



## mindfulness @ work: be here now



# BUILDING BETTER LEADERS ACROSS CANADA



You know that professional development is vital to your organization's growth and success. We know that you need your team to be able to ramp up quickly and effectively to make that happen. That's why we bring our solutions to you. Queen's University IRC offers open-enrolment and customized programs across Canada so that your team can easily access the knowledge they need to lead change in an evolving global economy.

## FEATURED PROGRAMS FOR 2020

### ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Feb. 11-13, 2020: Ottawa

### MANAGING UNIONIZED ENVIRONMENTS

Mar. 3-5, 2020: Toronto

Nov. 17-19, 2020: **Victoria**

### STRATEGIES FOR WORKPLACE CONFLICTS

Mar. 30-April 1, 2020: Toronto

Oct. 27-29, 2020: Calgary

### HR METRICS & ANALYTICS

Apr. 6-8, 2020: Toronto

### CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Apr. 28-30, 2020: Calgary

### LABOUR RELATIONS FOUNDATIONS

Jun. 1-5, 2020: **Victoria**

### MASTERING FACT FINDING & INVESTIGATION

Oct. 19-22, 2020: Regina

Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2020: **Victoria**

---

*Learn more about these & other  
programs offered across Canada:*

Call toll-free: 1-888-858-7838

Email: [irc@queensu.ca](mailto:irc@queensu.ca)

Website: [irc.queensu.ca](http://irc.queensu.ca)



# BIV

PRINT | DIGITAL | VIDEO | PODCAST | EVENTS | MAGAZINES

## Trusted content. Integrated solutions.

*Business in Vancouver* is BC's most significant voice of local business news and information. We write, broadcast and post across six platforms—print, digital, video, podcasts, magazines and special events—as one of Canada's leading integrated media companies. For three decades we've successfully connected organizations like yours with the business audience and community.

**Subscribe** | Call: 604-608-5147 or email: [subscribe@biv.com](mailto:subscribe@biv.com)

**Advertise** | Call: 604-688-2398 or email: [ads@biv.com](mailto:ads@biv.com)

**BUSINESS  
VANCOUVER**

## FREE MARKETING AUDIT

Currently investing in digital marketing and advertising?

Do you think you can get more out of your spend?

Get a complimentary digital marketing audit!

No commitments required.

Contact Pia Huynh at 604-608-5126 or [phuynh@biv.com](mailto:phuynh@biv.com)



GLACIER MEDIA DIGITAL

"The CPHR designation demonstrates to my employer, peers and wider network that I possess a strong HR knowledge framework and understanding, have high ethical standards and am committed to continuous learning and development."

---

**Kara Biles**, CPHR  
Prince George, BC

## Ask a CPHR about Credibility

Thinking about adding letters after your name? Do you wonder if the CPHR designation is worth it? Hear directly from your peers how the CPHR designation is making an impact for them through benefits such as Credibility, Expertise, Advancement, Community, and National Recognition.

Learn more from a CPHR: Email [info@cphrbc.ca](mailto:info@cphrbc.ca) to let us connect you directly.



16



26



36

## cover story

- 26 Mindfulness @ Work: Be Here Now**  
*By Nancy Painter*

## association news

- 6 president & ceo's message**
- 7 chair's message**
- 8 editor's message**
- 9 contributors**
- 11 upfront and online**
- 12 people and perspectives**  
How do you bring mindfulness to life at work?
- 14 members' corner**  
Hands-On Learning at HR Technology Symposium + Showcase  
*By Ian Esplen*

*"A few simple tips for life: feet on the ground, head to the skies, heart open... quiet mind."*

—Rasheed Ogunlaru

*"If the problem can be solved why worry? If the problem cannot be solved worrying will do you no good."*

—Buddha

## departments

- 16 recruitment and retention**  
Mindfulness a Magnet for Recruitment and Retention  
*By Isabelle St-Jean*

Reframing (the Science of) Mindfulness for Skeptics  
*By Sandra McDowell, CPHR*

- 20 training and teambuilding**  
A Return to Centre: Finding Focus and Results in Frantic Times  
*By Garry Priam*

Diversity and Mindfulness Go Hand-in-Hand  
*By Ali Najaf*

- 32 leadership**  
A Change of Leadership (in Mind)  
*By Ingrid Vaughan*

HR LeadersTalk with Michael Weeks: Journey Along the Amazon  
*By Drew Railton, CPHR*

- 36 workplace wellness**  
Seven Tips to Grow Mindfulness at Work  
*By Akeela Davis*

Connecting the Dots of Care, Culture and Commerce  
*By Amelia Chan, CPHR*

- 40 raising the bar**  
How Psychologically Safe is Your Investigation Process?  
*By Robin Turnill, CPHR and Mia McCannell*

- 42 bottom line**  
Moving Mindfulness From the Individual to Organizational Level  
*By Peter Saulnier, CPHR*

Businesses Need to Keep Housing Costs in Mind  
*By Jock Finlayson*

- 45 voice and vision**  
Dr. Roberta Bondar: Reaching From Space to Earth  
*By Jason McRobbie*

*"We are awakened to the profound realization that the true path to liberation is to let go of everything."*

—Jack Kornfield

## Ever Mindful of Changing Times



**Anthony Ariganello, CPHR**

**T**HE WARMTH OF THE HOLIDAYS NEVER FAILS TO RING home is an appreciation for those people in our lives who make any place feel like home.

My personal good fortune—and one I know that I share with many of our members—is to have that feeling extended throughout the year in the workplace. I have always considered this to be an honour, but before this issue of *PeopleTalk*, had not considered it a virtue of ‘mindfulness,’ just a reciprocity of respect and trust, which is a goal for any leader.

Growing up in different era, mindfulness was not in common usage, aside from matters of ‘minding your manners’ or ‘minding the curb.’ But the importance of its core concepts only grew in importance, albeit under different names, as my professional journey took me into ever greater realms of responsibility, and ultimately, impact on peoples’ lives.

One incident that really drove home the need for what we term mindfulness today happened years ago when I was the president of Avon Canada—and I was told by our US parent that the entirety of our manufacturing plant would be moving to the United States. As HR professionals, you know the impact these decisions have and, as a leader, I could only strive to deliver that news in the best light possible, but not before getting the support mechanisms in place.

By the time I addressed our team of 200 manufacturing workers in the cafeteria, we had those supports in place—psychologists, counsellors, outplacement specialists—but the most important thing was to be more than just the bearer of bad news. Having to explain the business side of it was tough, as the shareholders gains were obviously not to their benefit, but having established trust, they listened. The next morning I was in the plant, walking the floor, talking and hugging it out in equal measure. We worked diligently for outplacements and in the end a large percentage of our team actually transitioned into the pharmaceutical industry in Montreal.

What I had learned by then is that while change is never easy, it is how that change is communicated that makes all the difference. That said, I had never previously regarded that as mindfulness, simply compassion, due diligence and good leadership.

