

## **Mindfulness is the real deal for business success**

A local businessman recently said there was no secret for the success of his new business, it was simply due to the combination of hard work and good customer service. Yet not everyone is willing or able to work hard. Some people lack the energy, the stability of health, the motivation, the time management, the stress management or the organisational skills to do so. Others may struggle to provide appropriate levels of good customer service, for a variety of reasons.

One of the reasons preventing the provision of superior customer service is a lack of mindfulness. As a business owner, address your mindfulness and your customer service will blossom. So too will your capacity for hard work.

A common definition of mindfulness is attributed to Kabat-Zinn who defined it as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally”. More recently, Amy Saltzman described mindfulness as "paying attention, so you can choose your behaviour".

Regardless of definition, mindfulness involves activation of the frontal lobe of our brain, a dynamic area where cognitive processes like attention, creativity, decision making, problem solving and language occur. By becoming aware, by being attentive, we are more able to overcome emotional impulses, and so be less automatic in our behavioural responses. That is, we do not allow *negative* emotions to drive our behaviour. Rather, we think, we become mindful, before we act or 'choose our behaviour'. Once mindful, we are well positioned to faithfully execute our preferred customer service behaviour, consistently, intelligently and deliberately.

Conversely, when a person is acting mindlessly, by habit or in response to emotional circumstances, their executive control or ability to manage a situation thoughtfully is compromised. This is okay at times of genuine threat and there is no time to think, only act, and in these circumstances, the mid-brain and the activation it provides to the adrenal glands is an adaptive survival response. However, in the modern and safe world where most of us reside, genuine survival threats are rare, yet many of us will know people who activate behavioural responses, often with unhelpful outcomes, during times when emotions are running high.

The mindfulness challenge is to become *aware* of the unhelpful and otherwise habitual responses as they occur. This awareness helps to focus our mind so rather than responding to how we *feel* at that moment, we respond instead in a *knowing* and constructive way. This will support our business objectives and provide insight into the consequences of each of our imminent actions.

As successful business owners, there are many stressors that can activate negative emotions, including demanding customers, tardy or inept suppliers, fatigue, paper-work, anxiety, and more. Nevertheless, if we are to overcome and rise above such challenges to achieve the business success we desire, and the sustainability for our business operations we have planned, we must be as clever and as efficient as we can. By being mindful in each and every moment of significance during our working day, we increase the chances that we will make the best decisions, provide the best customer service and maintain positive health. Of course, when our health is optimised, we can also work harder.



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