



Session	Mindful Leadership
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JIBY: Hello everyone, thank you for joining this session on Mindful Leadership.

My name is Jiby Joyce, and I am Programme Manager at Community Business, and I will be your moderator for this session.

This year's Community Business India Conference aims to impact positive change in our workplaces, communities and wider society. And, when it comes to addressing inequalities and promotion of inclusion, we need to challenge deep-rooted assumptions, speak out for what is right and take bold actions to disrupt the norm. So in this session, we have Marut Bhardwaj.

She will speak about the practices from Potential Projects' "Corporate Based Mindfulness Training" programs that combine the latest neuroscience research, contemplative psychology and modern business practices that moves the needle to provide individual tools to be more effective and successful at work and in life; whilst at the same time cultivating resilience, stress management and emotional/mental balance

It is my pleasure to introduce our speaker for this session- Marut.

She is a strategy professional with more than 26 years of corporate experience. With CXO roles over the last 12 years, Marut has extensive experience launching Greenfield Companies. With 12 years of contemplative practice, Marut felt to bring the meditative practices to the workplace for as many executives in India as she could, and that led her to leave the commercial ventures and devote herself to bring mindfulness into work place to create Kind, Calm and Wise Leaders. Presently, Marut is the Country Director for India, a Senior Consultant and Trainer with Potential Project International, which is a Global Leadership Services firm with presence in 28 countries. Her passion for Mindful Leadership has led her to bring the immensely popular Mindful Leadership Summit to India three years in a row - 2016, 2017 and recently in August 2018.

She is also a contributor to the book The Mind of the Leader, authored by Rasmus Hoggard (founder and CEO of Potential Projects). The book was published by Harvard Business Review in 2018. Marut is passionate about working with leaders to enhance performance, effectiveness and well-being. Her area of specialization is in organizational excellence and workplace wellbeing, developing and delivering customized, evidence-based solutions to diverse work environments.

So, Welcome Marut, thank you so much for being part of this important discussion.

I'll start the session by asking you my first question; which is-

Why do we need to challenge our assumptions about the role of leadership in India? What are the risks and dangers of the way many leaders are operating now?

MARUT: Thank you so much for the introduction and the kind words. Let me start with sharing my presentation, it is easier for us to grasp and follow.

We are all part of the digital revolution today, so much has changed over the last 5 years. Leadership is the 5th most tweeted subject, if you look at it from a definition perspective. It is a definition that has been in transition for a long time right now. The more you delve into it and understand the concept of leadership in today's time, you realize you basically are looking back into the past. So, let us challenge the assumptions of what we think it is and what it used to be and would be in the times to come. If we look at it from that perspective. Is the leader in charge? Is that how we understand leadership? It is somebody who is at the helm who is in-charge of the entire set of people working towards a common goal. This is a myth, if you look at it from a present-day time and if you look at olden times of what our understanding of leader was, as a matter of fact till the 20th century, till the late 20th century Leadership was not a word necessarily connected to a business executive. Leadership was more from a political or social perspective. Leader was someone who had the ability, to be the single most important or significant contributor to the group. Someone who could lead the group by virtue of contributing more efficiently and effectively to the group than the rest of the team. So, if you look at it from this perspective in the given times, leadership needs to be considered more from the perspective of a wider, larger source of wisdom that is available to leader compared to the rest of the team. So, here is the person -



that is the 2nd point, where we say that a leader is not just someone who can utilize the resources to maximize the value for their organization, which is what the team does.

