

*Better Decision Making:
From a Mind Full to a Mindful Leader*

Shifting Into Mindfulness Is Highly Beneficial
For You, Your Team, and Your Organization



Caliente Leadership

Turning Good Leaders into Great Leaders



Better Decision Making: From a Mind Full to a Mindful Leader

Decision-making is a fundamental aspect of our professional and personal lives. Every day we make hundreds, even thousands, of decisions. Unfortunately, stress and other factors often lead good leaders to make bad decisions.

Our brains process 400 billion bits of information per second, but we are only aware of about 2,000 of these according to Dr. Joseph Dispenza, author of *Evolve Your Brain*. And, according to numerous reports, the average number of remotely conscious decisions an adult makes each day is roughly 35,000!

No wonder so many leaders operate in a “mind full” mode. This is not good. A more effective method is to make decisions in a “mindful” mode. Fortunately, this is a skill that can be learned, ingrained, and practiced.

In an article titled *Beware the Busy Manager* in the February 2002 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, Heike Bruch and Sumantra Ghoshal wrote, “Very few

managers use their time as effectively as they could. They think they’re attending to pressing matters, but they’re really just spinning their wheels.” In fact, the authors conclude from their ten-year study that “fully 90% of managers squander their time in all sorts of ineffective activities” and only “a mere 10% of managers spend their time in a committed, purposeful, and reflective manner.”



The daily juggling of data, reports, email, meetings, decisions, and way too much information makes it difficult to cope and results in leaders running on autopilot. We see these zoned out and inattentive leaders struggling to lead their teams and team members, as well as themselves.

Many are so consumed with firefighting activities that few realize these fires have been caused by the bad decisions and choices they have made. Thus the cycle of stress-induced poor decision making is perpetuated by the stress of correcting unanticipated results from previous poor decisions.



Leaders need to take a collective deep breath, pause, and regain control of their reactionary minds.

Stress Leads to Bad Decision Making

Neuroscience has revealed that as humans we rely on a pair of hardwired processes for decision making. Using pattern recognition our brains assess what appears to be going on. We then react to this information, or ignore it, due to the emotional tags stored in our memories. While normally highly reliable, these two processes can and do let us down, particularly in times of stress or tiredness.

In a process that scientists call pattern recognition, our brains try to reflexively counter decision-making anxieties by narrowing and simplifying our options. This attempt to find certainty in uncertain situations leads to premature conclusions that are often based on previous successful approaches and which prevents more and better options to surface or be considered.

In a similar way, emotional tagging in our memories sends us signals as to whether or not to pay attention to something or someone and what sort of action we should be considering. Interestingly, neurological research now shows that when the parts of our brain controlling emotions are

damaged we become slow and incompetent decision makers even though we retain the capacity for objective analysis. We all know how it feels to make poor decisions when we are being “emotionally hijacked.”

Usually, the more stressful the circumstances being faced are, the more a leader needs to explore a wide range of options and potential solutions. Unfortunately, while relying on past experiences may create a false sense of comfort and confidence, limiting one’s options is more often than not a recipe for disaster and poor decision making.

Additionally, many poor decisions are made as a result of leaders feeling insecure about their positions, their career trajectories, their own confidence, and even what others may be thinking about them. Using mindfulness techniques and practices helps leaders remain mentally strong and capable of overcoming such insecurities.



Mindfulness has been proven to be a skillful method for stress reduction and all of the many associated ills and problems that result from accumulated stress. Additionally, stress reduction

through mindfulness practices is a proven leadership performance advantage that



comes with the side benefits of greater happiness, health, and wellbeing.

Another decision-making peril caused by stress is the tendency for leaders, particularly new supervisors and mid-level leaders to start (or increase) micromanaging. If this happens frequently it can have significant long-term negative consequences for their teams, as micromanaging is cited as one of the most common reasons employees quit. No one likes to be micromanaged by their leader.

Leadership Mindfulness

Leadership is a mental game. Part of being a great leader is being mentally strong. This is not always easy when under pressure or when you are tired.

Mindfulness, or the art of being present and acutely aware of your thoughts, emotions, and actions, is a great practice for monitoring your mental strength and emotional health.

Mindfulness is no longer just a New Age buzzword with no relevance to the rough and tumble world of business and leadership. Rather, this centuries-old practice of paying purposeful attention in the present moment without judgment is now being used by an ever-growing list of

corporate leaders from Silicon Valley to Wall Street.

Mindfulness has been a hotbed topic of extensive scientific research in recent years, with much of the research revealing numerous physical and mental health-related benefits for those who engage in a regular mindfulness practice.

The many benefits of mindfulness for leaders include greater focus and attention, sharpened memory, an improvement in complex thinking, better ability to analyze multiple sources of information, enriched listening skills, increased brain acuity, enhanced ability to remember faces and names, and even a heightened ability to read people's emotions.

Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental and heightened state of observation of your thoughts, emotions, and experiences at a particular moment in time. It is a capability that all humans possess.

