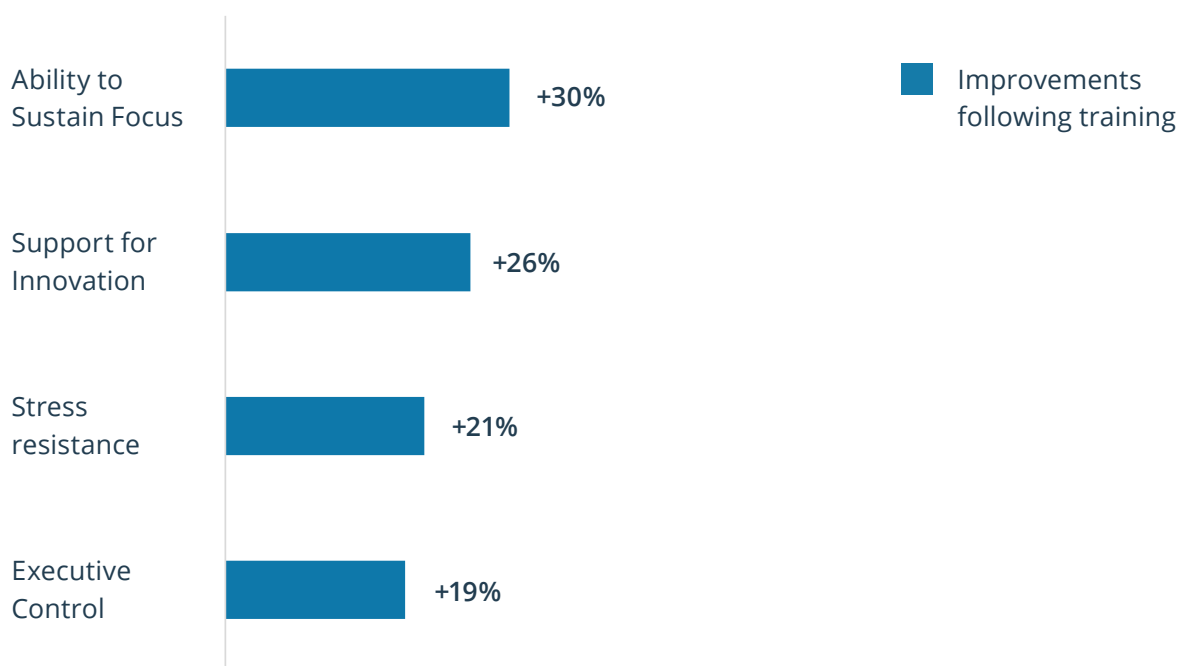


Figure 7

Strong improvements in KPIs after mindfulness training with leaders at savings bank NASPA (N=55)

Source: WorkingMIND study²

IMPLEMENTING MINDFULNESS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Building a foundational capacity for resilience and change

Cultivating mental and emotional skills is not something that happens overnight – it needs to be encouraged, invested in and measured.

Mindfulness training affects a variety of outcomes because it trains core skills with broad possible applications such as attention regulation, emotional and body awareness, positive outlook and meta awareness. These skills must become core skills of people working in the financial sector – both for their own wellbeing and resilience as well as for their ability to work and collaborate effectively.

Based on what we have observed in organisations implementing mindfulness-based trainings, we have compiled five recommendations to integrate mindfulness effectively and to avoid it becoming another fad.

1. Explore the groundswell

In most organisations, there are already individuals or groups who are passionate about mindfulness, who have considerable experience in the practice and who are keen to develop it. Building mindfulness bottom up can be a real source of energy and momentum and can often form a solid ground to grow from.

2. Identify the champions

Among the existing mindfulness practitioners, and usually among the existing organisational leadership, there are people who are experienced in mindfulness and have some ability to lead or contribute to this initiative. Working with them, it is important to establish a shared understanding that modern high performance cultures need to have a balance between care and performance and that mindfulness can be a foundational skill in such a culture.

3. Train the leaders in mindfulness

This insight can be supported by offering mindfulness training to leaders. The existing evidence base for this is strong: Mindful leaders are perceived as more authentic and supportive by followers.⁵⁵ They also engage in a different kind of communication style highlighted by greater presence, acceptance and calm.⁵⁶ Finally, leaders trained in mindfulness provided the kind of inclusive and creative environment necessary for great collaboration.⁴² Bringing a leadership program into an organisation can shift both the dialog around the perceived tension between performance and care and can create a heightened willingness and interest in such an offering.

4. Get the whole team on board

Increasingly, teams and projects are central to the delivery of value in the financial services industry. Collaborating well, which is based on psychological and emotional safety of team members, can be profoundly supported by mindfulness practices. Research found that teams vary in their degree of exhibiting mindfulness skills and more mindful teams experience less relationship conflicts.³⁷ Anchoring mindful habits in teams serves as an excellent crystallization point from the individual to the cultural change.

A combination of individual mindfulness practice and shared team practices and habits works best to get the whole team on board. Team practices can range from mindful check-ins and check-outs, shared mindful breaks or centring and grounding practices to mindfully reviewing “golden moments” just before the end of the working day or the weekend.

5. Build an ecosystem of mindfulness

In modern knowledge companies, surprisingly many people practice mindfulness together. Large banks such as HSBC (see case study) now offer daily meditation sessions or train internal mindfulness champions. Supporting communities of practice and training champions is an excellent way to build a sustainable ecosystem of mindfulness in an organisation.

When more people and teams engage regularly in mindfulness practices and habits, their benefits can become a part of company culture and conduct.

ABOUT THE MINDFUL FINANCE INSTITUTE

Unlocking the human potential in finance for the greater good

The Mindful Finance Institute (MIFI) promotes the application of mindfulness in leadership, business, and work in financial services.

The Mindful Finance Institute's mission is to support the ongoing transformation in the finance industry towards allocating resources for the greater good of society, human creativity and nature.

It provides inspiration and thought leadership through webinars, white papers, blog articles and a podcast series. And it connects interested

parties through community activities and public presentations and workshops.

Mindful Finance charts a path for individuals and organizations that wish to engage in discovering the finance sector of the future.

The institute was founded in 2018 by Dr. Friedhelm Boschert (Vienna, Austria), Chris Tamdjidi (Cologne, Germany) and Solomon Halpern (Boulder, CO) and Klemens Höppner (Berlin, Germany) became a partner in 2019.

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