But the leader is someone who has access to a larger world wisdom, who has a learning ability and who could have wisdom of which is the combination of what he or she is coming from the environment or the world in general and by that, going deep inside from within. So from the people development perspective, the understanding is that the leader should have a scenario where they are insisting and that they are actively involved in the growth and learning of their team. So, in the new scenario the learning, especially from a mindfulness perspective is based more on an environment of trust. So if you create a harmony and environment of trust, then people have a self-inclination for learning, it doesn't have to be pushed or it does not have to be part of a system. It has been an internal need to learn by example of the leader, see that he or she is delving deep within for self-awareness and it leads each individual to understand that in this culture of growth each of us needs to delve deep inside to become aware of ourselves so that we can contribute in a better way to the complete or wholesome goal of the organization. Another myth is the sense of entitlement, you know there are leadership circles - what we call pre-nursed, people who will have diamond encrusted watches and the fanciest offices and swankiest cars and so on. So that is one understanding of leadership based on partly the present day need for positioning or projecting oneself in a certain way. But today this is being questioned and it is being realized that the top leaders in the world are those who have a deep sense of humility. It is people who have the capability of maximizing value though leveraging internal resources and the ability to be kind and compassionate to the rest of the teams to be able to achieve the goals. And finally, the most critical points from the mindfulness perspective is what makes more sense; is it to be tuned to the future? Or is it to be more focused on today and now? So, this is not really a question because I think the leader today needs to have the capability to shift between world view and the sharply focused whole view. So, while there has to be the ability to have, as I said, the world wisdom and understand the environment completely, the leader must strive to be completely present in the now and focus on the specific target and goals that need to be achieved. So that laser sharp vision is required in addition to the ability to step back and look at the big picture and internalize. And the reason today we need to relook at leadership and what we have understood it to be for a while now, because we are all a part of what is called the paid reality by Potential Project - that's sort of like acronym we have come up with and the reason for this acronym is that we are all constantly pressurized, it is the life that we are living between work and family, the commuting to work, rushing into meetings out etc. There is a constant pressure building around us everywhere... we are always on; the work doesn't stop. There used to be a time when you used to stay late at work and once you reach home a stray phone call was all that was there was between office and home. But today it just never stops, between your mobile phone and your laptop, and your smartphones always getting emails, we are never actually de-linking from work to be with our family or doing anything that is more internal oriented.

Information overload as we all understand is coming from a digital world that we are all a part of, so you know a project management for example, a little while back it used to be about a few files, just what we had in our head or maybe a book or two... But today, information overload is making sure we have loads and loads of this information from Google and all other electronic media - we are struggling as to what to consume and what not to consume, and where to stay focused to achieve our goals. So information overload is another very critical challenge that we are facing. And finally we are super distracted, not only because of the different tools that we use at work but also because of the social pressure that we are constantly a part of. So between WhatsApp and Facebook, SMS's, calls and everything, it is near impossible to stay focused and you will see that most of us are a part of this paid reality and the result is that you will find less and less people, as an example, are able to sleep properly, and a lower number of people are able to read today. People don't have the concentration to read a novel or a book anymore because of the severe distractions and due to the pressured scenario, that we are a part of. So welcome to paid reality! That's our scenario today. So, we have become the industrial brain in the digital reality, in today's paid reality. So, there will be a time, where some people in our generation will not even recognize what we have on the left here - this is a typewriter and there was a point in time when it used to be about us and the typewriter; but today as you can see from the laptops, all the tools, smart phones and social media, there are so many distractions. So, what has happened because of this entire scenario is that there is a siege on our attention and the situation is grim. There is an attention deficit trait that almost all of us are suffering from and the research shows that there is an overload on us. This was found in a research project completed by Harvard Business Review, showing that up to 47% of the time our mind is wandering, and we are not on task. We are not able to stay concentrated on what it is, that we are doing. You know this may just look like a number but if you look at it carefully and think



about it, it means there is 50% of our lives that we are losing because we are not present and professionally it means we are working at about 50% of our potential and capability. So, from both perspectives, there is a huge area of concern that we need to address. And it doesn't just end at the fact that we are not completely present for what we are doing or what the task is at hand, but we also spend an average of 41% of our time doing low priority activities. This was research completed by Franklin Covey Global Times Matrix, who took up subjects from large, top organizations like Sony and Lufthansa, and what they found was that basically a large number of senior executives are doing what is called spinning the wheels - so they are in a frenzy, they are in action, they are doing something or other, but it is not effectively utilizing their time for finishing the most critical task. Rather than the critical tasks, they are pressing or dousing fires – which basically means that they are in that loop constantly working, really pressured, running against time but achieving really nothing, and this being the scenario with our attention under siege, we are experiencing what is called the ADT at work.