I think the biggest change in the workplace is all about communication, and this definitely gravitates around the more modern definition of mindfulness. We live in an era where the lines of work and life entwine, wherein psychological safety is integrated into employment standards, and employees are encouraged to voice their challenges and concerns—particularly around matters of the mind.

What was considered taboo talk just decades ago, when we were encouraged to leave our personal lives at home, has now taken root as the source of essential dialogue as workplaces and individuals grapple with mental health in an increasingly ‘busy’ world. Today’s workplace is not only more open, but more supportive and conscientious. Moreover, this is taking many forms: support networks, more encompassing benefits plans, tai chi Tuesdays and quiet rooms for relaxation and recharging.

Ultimately—as people leaders one and all—mindfulness is a virtue that gives back tenfold to ourselves, our organizations and those around us day-in and day-out, but serves even greater purpose in tough times when needed most.

Anthony Ariganello, CPHR

FCPA, FCGA, FCCA(UK), CPA(DE), CGMA, ICD.D, SHRM-SCP

President & CEO, CPHR BC & Yukon

[aariganello@cphrbcc.ca](mailto:aariganello@cphrbcc.ca)

# Refill, Refuel and Refresh

**T**HERE IS NO BETTER TIME THAN IN THE chill of winter—with the glow of the holidays behind us and a new year ahead—to reflect on those for whom we are grateful and those things to which we aspire.

For me, it has always been not only the most joyous holiday of the year, but a much needed opportunity to put all questions of whether the glass is half empty or half full to the side—and to refill the emotional jug entirely. You pour from that jug every day for the people in your life and you can do so without reserve, but the jug must sometimes be refilled, and occasionally we forget that.

For many of us, coming back to work, with energies renewed and happy memories of holidays shared with family and friends, feels like a fresh start. But that can fade as the cold and grey of January creeps towards the shortest, yet bleakest month of the year.

Even as HR professionals, or perhaps particularly because of our role, there are days when energy and optimism wanes, and it feels like we fell out of the proverbial ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down. The truth is though, everyone has days like this, and whether it's biorhythms or bad news, it always affects those around us—particularly in the workplace.

This is where an edition on mindfulness really hits home for all of us—connecting the dots between our own self-awareness, the dark clouds that can gather over the heads of others, and, ultimately, the potential of any business to thrive, let alone survive.

In this day and age, I truly believe it stands everyone well to



**Susan Ryan, FCPHR**

have that awareness and emotional intelligence, but we all know somebody who simply seems to lack the gene for empathy. Unfortunately, since these were the types who could traditionally make the tough, unemotional decisions, a lot of them can still be found in management positions—even HR!

To be fair, this is the world from which my generation came, wherein there was nothing 'touchy feely' about the workplace, but that notion has been turned on its head. What we are finding out is that the best leaders around today have EQs to match their IQs and that they are not equating the 'touchy feely' with anything less than how human beings work.

As a result, many businesses have become far more mindful of the role HR has to play in this newly emergent norm. Our profession has gone from having to ask for a seat at the table, to being increasingly, and essentially, involved in almost every strategic decision an organization makes. As one who wears both HR and finance hats, I know the true value of that.

Businesses can no longer make decisions without both of those hats being at the table as, like Siamese twins, any action on one part has a definitive correlative impact on the other. Being mindful of this, embracing the learnings and lessons each has to offer, is nothing less than the new way of business.

Susan Ryan, FCPHR, CPA, CMA, SHRM-SCP  
Chair, CPHR BC & Yukon  
sryan@cphrbc.ca

## People Leading Business™

**CPHR**  
British Columbia  
& Yukon

**Gain a competitive edge with a CPHR™**

**CPHRBC.CA**

# Business as Unusual

SITTING DOWN TO PEN THIS EDITORIAL, I AM IN A reflective state of mind. As poetically as that aligns with our theme of "Mindfulness" this issue, it also befits the fact that this will be my last issue of *PeopleTalk*.

I remind myself that this will be our 48th issue together and pause to think of all those whose efforts have buoyed our shared journey between these pages. Behind the scenes of course, I have both *PeopleTalk*'s designer Aftaab Gulam and our indefatigable sales manager Jordan Kofsky to shower with thanks; without those two, the magazine simply would not shine as it has, let alone have attracted the myriad advertisers to make it possible.

That said, our best behind-the-scenes efforts have only ever been aimed at creating a platform for some of the most dynamic people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. To create a magazine that not only survives, but thrives in today's market, it really all comes back to the voices and visions in the mix. On that account, I have been blessed from day one by a talent pool that remains undiminished these nearly 12 years later. The volunteer heart that underlies every edition of *PeopleTalk* continues to not only beat, but to set the pulse for a profession that continues to elevate itself in changing times.

What those quarterly brainstorming and countless intervening conversations have done for me personally and professionally is immense, and I can only hope that a portion of that has reached you too. In that light, this issue is no different, something of which we have been extremely mindful in its creation, finding the moments of calm amidst the chaos of change to appreciate the importance of the topic at hand.

There has never been a greater pace to the modern, interconnected moment, and while bringing with it many benefits, the stressors on individuals and organizations resultantly are greater still—impacting health, culture and results across the board. Answering this emergent reality is a growing recognition of mindfulness as a means of returning individual wellness and organizational vigour to the workplace.

With that in mind, regardless of whether you meditate or not, within these pages lies a path to a very different version of 'business as usual.' Indeed, as captured beautifully by Dr. Roberta Bondar in our closing pages, gone are the days of 'anything as usual.'

Fortunately, HR professionals have been leading the crest of the emergent 'whole-self' thinking for some time now. In an era where 'people-first' thinking is the only way forward, I leave off my watch knowing the future is in your hands.



Jason McRobbie

Jason McRobbie  
editor, *PeopleTalk*  
jasonmcr@telus.net

**CPHR**

British Columbia  
& Yukon

## CPHR BC & YUKON

1101 - 1111 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6E 2J3  
Tel: 604.684.7228 Fax: 604.684.3225  
Canada toll-free: 1.800.665.1961 www.cphrbc.ca

