

# Connecting the Dots of Care, Culture and Commerce

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**R**EGARDLESS OF THE GENERATION WE WERE BORN INTO and identify with, the emergent mindset of the modern workplace is all about bringing our whole selves to work. This way of thinking drives our priorities and helps set the tone for proactive decision-making and organizational development.

## Breaking the Silos of Self

This is nothing less than a radical shift from the previously prevailing approach to business that taught us to bring our work-selves only to work and to leave the other parts behind as those had no place in the professional environment. This artificially compartmentalized way of working could often feel very constricted and contribute to frustrations repressed or otherwise.

Fortunately, this thinking has come full circle and carried all aspects of self along with it in an attempt to better attract, retain and inspire a talent pool with strong expectations of authenticity and purpose. No longer are opinions things to be kept to the water cooler; in fact, it would be considered counterproductive to hold our real opinions back—as well as those of others. As a result, talent is being drawn to those organizations that speak in their voice, while progressive organizations are no longer looking to impose their norm, but focusing on individuals and how each might be optimally engaged.

What this has led to is a greater importance on cultural fit, simultaneously accompanied by a realization of the powers of individuality and diversity which is organically embodied in every organization.

## Minting a New Understanding

What this has inspired in turn is nothing less than a breakthrough for old-school thinkers—business and mindfulness are really two sides of the same coin. Understanding this increases the value of that coin exponentially as both share similar goals.

While the workplace doesn't seem to be inherently mindful on the surface, one of its main goals is to achieve an optimal level of effectiveness via the productivity of its employees. Mindfulness increases our ability to stay grounded even when things get busy and tensions increase. The focused actions and emotional control of mindful-wellness provides buoyancy to the workplace equation and helps carry or restore productivity in calm and challenging times alike.

## A Toolkit to Keep in Mind

Fortunately, mindfulness—most simply defined by staying in the present moment—is already practiced by many in our profession and is available to all. More importantly, research has shown it to be a reliable method for reducing stress and anxiety.

Taking this concept into the business realm, it can be a powerful workplace wellness tool. When we feel overwhelmed and scattered, it is hard to be engaged, focused and productive. Mindfulness principles help us stay grounded and resilient. Simple practices keep the brain limber and help manage our emotional control when things get hectic or we experience stressful life events.

Building a workplace where these practices are engrained in the culture has become the goal of many HR professionals—and for good reason. Even with such open door thinking in place, talent is becoming increasingly elusive.

## The ‘Vanishing’ Talent Pool

While a tight talent pool is not an unknown to hiring professionals, ‘workplace ghosting’<sup>1</sup> is becoming more commonplace as individuals do not know how to handle stressful situations. Recruiters, HR professionals and managers are scratching their collective heads at the sudden disappearance (without any specific explanation) of candidates and even employees coming to work.

The anxiety over having to confront difficult people, conflicts and otherwise uncomfortable situations is credited with the rise of these occurrences on the organizational front; this, coupled with the perception of greater alternative choices or lack of serious consequences, has changed our workplace norms in a major way. It has also created further stress upon mental health and overall workplace stability, which is a critical ‘must-have’ for talent of any generation.

This in turn puts a greater focus than ever on having a culture with care at its core, wherein those critical conversations happen long before anyone simply becomes a ‘ghost.’

## Decrease Judgement and Increase Empathy

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a soft skill that gives a greater level of depth to our interactions and relationships. It is also a trait to be nurtured within any workplace culture as, in its absence, talent can not only ghost, but stay to create a toxic environment of unvoiced resentments. As HR professionals, we understand how judgement—of others and ourselves—can result in isolation and make connection difficult. Because of the growing realization of this at the leadership levels, EQ has never been more sought after by employers and employees alike.

With the ever increasing rate of change in the workplace, strong organizations need employees—and leaders—who possess the ability to both tap into and manage their emotions, as well as those around them. Practicing mindfulness in the workplace enables us to manage our own emotions and feel empathy for others at the same time. Our internal compass then helps us better navigate the emotional map, so that we can better deal with workplace demands and function better under stress. With the ability to see things clearly and from another’s point of view, well-adjusted individuals are simply able to make good decisions and perform better.

## Taking Mindful Leadership to Heart

As we all know though, achieving calm and maintaining self-control isn’t always easy. It is even more challenging within organizations because there are so many influences and moving parts. However, whether they term it mindfulness or not, truly productive individuals practice simple skills every day to achieve their goals.

1. **Work with intention:** Good leaders do a lot of listening because they realize work isn’t just about getting a pay cheque.

By paying attention to the everyday nuances and asking more thoughtful questions, we develop greater ideas and inspiration. Getting to know the people and culture of the organization helps bring greater positive energy, which is contagious.

2. **Strive for self-awareness:** In addition to practising self-awareness for one’s own sake, smart leaders strive to understand where their efforts to improve are best directed. Receiving feedback—from staff, colleagues, and managers—and truly acting on the information, is what changes our experience. This practice of self-awareness (and self-improvement) differentiates great leaders from good ones.
3. **Take time to think and reflect:** At its core, leadership involves objectively weighing the available options and making a decision. Good leaders set aside time to be alone with their thoughts, reflect and act accordingly; this is what gives rise to great leadership. Experiencing the moment is fundamental to mindfulness, but the habit of reflection is where real improvements happen.

## Embracing a New Super Power

Mindful leadership has moved from being a ‘nice to have’ to becoming a collective necessity because of the ripple effect it generates and the culture it both embodies and enables—within and beyond the organization.

For many leaders, this has led to embracing a greater learning—slowing down to reflect can bring a lot of things into fresh perspective at the speed of bright. In seeing themselves differently, they see their teams differently, and this in turn connects the dots between culture, care and the type of sustainable commerce that is capable of not only navigating, but corralling the chaos and change that can otherwise derail ‘best’ efforts.

For others, it is a more difficult transition, a pursuit and practice of patience in a world that has been encouraging us to pick up the pace for decades. Fortunately, the science of stress has become well-known in mainstream media and absentee numbers alike, making the link between mindfulness and better wellbeing—mentally, physically and in our interactions with others—not only apparent, but ‘wholly’ alluring for even the toughest, ‘work-self-only’ leaders.

It also changes our focus from the external to the internal, which has an ROI of its own—and no ceiling to its value. 📌

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“...a culture  
with care  
at its core,  
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1. <https://www.hcamag.com/ca/specialization/recruitment/ghosting-the-creepy-new-hr-trend/190329>