So, with 47% of the time our mind being off the tasks, that means we are really distracted, we are on auto-pilot, we have lost our sense of control over what we are doing, and we are highly stressed, highly pressured, running against time and the result is we are really disengaged from the work that we are doing. You will find many people saying, they don't really feel connected to the work that they do and the big reason for this is for the extent of distraction that we are facing but the most important cause of concern for us would be the fact that it leads to cognitive rigidity, we lose our flexibility, we lose our ability to be open to various different ways of looking at a scenario and solving problems and the result is that we are not creative or innovative anymore. We don't have the space in our mind to come up with creative solutions to the situation that we are facing. On the other hand, 53% of our time when we are on task and we can concentrate on the work that we are doing, we are able to have the space for making conscious choices, to be relaxed and have the space for being resilient and creative, able to focus and prioritise on our tasks.

So, it makes a huge difference as to what level of attention we have on our work. This is where mindfulness comes in, as the more mindful we are, the more present we are and the more capable we are to stay on the job whilst we are at the job. As mentioned by Thomas Devin Port of the Accenture Institute of Strategic Change, understanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success. So, we may have the time and the skills, and we may be highly productive but unless we have a high level of attention focused on our work we will not be able to get the results that we need. It is as simple as that. The most important critical factor today is the attention, the ability to focus and concentrate. So, answering your question, it is all about attention, the leader needs to in the present-day scenario understand that all of us are going for results, whether living not just at workplace but even at home as parents, with our children, we are all looking for the right results. But to be able to achieve the right results, we need to take the right action. Where will you be ever able to get the right result without taking the right action, that never happens. So, it is the right action that will lead to the required results, then we need to be making the right choice and right choices is all about conscious decision making. To be able to consciously make the right decision, we must ensure we have all our attention on the right subject and we are able to address it effectively. So, it all boils down to attention. Unless we can ensure full and focused attention on what we need to achieve, it is unlikely that we will be able to achieve the results that we need. So, these are the challenges that leadership is facing today, and the way out is to understand something beyond our approach to look at it from a management or strategy perspective. At the last Mindful Leadership conclave, Rasmus Hougaard did a section on compassionate leadership which was very interesting; he asked the audience 'to you what are the factors that de-motivate you because of your leader, what is it that she/he does that de-motivates you?'. Then after listening to their answers, he asked them the question 'what are the points of your leader that motivate you?' and 100% of the answers in both categories pointed entirely to the people functions, how empowering the leader is, how honest the leader is, how authentic the leader is, how inclusive the leader is. Nobody was talking about strategy or vision on management skills or supervision. It is basically about being deeply self-aware, to develop the understanding to know what are the expectations of the team from you and from that you can determine how to lead your team effectively, that's how I see it.

JIBY:

Wow, that is quite insightful. You know some of my learnings have been that leader is largely somebody who has that accessibility to world wisdom and how that leads to people's development. Team development is based on the environment of trust and how strategies are built by a leader who is truly humble, and I guess the numbers were quite alarming for us as well. It was quite alarming for me to understand that 50% of our mind is what we use generally for our productivity and rest of the 50% is



something we are not using. So, thank you so much for that, Marut!

I want to direct my next question to the contemplative practices, what can we learn about leadership from ancient wisdom and contemplative practices.

MARUT:

So for a long time, since the ancient times when the guru and masters used to meditate, we have attached religious connotations to the practices of meditation and it is associated to prayer and we think of the entire process from a religious perspective, be it from a Buddhism or Hindu perspective or whatever may be the case, and from that perspective you were to understand that fundamental concept behind meditation. In the Buddhist tradition there is a word called GOM and that is the Tibetan word for meditation which means familiarization. So, meditation was just the ability to familiarize yourself with your mind, so what we call self-awareness today. In Hindu tradition there is a word called Dhyān which is a Sanskrit word for meditation. Dhyān or Manan, which means a systematic introspection of nature of self to achieve a higher state of consciousness, so this is basically being able to go deep within and understand our self and our human nature. It is interesting to note here, and this is more my personal interest, but why do we feel the need to circumvent the mind to be able to understand our self, why should it be in the absence of mind? Because what we are doing is essentially shutting down our chapter in our heads and come to a complete state of silence and stillness; that is when we can tell people and understand ourselves better. So, if you look at it from the perspective of what is our mind? The mind is basically a total of all our environment and our learning, that has gathered our data basis, our environment and our learning for our lifetime, that is our mind, right! It started from probably zero and this is where we have brought it to today wherever we are, it is limiting if we are always going to operate as leaders from the total of our learning. Where does the sum of learning stand vs the entire world wisdom and universe? That is limiting us in our ability to perform and come up with the most effective, most creative or the most optimum solution for the situation that we are facing. To be able to reach there we must be able to delve into a cache of wisdom which goes beyond our very limited learnings from our individual lifetime. Dr Richard Davidson, who is one of the top neuroscientists from the US today has done an extensive amount of research on meditation and he calls it contemplative neuroscience. Many years back he was a student of Baba NeemKoroli, and he was able to see the isoteric practices and contemplative practices that were followed in the Hindu religion. He came back, and he said that there are astonishing outcomes and huge possibilities through meditation and decided he would like to understand them from a scientific perspective, which is how the ancient practice of meditation was explored through extensive research. Today they are talking about neuro-plasticity, which determines that if you meditate you are constantly building certain habits that completely change your mind, meaning it is changing not just your personality at the front, but also physically changing your mind. It is thickening the pre-frontal cortex, which means there is physical change in your brain and which fundamentally means it can be permanent. So, if we train our mind then we can be who we choose to be, and we can achieve what we choose to achieve. So that is the good news here.