|                                                            |                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER                        | Anthony Ariganello, CPHR (ext. 102)<br>aariganello@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6937 |
| EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO CEO                                 | Celine Forget (ext.101)<br>cforget@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6946                 |
| DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS<br>& STRATEGIC HR                   | Sheh Shojae, CPHR (ext. 110)<br>sshojae@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6938            |
| DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT                             | Kelly Aslanowicz (ext. 101)<br>kaslanowicz@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6934         |
| CONTROLLER                                                 | Claudia Wang, CPA, CGA (ext. 111)<br>cwang@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6931         |
| FRONT OFFICE AND<br>PROJECT COORDINATOR                    | Fernanda Castro (ext.100)<br>fcastro@cphrbc.ca • 604-684-7228               |
| MANAGER, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT                          | Neha Mohan (ext.114)<br>nmohan@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6941                     |
| COORDINATOR,<br>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT                   | Judy Cave (ext.125)<br>jcave@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6945                       |
| MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR                                | Vicki Bauman, (ext. 119)<br>vbauman@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6936                |
| ADVERTISING SALES AND REVENUE<br>GROWTH SPECIALIST         | Jordan Kofsky (ext.108)<br>jkofsky@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6944                 |
| SR. MANAGER, MARKETING,<br>COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER AFFAIRS | Kara Douglas (ext. 129)<br>kdouglas@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6947                |
| COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST &<br>PEOPLETALK ONLINE EDITOR    | Ian Esplen (ext. 115)<br>iesplen@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6930                   |
| CONFERENCE/ EVENT MANAGER                                  | Erin Roddie (ext. 107)<br>eroddie@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6933                  |
| MEMBER RELATIONS MANAGER,<br>LOWER MAINLAND                | Quinne Davey (ext. 104)<br>qdavey@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6943                  |
| MEMBER RELATIONS MANAGER,<br>INTERIOR, NORTH               | Tim Read, CAE (ext. 120)<br>tread@cphrbc.ca • 250-317-8344                  |
| MEMBER RELATIONS MANAGER,<br>VANCOUVER ISLAND              | Carolyn Taylor<br>ctaylor@cphrbc.ca • 250-479-4235                          |
| MEMBER RELATIONS MANAGER,<br>YUKON                         | Rita Koeller, CPHR<br>rkoeller@cphrbc.ca • 867-332-4102                     |
| CPHR REGISTRAR                                             | Trish Andrea (ext. 105)<br>tandrea@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6939                 |
| DATA & IT MANAGER/PRIVACY OFFICER                          | Anita Hales (ext. 116)<br>ahales@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6932                   |
| ADMIN AND IT ASSISTANT                                     | Jaclyn Truchon (ext.128)<br>jtruchon@cphrbc.ca • 604-684-7228               |

**CPHR** **PeopleTalk**  
British Columbia  
& Yukon

WINTER 2019 VOLUME 26 NUMBER 4  
EDITORIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL AND CONTRIBUTORS

Amelia Chan, CPHR; Vincent Chow; Lorie Corcuera; Akeela Davis; Adam DiPaula; Donna Howes, CPHR; Jock Finlayson; Jennifer Gerves-Keen; Heather Hughes; Kevin Jeffrey, FCPHR; Lindsay Macintosh, CPHR; Raluca Manolache; Graeme McFarlane; Natalie Michaels, CPHR; Lynn Oucharek; Howie Outerbridge; Garry Priam; Laura Reid, CPHR; Peter Saulnier, CPHR; Bernadette Smith; Isabelle St-Jean; Kristine St-Laurent; Jane Terepocki, CPHR; Doug Turner; Ingrid Vaughan; Kristin Zehnder, CPHR.

|                     |                                                                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EDITOR              | Jason McRobbie<br>jasonmcr@telus.net • 604-418-9953                    |
| ADVERTISING MANAGER | Jordan Kofsky<br>jkofsky@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6944<br>Fax: 604-684-3225 |
| ASSISTANT EDITOR    | Ian Esplen<br>iesplen@cphrbc.ca • 604-694-6930                         |
| DESIGN              | Aftaab Gulam<br>aftaab@telus.net • 604-788-7523                        |

Reproduction of *PeopleTalk* material in any form, without permission of the copyright holder, is prohibited. For reprint permission and non-member subscriptions contact editor@cphrbc.ca.

Writers' guidelines  
<http://www.cphrbc.ca/resources/people-talk-magazine/writer-guidelines/>

To view back issues:  
<http://www.cphrbc.ca/resources/people-talk-magazine/view-back-issues/>

*PeopleTalk* magazine is published quarterly by CPHR BC & Yukon. Send change of address notice and undeliverable Canadian addresses to: 1101 - 1111 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6E 2J3 Publications Mail Agreement No. 40010722.

Advertising Policy: CPHR BC & Yukon will not be responsible for the claims of, nor does it provide endorsement for the advertisers, products and services advertised in *PeopleTalk* magazine.

Each issue of *PeopleTalk* draws upon the HR expertise and people-first thinking of our Advisory Council and the editorial acumen of thought-leading professionals. It is an honour to introduce you to some of those whose wisdoms make this issue a mindful milestone.



**Amelia Chan, CPHR**  
**Connecting the Dots of Care, Culture and Commerce** p. 38

For Amelia Chan, CPHR, success has always been “all about the right people” working together to support, empower, and ultimately, succeed. As owner of a boutique HR/immigration consultancy,

Higher Options Consulting, Amelia understands how to translate complex systems into practical applications for small to medium-sized businesses. Whether working with large clients globally or SMEs locally, the philosophy remains the same while the work is ever-changing.

**Ali Najaf**  
**Mindfulness and Diversity Go Hand-in-Hand** p. 22

Ali Najaf, CPHR candidate is a recent HR graduate from SFU’s Beedie School of Business and is now an active HR coordinator with KIEWIT. He has completed three co-op terms and has volunteered more than 2,500 hrs with 25+ organizations in Canada and Pakistan. Ali likes to assist others to overcome the challenges that they face as he believes that: “Life is not measured by the number of days you live, but the number of lives you inspire, so be someone’s inspiration.”



**Robin Turnill, CPHR and Mia McCannel**  
**How Psychologically Safe is Your Investigation Process?** p. 40

Robin Turnill, MHRM, CPHR is chief consultant, executive coach and founder of Pivot HR Services in Vancouver. Robin has 20 years of executive, management and consulting experience in the public and private sectors, and taught for ten years at Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s School of Business. Mia McCannel is an HR consultant



with Pivot HR with over 10 years of exceeding client needs. On the path to obtaining the CPHR designation, Mia holds a Masters Degree in International Business from the University of Hertfordshire, a Graduate Diploma in International Management and a Bachelor of Tourism Management (with distinction) from Capilano University.

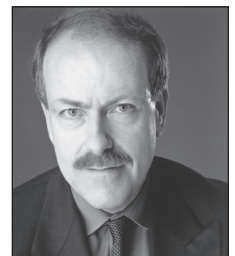
**Isabelle St-Jean**  
**Mindfulness a Magnet for Recruitment and Retention** p. 16

Isabelle St-Jean is a consultant and Professional Certified Coach with International Coach Federation accreditation, a Certified Retirement Coach, and a Certified Professional Facilitator. Over the past decade, she has been leading seminars coast-to-coast and internationally, and has provided consulting and coaching to numerous individuals and executives helping them with their workplace challenges, career management or retirement transition. She is also initiator and co-author of the award-winning anthology *Einstein’s Business: Engaging Soul, Imagination and Excellence in the Workplace*.



**Jock Finlayson**  
**Businesses Need to Keep Housing Costs in Mind** p. 44

Jock Finlayson is executive vice president and chief policy officer at the Business Council of British Columbia (bcbc.com), an organization representing 250 large and mid-size BC companies and affiliated industry associations that together account for approximately one-quarter of all jobs in the province. In this capacity he directs the Council’s work on economic, fiscal, tax, environmental, regulatory and human capital issues of interest to the province’s business community. Jock previously served as vice president of research at the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. Since 2007, he has served on the Board of Directors of the Bank of Canada.