The more often you can do this, the more consciously aware you become of the decisions you are making, the actions you are taking, and the behaviors you are exhibiting. Additionally, mindfulness helps interrupt automatic, reflexive reactions (both cognitive and emotional) that can lead to fear, worry, anxiety,





angst, apprehension, and negative premonitions. By using mindfulness in our actual experiences in the moment we also increase the likelihood of exerting more conscious control over our reactions, thoughts, decisions, and behaviors.

The key is to be nonjudgmental in the moment. There's plenty of time later for rehashing how or why you have made a mistake, treated someone poorly, or done something that results in the carrying of some guilt or angst.

Mindfulness can also lead to an increased ability to break current habits holding you back from peak performance and inner peace. Additionally, just like our physical bodies, our brains can change its physical form and function throughout our lives in a process scientists call brain plasticity. And the best news: by using mindfulness techniques and practices you can be in charge of your brain and its future development.

While cognitive in approach, mindfulness goes beyond clarity and lucidness. Mindfulness results in greater confidence in one's actions and decisions, which means it is also a powerful way of battling that old foe procrastination. Those who

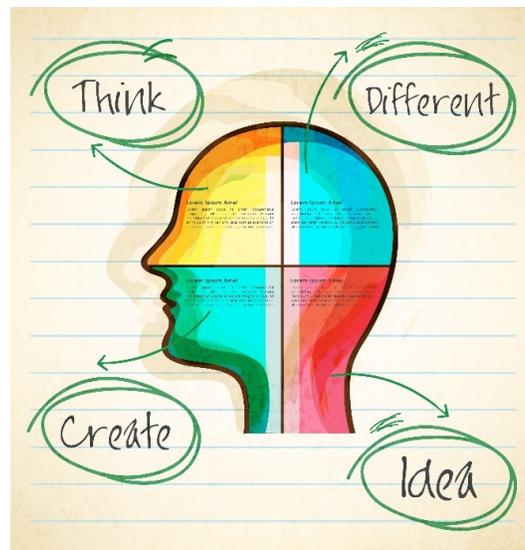
are more confident in their decisions are more motivated to take action and be committed to pursuing desired outcomes than those who remain hesitant because their minds are too full for contemplative and calm analytical thoughts.

Shifting Into Mindfulness

Leadership mindfulness is not a running away from difficult choices, a method for avoiding the reality of a situation, or even disengaging from the world and events around us.

Rather, mindfulness (and meditation as well) is a technique to calm and teach our minds a less reactionary way of handling emotions, situations, and decisions. By observing the ever-constant stream of thoughts and emotions that envelope us throughout the day, we are better positioned to be more contemplative, analytical, calm, and purposeful in our actions, decisions, and behaviors.

Mindfulness enables leaders to be better at determining the complexity and interdependency of problems, identifying any unconscious biases that might be hidden in their decisions, and more cognizant of any emotions that might be swaying thoughts, decisions, actions, and behaviors.





Mindfulness is also a technique for being mentally strong in tough situations, thus aiding with resiliency, adaptability, hardiness, willpower, fortitude, and determination.

Caliente Leadership

We believe leadership is an art. It is the art of achieving progress through the involvement and actions of others.

We also believe that it is of the utmost importance that leaders take good care of themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. That's why we created our one-day workshop *Better Decision Making: From Mind Full to Mindful Leadership Skills*.

Like all our workshops, this full-day interactive event incorporates a three-step behavior change process:

- Awareness of why the behavior change is important and relevant to participants.
- Inculcation of the new knowledge and skills so that participants are capable of mastering the tools and techniques presented.
- Application of the new skills and knowledge as part and

parcel of their current or future job responsibilities.

At Caliente Leadership, we understand that SMEs and privately-owned companies cannot afford the high fees and licensing costs from the major training providers. Which is why we don't charge per participant licensing fees. We can also cost-effectively train groups as small as eight.

With Caliente Leadership you bring the best practices of Fortune 500 training programs into your organization without Fortune 500 fees and licensing costs. We will help you build a solid and strong leadership pipeline that will sustain your growth for years to

come.

We also place great emphasis on the importance of learning reinforcement. We know that leadership development is not a one-time training event or a two-part workshop. It's more. This is why we include on-going learning reinforcement in all our leadership training programs.

The art of great leadership means leveraging the emotions of passion, enthusiasm, self-satisfaction, trust, and the loyalty of team members to drive creativity, thinking, innovation, energy, and buy-in to your organization's





strategies, tactics, and activities in pursuit of clearly stated goals and objectives.

Our focus at Caliente Leadership is turning good managers and good leaders into great leaders — at all levels of your organization. We do this by revealing to them the best practices of great

leadership so that everyone in your organization can become a great leader.

Call us today to discuss how to benefit from *Better Decision Making: From Mind Full to Mindful Leadership Skills* for yourself, your team, or your entire organization.

“Continuous training of your employees, especially in the areas of teamwork, collaboration, and working across boundaries, is the key to scaling every part of your business.”

Steven Howard
Leadership Author