Let me just show you a quick look at what is inside our brain. This is what our brain looks like on the inside, so these are the neural nodes and what you see as the pipes are the neural bridges which we call synapses and every moment as we make decisions, as we think, as we strengthen a habit, these new neural networks are getting created. So, every moment these new connections are getting formed. The more you smile, the neural network for smiling or happiness is strengthened, and we are forming the habit of happiness. So, whatever you constantly, repeatedly do is becoming who you are. So, no matter how much hardship you are facing or what is the level of challenges you are facing as a leader, if you choose to stay calm and if you choose to stay in a space of equanimity and harmony it will be possible for you to face those challenges and come out on the other side. Because nothing is permanent, and everything changes with time, so this is what resilience is all about. So, this is where are in terms of our ability to change our mind using basic contemplative practices which are taught to us through the ancient wisdom.

JIBY:

Thank you much for the wonderful insight, Marut. I have never heard of GOM in the past and you know,



it is important to familiarize yourself within your mind and I think some of the biggest leadership lessons and decisions are taken when you are in the moments of silence and meditation, so I think it was very insightful for me.

My next question will be a deep dive into Mindful Leadership as it gets interesting. We have been hearing about Mindful Leadership as a context – I am sure the viewers must be curious to hear from you as what exactly do we mean by Mindful Leadership? Is it this just a new fad?

MARUT:

Thank you for the question. It is definitely a word that we are listening to everywhere, reading everywhere, the newspapers, the magazines, the television, the internet, it is surely the new buzzword of the day but from our Potential Project, from a work perspective, if we look at it from a leadership perspective - mindfulness is simply the ability to pay complete attention or stay completely focused on the task at hand in spite of all kind of challenges in terms of pressure and distraction that we face – from the leadership perspective this is the exact definition of mindfulness. But if you look at it from a larger perspective, mindfulness is the ability to stay in the present moment, in the now, in a nonjudgmental and gentle way; despite all the stimuli that your senses see and yet you stay completely calm and focused on the present. So essentially it is the ability to stay in this moment and stay focused on the task at hand. This is what mindfulness is about. That said, the good news is that we can have the mind that we want, we can train the mind to be what we want it to be. So, if that is the case then just like we flex our physical muscles, we go to the gym, we look after our body, there is a need to look after our mind. There is a need to flex our attention muscle until it becomes strong enough, until the new neural networks for high attention are formed and staying concentrated and focused becomes a habit and becomes a physical structure in our brain therefore it is not possible for it to divert from that, so basically we need to make our attention stronger than the distraction whatever they may be.