**Peter Saulnier, CPHR**  
**Moving Mindfulness From the Individual to Organizational Level** p. 42

Peter Saulnier, CPHR is a partner with LoganHR. He has consulted in the US, Europe and Asia, and speaks regularly on a wide range of HR and business

issues. LoganHR is a consulting firm specializing in organizational development, leadership coaching, compensation, and in-person career transition (outplacement). With local offices in Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, and the Okanagan, LoganHR also has partner offices in every major city across Canada, and in 40 countries around the world.

## LEGAL UPDATE

# Just When The Smoke Was Beginning to Clear...

A workplace free from impairment is crucial for employers' compliance with legislative workplace health and safety obligations.<sup>1</sup> Last year, the *Cannabis Act* came into force and legalized the cultivation, sale, distribution and consumption of certain classes of marijuana for recreational use nationwide. Many employers were concerned about the permeation of cannabis into the workplace. One year later, new regulations under the *Cannabis Act* allow for the legal production and sale of three new classes of marijuana – *edibles, extracts and topical products*. Such products are expected on retailers' shelves by the end of 2019.

Legalization of these new classes of products raise further concerns and new challenges for employers. Unlike with smoking or vaping, identification of edibles or other cannabis products is difficult. Such products come in many forms including drinks and food items and are typically odorless. Adding to the employer's quagmire is the fact that the effects of cannabis through consumption of edibles may be delayed and last significantly longer than through smoking or vaping. It is possible that employees may unintentionally over consume and may not notice symptoms until sometime after ingesting edibles.

The biggest challenged to date is how to actually measure impairment from cannabis. There remains little consensus given the lack of a reliable correlation between the level of Tetrahydrocannabinol ("THC") which is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis and impairment. Impairment is impacted by an almost endless list of factors including potency (amount of THC), quantity, and method of consumption (inhalation vs. ingestion). What's more, the effects of THC on individuals vary widely and depend on a number of factors, such as frequency of use, physical and psychological health and age.

Reliable mechanisms for assessing impairment are lacking. In Canada, control tools are being developed to detect THC in drivers. However, unlike for alcohol, no acceptable maximum level of THC has yet been determined. Similarly,

other forms of biological testing involving the analysis of blood, breath, urine or saliva can only detect the presence of a substance. Unlike testing for blood alcohol levels, obtaining a positive test result that indicates the presence of marijuana is not necessarily a clear indication of possible impairment. Remember, marijuana can be detected for days to weeks after usage. Presence alone is insufficient given that current means of testing are not good at approximating when the cannabis was consumed and whether a person was impaired at a particular point in time.

In addition to the problems associated with the reliability of drug testing, Canadian employers will also have to take into account restrictions on drugs testing in accordance with human rights legislation, privacy requirements, labour standards, collective agreements and other regulatory requirements. Further, arbitrators in Canada have repeatedly held that indicia of impairment beyond a positive drug test must be relied on by an employer to prove an employee was impaired at work. Termination for a positive THC test result is likely to be found to be improper without further corroborating evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Employer must remember that legalization of recreational marijuana does not reduce the employer's obligations to protect the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment. While employer's safety obligations remain constant, however, obligations and concerns for employers may differ depending on whether the marijuana use by an employee is medical or recreational. Having robust and consistently implement drug and alcohol policies has never been so critical. In addition, employers should invest in training management and supervisors on detecting impairment and addressing suspected impairment in accordance with workplace policies. The risks of not doing so far outweigh the rewards.

<sup>1</sup> See *British Columbia Workers Compensation Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, and British Columbia Human Rights Code*.

<sup>2</sup> *Tolko Industries Ltd. v. United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union, Local 1-425*, 2017 CanLII 79297 (BC LA); *Teck Coal Ltd. (Fording River and Elkview Operations) v United Steelworkers, Locals 7884 And 9346*, 2018 CanLII 2386 (BC LA)



Melanie Samuels

Partner

Singleton Urquhart  
Reynolds Vogel LLP  
(604) 673-7405

Melanie Samuels has extensive experience in Labour and Employment Law and has been practicing in this area for more than 25 years. She is Co-Chair of the Employment and Labour Group at Singleton Urquhart Reynolds Vogel LLP, and advises clients on all workplace issues including providing guidance on disciplining and/or dismissing employees, drafting employment contracts and policies and advising on human rights issues, including harassment and the duty to accommodate.



Talya Nemetz-Sinchein

Associate

Singleton Urquhart  
Reynolds Vogel LLP  
(604) 673-7440

Talya Nemetz-Sinchein advises clients on workplace and labour law issues. She drafts employment agreements and drug and alcohol-related policies. Talya has successfully advocated for clients before the BC Human Rights Tribunal, the Worker's Compensation Appeal Tribunal and the Supreme Court of BC.



**SINGLETON  
REYNOLDS**

Whether you are looking for past [PeopleTalk](#) articles or the latest in thought-leading HR news and views, head to [PeopleTalkOnline.ca](#)—CPHR BC & Yukon’s dynamic, online hub for all things related to excellence in people practices.

### Mindfulness Yields Unexpected Workplace Outcomes

By **Wendy Quan**

I’d like to share an unexpected (and wonderful) result from group mindfulness practice at work. When I began leading mindfulness practices in my workplace back in 2011, something steadily emerged in addition to the much-talked-about benefits of this practice—a sense of community emerges and does so to this day. [bit.ly/33we359](#)



### Practicing Mindfulness in a Multitasking Environment

Mindfulness—being focused and fully present in the here and now—is good for individuals and good for a business’s bottom line. Google, eBay, Intel and General Mills offer classes on it. So do Harvard Business School, Ross School of Business and Claremont Graduate University, among other campuses. Mindfulness is not just a corporate trend, but a proven method for success. [bit.ly/20VabW1](#)



### Mindfulness @ Work

By **Rob Hershon**

Any discussion of mindfulness must begin by considering both workplace wellness and the well-being of our society as a whole. When we look at personal wellness, we need to ask whether people are realizing a balance between their personal lives and within their workplace cultures. Are they experiencing fulfilling, supportive, trusting friendships that bring joy? [bit.ly/37TNdHM](#)



### The Three Key Generators of Stress & Anxiety (and Tools to Combat Them)

By **Mick Cassell**

Get this. Stress isn’t something forced upon you, or inevitably ‘created’ by external conditions. You create your stress by how you choose to react to events or conditions. Deep-rooted, long-term change comes from increasing awareness of the causes and patterns of stress—and uncovering the reasons you are resisting change. [bit.ly/2Dw81XA](#)



### How HR Leaders Can Build A Strategy To Promote Mental Wellness At Work

In any given year, one-in-five people in Canada experiences a mental health problem. The Mental Health Commission of Canada notes that mental health conditions are the leading cause of workplace disability, absence, and presenteeism, with an estimated cost of at least \$50 billion dollars annually. [bit.ly/2L4LkxO](#)



### Digital Detoxing in a 24/7 World: Disconnect to Connect

By **Lorie Corcuera**

Over the past year, I have had a love and hate relationship with technology. While it serves me and our company well in sharing information and staying connected with our community, if not managed well, being connected can be overwhelming and consuming. That said, what does it really mean to be disconnected? [bit.ly/34Ao0Qf](#)



## LinkedIn Looks Into Training, Dogs and Cat Naps

**Kristi Searle, CPHR asks:** I love dog friendly companies. Is your company dog friendly? [https://lnkd.in/gGq-HrB](#)

**Slavka Shavio responds:** We are! It’s so amazing how pups make everybody around them calm and happy! Some days we have seven pups in our office.

**Kristi Searle, CPHR asks:** I have taken a quick nap on occasion, or used the time to mediate or reset. Isn’t that why your car seats recline? I love the idea of a nap/relaxation room! Does your company have one? Or a chill space? [trib.al/VFfLJ9Z](#)

**Joel Peterson responds:** I have been known to be a solid napper, but haven’t tried doing so at work. I can definitely see the benefit

beyond productivity—like having more alert employees on the job. I like the idea of even a quick nap before your commute home to be more alert on the drive.

**Alan Bostakian shares:** The three C’s for HR professionals. As you cultivate your pipeline of high potentials, do you follow these principles: be clear, be consistent, be creative?

**Ian Gibson responds:** Saw a great quote the other day. When the CEO was approached about a training budget he responded with, ‘What if we invest this money in training people and they leave?’ The VP of HR responded, ‘What if we don’t invest in training and they stay?’ Infusing your talent with ongoing development is never a bad call.

# How do you bring mindfulness to

**Susan Kleinschmidt, CPHR**



CEO,  
Good Insights Strategy  
Victoria, BC

*Susan Kleinschmidt, CPHR is a senior strategy, leadership and corporate culture practitioner with over 25 years executive and international management consulting experience, and five-plus years of senior executive experience working within the BC Government. Susan has a Postgraduate Diploma in Organizational Behaviour from the University of London and a BA in Economics from Queen's University. She is Master Corporate Executive Coach and is certified to administer a wide variety of culture, leadership and psychometric tools—Myers Briggs, Firo-B, and Human Synergistics.*

I start each morning with a 10-minute guided meditation from the CALM app. This is a great way to start the morning and to check in with myself before the day begins. I read the “Morning Smile” for some good news and I make sure to eat my breakfast.

In my day-to-day work, I make sure to take a break at least every 90 minutes. I start this break by making sure my feet are placed solidly on the ground and then take three deep breaths. Then I will stretch and go get a glass of water.

I make sure that I take time to check in with myself throughout the day and have learned the importance of slowing down rather than just driving through the day. I am practicing mindfulness each day to really connect with myself and others, focusing on being less of a human doing and more of a human being.

**Joanie Clary, CPHR**



advisor, learning and  
development,  
City of Vernon  
Vernon, B.C.

*Joanie Clary, CPHR is the advisor of learning and development for the City of Vernon. Recently, she researched and wrote their learning and development framework and is currently developing programs and initiatives into the next seven years. A lifelong learner, Joanie began her career in the recreation, sport and wellness industry, possesses a Recreation Leadership Diploma, a Business Administration Diploma in HR Management, as well as leadership, coaching and mentoring certificates. She is passionate about neuroscience, quantum physics and ancient civilizations.*

Mindfulness is being present. Mindfulness can be practiced at any time, wherever we are, whoever we are with, and whatever we are doing, by showing up and being fully engaged in the here and now.

Moving through my working day in the present moment places me in a zone of aliveness. I am neither preoccupied with the past or anxious about the future. I am attending to what needs my attention right here and now. I now understand this to be a zone of high performance. More is done with less, and stress drops away.

By being in this zone at work, you can actually access the power in this space, which brings about inspiration because you are making the decision to consciously focus on things that will enhance your experience, instead of taking away from it.

The City of Vernon is currently working on a research project that involves mindfulness as a dimension of building resilience.

**Giulia Lucchini**



director, employee relations and  
OD, Yukon College  
Whitehorse, YK

*Giulia Lucchini is a passionate leader who helps organizations create leadership, develop environments where people can be at their best and build cultures where empowerment and performance is the norm. A certified Business Manager, Integral Coach, LEAN Green Belt and Participatory Leadership Facilitator, Giulia comes with 10 years of organizational development experience gained in post-secondary education, government and railways services.*

To me, mindfulness is the art of slowing down, getting off the hamster wheel, becoming more aware of ourselves and our surroundings in the present moment with kindness, curiosity and grace. Learning to recognize, embrace and practice this sensation has been a radical wake up for me and my work.

Over the years, I have invited colleagues and teams to practice mindfulness individually and collectively by exploring uni-tasking, digital sabbaticals, breathing breaks, walking meetings, journaling and meditation. In my current role, I am intentional about bringing mindfulness when hosting conversations with others and providing people with a peaceful and spacious space to reflect deeply and connect with their inner wisdom. The most transformative approach to date has been encouraging people to practice and express gratitude by sending ‘gratitude nudges’ and asking reflective questions.

Mindfulness at work is a practice and what you practice you become; therefore, mindfulness starts with you.

# life at work?

**Pamela Robinson, CPHR**



senior labour relations officer,  
B.C. Nurses Union  
Vancouver, B.C.

*Pamela Robinson, CPHR has a passion for justice, which has served her well in the realm of labour relations since 1990. Currently a senior labour relations officer at the British Columbia Nurses' Union, her work in healthcare goes back nearly as far. For Pamela, mindfulness is a daily practice; she began practicing meditation when introduced to the Shambala teachings close to 20 years ago. She holds reflection to be an essential skill for problem solving in labour relations.*

Many believe that mindfulness is meditation, however, there are many other practices. I find the simple act of reflection helps me immensely in staying curious and open minded. When presented with an idea contrary to my own—or when I have no idea what the other person is talking about or where they are coming from—I pause. I take a deep breath.

This breath gives me time to ponder other points of view. During this breath, I relax and engage my curiosity. I remind myself of what I am trying to achieve and then I invite the other person (people) to share more about what they want. Self reflection is key.

Approaching conflict resolution in a mindful way allows me to increase my understanding of the situation and clarify what all parties want; and improves the ability to come to a resolution in a respectful manner.

**Sarah Bijl, CPHR**



HR manager,  
Interior Community Services  
Kelowna, BC

*Sarah Bijl, CPHR is the HR manager of Interior Community Services, a non-profit social service agency serving Kamloops and area. She obtained her Business Administration degree in human resources from Thompson Rivers University and her CPHR designation in 2011. She has been on the Central Interior Advisory Council for four years and is currently leading the Professional Mentoring Program portfolio.*

In 2019, one of my goals has been to revitalize our wellness program. This has led our organization to join the Canadian Mental Health Associations “Not Myself Today” program which focuses on “self care” and mental health in the workplace.