So, let me just look at the science of it a little bit. If you look at the brain, when you are completely attentive and you are completely present in the now, it is normally the state of meditation or when you are completely mindful, you have this one dot which shows that concentration of light in the pre-frontal cortex, which means that one part of the brain which is fully active, that is the part of the brain that is responsible for making all the conscious decisions. So, there is full activity in this space with no distraction from anywhere else in the brain, so there is nothing else coming in the way, but as your mind starts to wander, you will find various different parts of your brain have begun to light up and your fight or flight mode is becoming active, your past memory mode is becoming active. So, there are different parts of your brain that are becoming active and beginning to give input to you in addition to the pre-frontal cortex. Then when you have flexed the muscle enough and when you have trained your mind through meditation you build the capability to become aware of your mind wandering. So, take a note here, you are not your mind. If you were your mind, you could not possibly see yourself losing your attention. The very fact that you can become aware of yourself, losing attention means there is something beyond the mind which can observe, be aware of the mind wandering. So, as you become aware of the mind wandering, this is where the actual flexing is happening; flexing of the muscle is not by staying attentive, flexing of the muscle is by you move your arm to raise the weight, so weight is a challenge. In this case weight is the distraction. So each time you engage with the distraction and you disengage with the distraction, to bring your focus back, you are building the neural muscle to stay concentrated and as you do that, you go back to majorly your pre-frontal cortex coming back into action and being able to make undisturbed, undistracted, calm harmonious decisions and that is how you go back to your attention phase. So that is basically the science behind contemplative practices and the result which is high attention and therefore a deeper sense of awareness and the ability to take the right decisions. That is what mindfulness is all about.

JIBY:

Thank you so much for that, I think staying in the now is so crucial and that takes away from the anxieties that you have as a leader. It also leads to be more self-aware and helps to focus better and all that leads of harmonious decision. So that is quite insightful Marut, thank you so much for that.

My next question is how do we create more kind, calm and wise leadership in our organizations?

MARUT:



What is happening today because of the pressure, because of the distractions, because of always staying on? We are moving between activities all the time. We take a lot of pride in multi-tasking. Everybody is multitasking, you are running, on the phone, on your emails, your child is calling out to you, barely paying some attention, not being able to stay focused on the present or anything, and social media and so on, so forth. So, for example when we are driving, we are texting and driving at the same time, we are taking calls and driving at the same time and we think we can do it, there is no problem. I am a great multitasker. Women take a great pride in being multitaskers and doing multiple things at the same time. This is all a myth, there is no such thing as multi-tasking as far as our brain is concerned. Our brain might crave to multi-task, because that gives us a dopamine kick. But our brain has been created for handling one single activity is at a time. So, when we think we are multi-tasking, you know, I am looking at the email, looking at the time, I am checking my WhatsApp messages, I am looking at my documents, all at the same time. I think it is happening at the same time. What is happening is one at a time, and I am basically rapidly shifting between one task and the other. So, I am mono tasking, but I am doing it such a fast pace that it feels like multitasking, that's all that is happening, and the result is I am not able to pay attention to anything. I am shifting my focus back and forth between things and therefore much as you think, you are capable of texting and driving at the same time, you will find your focus is on your texts not on the road, you have not seen what has happened in the last few seconds and if your focus was on the road then you have not been able to understand the text. That itself is proof of the fact, that there is no such thing as multi-tasking. We think we are doing that. You know there was a point in time when the researchers put together a few strong multi-taskers in the room and said, ok! Let's identify what are the benefits of multi-tasking, that we can bring about in the organization and they could find none. All they found were downsides, they found that it reduces your efficiency because of the switch time, every time you move from one task to the other you are becoming less efficient, it is not very easy to do an exercise here, else I would have taken you through a simple 20 sec exercise which would show you something as simple as ABCD and 1234 which is really on auto-pilot in our mind, we cannot multi-task or provide the same quality and time frame for a task which we can when we are completely focused on a task. It is proven beyond doubt that multitasking is never efficient enough. It reduces efficiency as I said, it needs prioritization because you are moving between tasks, you are no clearer what is your priority and there is a loss of over-view, it decreases the quality. You will make more mistakes, and even if you manage to catch yourself at the right time you are still losing time. We are talking about simplistic activities. The more complex the task becomes, the higher possibility of mistakes. It hampers creativity since your mind is so full, you are already tackling so much that having the space to consider options and to analyse possibilities becomes a real no-no and it drains your energy because of the constant switching between the task, you feel frenzied, you feel tired and those are some of the reasons why people are facing health issues, stress, bad sleep, and so on. It reduces wellbeing, it shrinks your brain, and as we multi task more, neuro-plasticity is taking place. Remember the neural structures that are getting made. The more we multi task, the better multi taskers we are becoming and the more we are affected negatively, the more our wellbeing and our ability to perform are affected. So, one of the biggest challenges of today's time from a leadership perspective is multi-tasking. We need to come back to calm, complete presence, in the moment, if we want to take this generation into a positive space. It rewires your brain to becoming a multi tasker like I said. So that is something that we have to strongly look at, if we want to understand how we can really bring mindfulness to workplaces and lead to better results.