This program has spurred us to incorporate ‘mindfulness’ in several ways. Each Monday morning a “weekly wellness wisdom” email is sent out to all staff—tidbits of wisdom aimed to encourage mindfulness before starting the week. We have made wellness webinars available and provided staff opportunities to experience 20 minutes of guided meditation.

It is common to go at full speed the whole day, sometimes barely taking a quiet break to eat. As HR professionals we need to encourage a shift in the mindset that equates busy and no breaks with productivity—as it is rarely sustainable. Imagine instead having a chance to close your eyes, take a deep breath and be present—perhaps even returning to work more focused, grounded and productive.



## Choosing to prepare for the NKE exam without a Canadian HR Press Study Guide means you:

- a) Would be well advised to bring your Lucky Looney to the exam
- b) Are in no hurry to get your national HR designation
- c) Enjoy reading HR text books
- d) Didn't know that buyers of Canadian HR Press exam prep products consistently achieve the highest marks in Canada

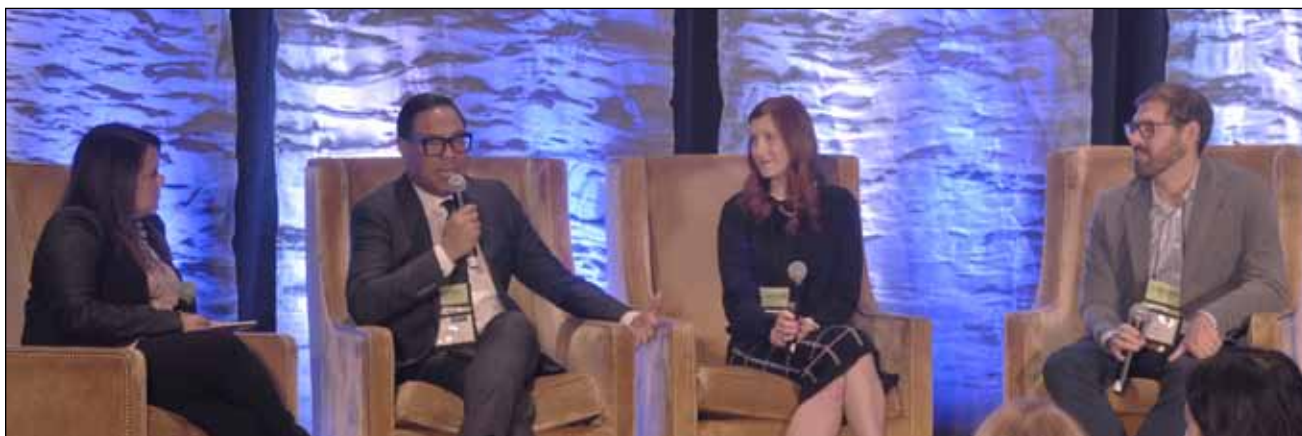
Make the right choice for your career  
- invest in a learning resource from  
Canadian HR Press, Canada's premier  
provider of HR certification training.

We are the only supplier of hard  
copy study guides specifically  
designed for the NKE exam. We are  
recognized across Canada by HR  
Associations and academic  
institutions. Join thousands of  
satisfied CPHRs - purchase your  
Study Package today!

 **CANADIAN  
HR PRESS**  
earning through learning

**Toll-Free: 1-866-607-0876**  
**[www.canadianhrpress.ca](http://www.canadianhrpress.ca)**

# Hands-On Learning at HR Technology Symposium + Showcase



(L to R) CPHR BC & Yukon's Sheh Shojaaee, director of operations & strategic HR talks tech with Jose's Dino, VP of business development with Telus, Kathy Gibson, CPHR, president of Catchy Consulting Inc. and Josh Berman, culture enablement lead at Culture Amp.

By **Ian Esplen**

**C**PHR BC & YUKON'S 2ND ANNUAL HR TECHNOLOGY Symposium + Showcase took place this past fall at the Fairmont Vancouver Hotel.

This hands-on interactive event started with a warm welcome from Anthony Ariganello, president and CEO of CPHR BC & Yukon, and included four invigorating keynote sessions, four thought-provoking "Tech Talk" presentations on how technology is impacting the HR industry in various ways, and 18 vendors showcasing the latest and greatest innovations that are making HR professionals' lives easier.

## Creating Meaningful Moments with Tech

"After reviewing the feedback we received from both delegates and exhibitors at past events, we wanted to ensure this symposium allowed ample opportunity for delegates to make meaningful connections, to ask the exhibitors questions face to face, and to fully understand the unique solutions being showcased," explained Kelly Aslanowicz, director, business development, CPHR BC & Yukon.

"To facilitate those meaningful connections, this year we provided comfortable demo pods, lounges and kiosks, instead of traditional booths. This set the stage for more interactive and intimate conversations. We also scheduled delegates for 'demo crawls', which were hour-long guided tours of the showcase," Aslanowicz added.

## Demo Crawl Creates Connections

Each demo crawl was led by a CPHR student volunteer, who served as the "showcase tour guide" to the groups of three to five people. They provided attendees with insight on what each vendor's focus was and what problems they were helping HR professionals solve.

"I went on one of the demo crawls, so having an introduction without having to create that myself and get a snapshot as to what everyone is doing through their presentations was great," said Alina Zutz, CPHR, of Coastal Community Credit Union. "It made it really easy, and helped me with what kinds of follow up questions I need to be asking them."

One of the demo crawl leaders, Haidar Waled—who is currently attending Kwantlen Polytechnic University—volunteered because he is interested in the technology side of HR and the opportunity to watch the final keynote presentation by Saeed Sadooghi of Indeed.

"I was actually lucky enough to talk with him before his keynote and we chatted about what Indeed is working on," said Waled. "His presentation was very thoughtful and he certainly has a lot of data on the current job market, which

honestly, you have to pay for that kind of data a lot of the time."

Waled added that it was eye-opening to see all the different areas that technology is impacting HR.

**"You can't  
take the human  
out of human  
resources—  
technology is  
simply an  
enabler  
to make  
HR better."**



Exploring TELUS Employee Solutions



Sourcing Optimum Software

### Envoys of Excellence on Site

With operations running in Toronto and its head office in Chicago, one of our sponsors, Envoy Global, was able to travel out west for our event. They specialize in technology that helps organizations navigate the immigration process when bringing in workers from other countries.

Jeff Reppucci, Envoy Global's head of strategy, raved about their experience at the event and the wonderful opportunity he had to network with so many HR professional and companies that are working in the HR technology space.

"Sometimes when you go to a showcase like this, there's thousands of people and it's chaos—you can barely hear each other," said Reppucci "Here, it was intimate and cozy, and you get to actually sit with people, talk and do real human networking, so I think that was great."

What did HR professionals talk with Reppucci about? "A lot of people shared stories about challenges they've had trying to bring people to Canada, so that was an easy jumping off point to talk to them about how we can help," Reppucci said.

### Creating People-Friendly Futures

Returning to the event for a second consecutive year was TELUS Employer Solutions, showcasing the TELUS HCM VIP Platform and their employee virtual care program.

José Dino, TELUS's vice president of business development was very impressed with the lounge space that offered comfy seating for six-to-eight people and how well it aligned with TELUS's clean and nature-focus brand.

"The biggest thing we're hearing today is technology isn't going away in the HR industry," said Dino. "Some see it as something that is helping the profession, but others view it as something that is very difficult to manage."

"With us and all the other technology vendors here, it's a great opportunity for us to educate people on how technology can help HR, but at the same time, help people better understand what technology can and can't do," explained Dino, before emphasizing, "You can't take the human out of human resources—technology is simply an enabler to make HR better."

### A Look Back

The professional development offerings by CPHR BC & Yukon reached new heights in 2019.

Online, CPHR BC & Yukon hosted 32 webinars, which included 13 free webinars, that resulted in more than 5,000 views (registrations). That's the equivalent of more than 315 days in CPD hours.

In person, CPHR BC & Yukon hosted 11 different symposiums throughout B.C. and the Yukon. These events showcased the brilliance of more than 50 expert speakers and drew nearly 750 registrants. Add that all up and that is equivalent of more than 185 days in CPD hours.

"What a great year 2019 has been for the professional development department at CPHR BC & Yukon," said Neha Mohan, manager, professional development. "We delivered ten thought-provoking symposiums and countless interactive webinars for our emerging professional in the HR industry. We hope our efforts in providing successful PD was not only valuable to our members, but allowed them to learn and grow in their careers."

### A Look Ahead

The 2020 professional development calendar is beginning to take shape with a number of symposiums in the planning stages for 2020, as well as a number of webinars and workshops.

"I believe that one of the most important characteristics a leader can have is the willingness to continue to professionally develop themselves and their skills," said Mohan. "We, as individuals, are the one continuous influence on all our actions and accomplishments, so it's vital that we continue to learn for recurrent growth. In 2020, our members can expect new opportunities to learn, network and grow in more challenging ways. We'll be bringing you exciting new topics and new faces to help you enhance your growth."

Coming up early in the new year, the Vancouver Legal Symposium is scheduled Feb. 7, 2020 and the HR Conference & Expo is scheduled for April 28-29, 2020. Visit [www.cphrbc.ca/pd](http://www.cphrbc.ca/pd) to view the full schedule of professional development events. 

Ian Esplen is CPHR BC & Yukon's communications specialist and editor of PeopleTalkOnline.ca.



# Mindfulness a Magnet for Recruitment and Retention

By **Isabelle St-Jean**

*"If you can control your mind, you can control a lot of things"*  
— Bianca Andreescu

**A**S HR PROFESSIONALS KNOW, RECRUITMENT EFFORTS HAVE evolved exponentially in our fast changing world. Waiting for the hot resume to land on your desk is no longer a talent strategy, replaced by exploring multiple talent platforms and taking into consideration a complex web of factors in the hopes of hiring the best fit for the job and the workplace culture.

## Mindful Finders and Keepers

Gone are the days of passive attraction. In this proactive recruitment reality, it's also important to know how and what will best attract and retain the right people. As a result, the face and space of the progressive workplace has opened up to create cultures that inspire just those actions. Coupled with the growing concerns about the continued rise of stress levels and nearly epidemic anxiety in our lives, many HR professionals have been 'minding' the office for employee and organizational gain—applying their experience and influence to their workplace cultures and branding to inspire a sense of calm, collaboration and engagement.

## Creating Inspiring and Inviting Environments

We all know the importance of fostering positive first impressions, but how far have we applied that to the workplace, and what impact might it have? Imagine the impact of creating a physical

environment that emanates creative energy and a sense of open peacefulness to a prospective new employee stepping in for a first interview. Rather than bland mission statements and modern art—both of which are too often devoid of meaning and aesthetics—consider what changes in your office decor and decorum might better robe the workplace as an appealing reflection of what is honoured in your company's purpose and mission.

For example, envision the reception area with a wall full of golden words tastefully representing core values such as peace of mind, collaboration, mindfulness, creativity, awareness, prosperity, potential, and so on. I will never forget walking into such an office in the U.S. once, many years ago and being awestruck by the forward thinking and boldness of these words speaking for themselves on the company's behalf.

What I have reflected on since is that all such changes are first born in the mind, and with mindfulness gaining greater corporate allure, the number of wonder walls is only likely to grow—alongside more appealing (and retentive) cultures.

**"Mindfulness  
is not about  
making the mind  
more full than it  
already is."**

## Guiding the Mind away from Stress

As drawn from Bianca Andreescu's introductory quote, when we take charge of our minds through mindfulness practices, we can control a lot of things—and that applies as much in the workplace as on the tennis court. It is in the recognition of this fact that greater numbers of individuals and organizations are looking for new mindful means of fostering stronger cultures while reducing the collective stress levels.

Therapist, author and corporate workplace consultant Dr. Steven Lake, agrees that as we train the mind to be attentive and focused we become better able to counter the stress and extreme distractibility to which we are all subjected these days.

Integrating such practices in workplace culture, Lake says, can be important and also helps to retain employees, especially those who are in extremely stressful jobs such as first responders. Having provided critical incident, debriefing group sessions for organizations, Lake believes that encouraging employers and employees alike in ongoing mindfulness practices can help all parties to self-regulate and feel supported before, during and after a crisis. Whether the psychological support is available internally or is provided by external professionals, it needs to be readily available, particularly for all high-stress positions. This in turn can help to foster a sense of psychological safety, prevent burnout and support retention efforts.

### Mindfulness Across Diversity

As we know, many factors impact a company's ability to retain its multi-generational, increasingly diverse workforce. Knowing that in some cultures mindfulness and meditation is integrated—and as natural as breathing—HR professionals might find an opportunity to invite certain employees to become champions or pioneers in establishing such practices in the workplace.

Megha Ratna Shakya, originally from Nepal, was given just such an opportunity at the Trans Himalayan Aid Society where he was asked to lead a healing sound and meditation session for the board members of the non-profit.

When asked about his experience of mindfulness in the workplace in Nepal, Shakya points out that although conflicts exist there as elsewhere, the tendency is for people to be poised and remain calm. He explains that as adults, people in the Nepalese culture come to know that it is important to keep one's ego in check with the goal of maintaining peace of mind, which is highly valued in that culture. Because of that, employees are less reactive and more likely to be responsive instead—guided by a kind of equanimity or what we call being on an “even keel” in the West.

Shakya also points out that the concept of mindfulness in our mainstream culture can be easily misconstrued as just another task on the “to-do” list. He assures that mindfulness is not about making the mind more full than it already is; instead, what is at the heart of true mindfulness is actually a matter of awareness and attention. Training oneself to focus one's attention and cultivate a deeper awareness of self and others, Shakya notes, also lead to stronger performance and ongoing success at work.