Let me just give you something very simple which you can say is a tool that you can use, in your work life and which will make you aware that you are not completely mindful at this moment. So rule no 1, focus on what you choose, let's take the example of you being at work and you are writing a really important report and you are completely focused and you want to make sure that this report goes out fault free, and you writing your mail and your colleagues are sitting next to you and chit-chatting about the show last evening on the TV and it is distracting you but you stay focused and you are like "No, I am not going to allow myself to", so that's rule number 1- "I will stay completely focused on my job and make sure this report, goes out" and WhatsApp message come through but you refuse to look at it, so you are trying your best to stay focused and do your job and ensure you are completely present to what you are doing. And then your boss enters in and she is furious and red in the face, says client has called and everything is gone down the drain and I need you right now to come and address the issue... now if you stay completely focused and if you refuse to look at your boss or address the issue that she is bringing up, well you will get fired tomorrow. So that is probably not the only rule we can work with!



We must have a rule no 2, which says choose your distractions mindfully. So there will be a point in time, to shift your focus from what is the task at hand but you have to be mindful of what is the distraction that you have chosen and once you choose that distraction, you have to stay completely focused and that then becomes your rule no 1 again. So you can actually handle your work life between these 2 rules and make sure that you are able to give your best attention to the work that you have to achieve .

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If we try to put this in a simple matrix which will help us understand where and when we can be mindful, so we can either be completely distracted or we can be sharply focused. Similarly, we can be on autopilot and not be aware at all or we can be openly aware where we are not just focused on the task at hand, but we are also able to understand the peripheral vision and know what the various options are. So if we look at it from this perspective which quadrant do you think is the most mindful. So, the most mindful is quadrant 2, where we are sharply focused yet openly aware and if we're openly aware we would know when we need to shift our focus right. But until the point that we need to do that, we stay sharply focused on the task at hand. So, what is Quadrant 1? Quadrant one is when we are in the flow, when the task doesn't need us to engage our presence completely but we need to be sharply focused, for example in a factory when the workers are inserting these little components into a printed circuit boards for example or when a seamstress is doing embroidery for example, so these are tasks which will put you into particular flow.

When you are in autopilot you don't need to think of what you are doing anymore but you need to stay very, very focused. If you are aware of this, it will be possible to direct yourself in a certain way of mentally positioning yourself for best effectiveness. In the fourth quadrant where you are highly distracted but openly aware that's where creativity happens. For example, we all know when $E=MC^2$ happened, so our best moments are on the pot or in the shower because that is where we are very distracted, or we have 1000 different thoughts in our head, but we are also aware of all those different thoughts. There is nothing else that is competing for our attention, there is nothing that is putting us into action mode, we are completely off the action mode so to say. So, we may be distracted but we are openly aware of all options and therefore it becomes possible in that space. There is a book written by Janice Marturano which is called 'Finding This Place to Lead', for when you have that space in your head. There is a book by Rasmus Hougaard 'One Second Ahead', for when you find that one empty second before you react to something when you can make a conscious choice where you are able to consider all the options to decide what should take your full focus that's where success lies, that's where exceptional leaders prefer to be. And then of course we have the mindless quadrant when we are in autopilot and are completely distracted, we have no clue of what we are doing we're looking at all the options at the same time we are multitasking are struggling to find a space in our mind, so that is what mindfulness is from a workplace perspective.

JIBY:

Wow thank you so much Marut, I think multitasking is a myth is a very new learning for us right now, especially because multitasking is one of the skills that is prominently look in most of the job roles. Thank you so much for stressing on that and thank you also for the two rules for our mental effectiveness (1) to focus on what you choose and (2) to choose your distractions mindfully, so thank you so much for that Marut, can you share with us what are the tangible impact and benefits of mindful leadership?

MARUT:

Sure, we have gone a bit in the reverse direction. So we can look at benefits for ourselves personal benefits of mindfulness which include decreased stress and we have gone over this a little bit while we were trying to understand what happens when we are focused on a task and when we are not focused on the task. It definitely increases our sleep quality, it increases happiness level because we have space to be able to consider options at all times. It enhances attention increases brain grey matter which is actually the most critical benefits of mindfulness as it ensures that we change for the better permanently. It has reduced cellular ageing, now that should be of interest to the ladies in the group because not only does mindfulness impact us from a point of work perspective but also reduces aging, we are less stressed, we are we get better sleep and better wellbeing and therefore better health overall. (44.48)

We improve our mental fitness, we do not suffer from so many other mental diseases because there is no stress and we are able to stay calm, better heart rate variability and increased emotional intelligence



as we become more self-aware and calmer as human beings we are able to make emotionally intelligent decisions and impact our relationships in a big way, at the end of the day in your work space or in your home space or in your personal space, it is relationships that create the life that you lead. And then there are the benefits of mindfulness for you as a professional so you are able to have better task performance, decrease multitasking need to enhance job satisfaction, a better ability to make decisions you can be more creative and innovative, it increases your problem solving skills because you are more self-aware, your decision making becomes more ethical and it helps you to increase the retention of people and you improve the health of your teams, therefore they are present at tasks more often, your productivity increases, effectiveness increases and actually you can impact the top line and bottom line through mindfulness into the organisation at the cultural level. So those are the benefits both personal and professional.

JIBY:

So, thank you for that I just have one last question as we close Marut. What do you think is your call to action to companies?

MARUT:

You know I personally have had a contemplative practice meditation etc., for many years, close to 15 years now and I have seen and experienced something what is called close to bliss in that personal space of mine and when that was happening I would come to work and it wouldn't take me more than one hour for me to get absolutely back into the aggressive, "I am going to kill the world to achieve what I want", that kind of a scenario. And I would lose everything that I had been able to achieve through contemplative practices and that's when I understood that there is a need to bring this into our workspace because the fact is that we spend about 80% of our time in the workspace whether directly being there or indirectly through our emails and phones, we are spending a major part of our day with our work teams or in our workspaces. Now if that is the case then it is very critical that there is a culture of mindfulness so that it is possible for us to stay mindful in a workspace but also, so we don't end up negatively impacting our families and as a result the society. Because if we come back from a toxic or highly political work scenario and we come home to be with our family and our children and spouses, we tend to bring all of that toxicities into our home spaces. So as a society, as people we are not able to flourish, and I think you very correctly pointed out when you said- is it really a fad or it is just buzzword when we talk about mindfulness. I think the reason it starts to feel like a buzzword is when we just explore the theory of it, mindfulness is a practice. Its like looking at the platter of fruit, describing the fruit and expecting to get the benefit out of it, you know that's what we're doing right now.

So what I want to request to the corporate is to understand that you can spend 10 minutes making your teams meditate, to come into the space of calm; the one minute that that you can spare before you start your meetings to become calm and meditate can help you, as you will be in a clear state of mind to be fully present for the meeting, the meditation that will help you identify how to layout your time schedule so that you are calmly able to handle each piece, be it the meetings or the emails or whatever it is that your work entails. It all leads to you, of course the two rules of mindfulness will help you create a framework but eventually what will make the difference is adoption of the mindfulness practice - that is the most critical factor. They say that unless you are doing at least 10 minutes of practice every day you cannot expect to get its benefits, so if we can get down to 10 minutes of practice every day I can assure all other organisations that it will have a huge impact.

JIBY:

Great thank you so much. Unfortunately, that is all time that we have for now. I think it was a beautiful and insightful session. You have pointed out some wonderful points as to how to remain in the now and how powerful it is to be self-aware and how that keeps you stay humble as a person and how multitasking can have negative implications and overall this leads one to become a successful leader in workplaces.



So as this session comes to a close, I would like to thank, on behalf of Community Business - our speaker: Marut Bhardwaj.

I think we have all learnt a lot about this crucial subject, ancient contemplative practices, and numerous benefits that organizations get due to mindful leadership.

I am also very delighted to also mention that our goal at Community Business is to increase understanding about the importance to enhance physical health and well-being with mindfulness, how to cultivate awareness and strategies of dealing with unconscious (and conscious) bias, and also learn how we can be more attentive and focus on all tasks in order to improve effectiveness and performance at work.

So with that, it just remains for me to thank you all for attending this session and I would like to highlight that the recorded session will be available for download for 30 days – so if you find it useful, we encourage you to share with your network.

Thank you and have a goodbye!



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