### Mindfulness as Retention of Attention

Indeed, awareness is the key to mindfulness, as I heard Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn affirm in September 2019 at the fabulous retreat and educational center, 1440 Multiversity in California. He also emphasized that the integration of mindfulness in the mainstream has become easier partly due to the 800 scientific studies to date that have firmly identified the numerous benefits of meditation, while also detaching it from its spiritual association of past years.

As a best-selling author and founder of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Clinic in 1979, Kabat-Zinn has been devoted to bringing MBSR programs into the workplace, personal lives and institutions all over the world. He defines mindfulness, with utmost credibility, as “awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.”

Adopting this definition collectively can only encourage employers and employees to suspend the judgement they may hold towards each other. This would further contribute to a sense of individual psychological safety, while everyone also pays greater collective attention—channelling our awareness to give rise to the most poised and focused version of ourselves in any given position.

### Instigating a Mindfulness Campaign

Among the many ways mindfulness can be incorporated in your workplace, consider experimenting with a quarterly or by-annual campaign. Activities for this could include:

- Sharing by text, email or office board a few weekly pictures of people and things that celebrate awareness, serenity and peace of mind;
- Offering a 15-20-minute lunch time, guided meditation by leaders in the field via audio books starting with *Mindfulness for Beginners* by Jon Kabat-Zinn or *Meditation for Beginners* by Jack Kornfield;
- Beginning team meetings with a one minute sharing of something new that has come into an employee's deeper awareness from either work or personal life;
- Encouraging the practice of random acts of kindness;
- Taking a subscription to the *Mindful* magazine published 6 times per year and sharing its ideas and inspirations with your team;
- Offering mindfulness and meditation training or retreats;
- Encouraging one-minute deep breathing exercises at least twice a day; and
- Beginning a team meeting with a 30-second pause with eyes closed and deep breathing.

Imagine how different this simple way of starting a team meeting could be. As a means of tapping into our hidden resources, those 30 silent seconds can provide a powerful catalyst for infusing awareness and recognizing the value of those gathered—leading to greater engagement and more fruitful discussions and futures.

As such, mindfulness practices become seamless elements—anchoring qualities of presence, focused productivity, awareness and calm in your workplace culture—employees will appreciate the added value of working for such a progressive company. After all, any employee who feels truly valued is both empowered and, ultimately, invaluable to any organization. 

Professional speaker, author and business coach, Isabelle St-Jean, RSW, PCC, RTC brings to her clients two decades of experience in leading, educating and providing practical solutions to major work/life challenges and transitions.

# Reframing (the Science of) Mindfulness for Skeptics

By **Sandra McDowell**, CPHR

IF WORDS LIKE ‘MEDITATION’ AND ‘MINDFULNESS’ CONJURE UP images of a yoga retreat or something that seems equally irrelevant to your professional life, this article is for you.

## Working Out Our Mental Muscle

Although it sounds easier said than done, attention is a mental muscle and like any other muscle, it can be strengthened through the right kind of exercise. Meditation and mindfulness, which are the fundamental exercises for building deliberate attention, are actually quite simple. Whenever your mind wanders, notice that it has wandered, bring it back to your desired point of focus and keep it there for as long as you can.

From a neuroscience perspective, meditation pertains to what we are paying ‘attention’ to, and mindfulness pertains to the ‘awareness’ of where we are directing our ‘attention.’ What we pay ‘attention’ to, and our ‘awareness’ of it, impacts our brain and outlook.

We live in the era of knowledge, and business moves faster than ever. Information overload is real and distractions are constant. Cognitive control takes place in the prefrontal cortex—the area of the brain in charge of abstract thinking, thought analysis and behaviour regulation. Once bolstered through a bit of practice, cognitive control allows you to stay focused even in the face of disruptions or impediments. It should come as no surprise then that cognitive control is a highly desirable quality of successful leaders. This is how meditation and mindfulness can be used to enhance your professional life.

## Distraction Inaction is Real

A quick reality check—how often does this happen? You’re sitting at your desk concentrating on something when one of your devices sounds a notification. You check it and promptly return to the task at hand. A colleague pops by to ask you a ‘quick question.’ Then there’s an incoming email notification...then a phone call...then a loud conversation that spills over from the other room, and so on.

Before you know it, an hour has gone by and you haven’t even made a dent in your to-do list. Anxiety goes up as productivity goes down. The spiral continues in a seemingly endless cycle.

From emails and social media notifications to advertisements, our focus is more challenged than ever. Notifications elevate our feelings of urgency, and resisting the temptation to check them has become one of the great challenges of our time. The average person looks at their phone 52 times a day and experiences an interruption every three minutes.<sup>1</sup> After an interruption, it can take anywhere from five to 23 minutes to return to the original task.<sup>2</sup>

## Linking Wandering Minds and Worry

We’re also locked in a fierce battle for attention with our own minds. One study of over 15,000 people found that their minds

wandered nearly half of the day.<sup>3</sup> During these periods of mind-wandering, people report being less happy than when they are focused in the present moment.

That’s because mind-wandering often involves worrying. With access to more information than ever, we are hyperaware of dangers near and far, from disease, terrorism and credit card fraud to climate change and gluten. Our negativity bias is in overdrive.

Our brains evolved to perceive danger everywhere, yet in reality there is only about one real ‘tiger’ for every 99 we perceive. Research has shown that the repeated stress triggered by those imaginary tigers is detrimental to our health, and it can also lead to decreased engagement and performance.

## Making Mindfulness a Habit

Here’s the good news. With discipline about where you focus your awareness, it is possible to manage distractions. You can shut off email, turn off audible notifications and tune out noise by working in a quiet place.

As Donald Hebb, the influential Canadian psychologist once said, “neurons that fire together, wire together.”<sup>4</sup> Your experiences become entrenched in your mind through a system of neurons. When you repeat a behaviour, the neuro-pathways involved in that behaviour become even stronger and habits are formed. Once the habit is formed, your brain uses less energy because those pathways are already strengthened and the behaviour is routine.

This can work to your benefit. More mindfulness leads to higher emotional intelligence—higher self-awareness, self-regulation, deeper motivation, better empathy, and better social skills. And it is self-reinforcing; it gets easier each time.

## Reducing the Strain on Your Brain

Research shows that mindfulness can create lasting changes. The University of British Columbia has found that the practice of mindfulness meditation impacts many regions of the brain, including the anterior cingulate cortex, which is responsible for self-control—focusing, managing impulses, and resisting temptation and distractions.

Another area of the brain that is significantly impacted by mindfulness is the hippocampus, which is associated with emotion, memory, and managing setbacks. Unfortunately, stress can have a damaging effect on the hippocampus—those who experience chronic stress have been shown to have smaller hippocampi than average, coupled with a reduced capacity for resilience. Mindfulness can help counteract that stress.

Another study found that meditators demonstrated better self-regulation, resisted more distractions and made fewer errors than non-meditators.<sup>5</sup> These abilities are imperative for personal and

organizational leadership, where mental fortitude and resiliency are necessary to cope with change and setbacks.

### Focus is Good for your Health

Outside of work, meditation can be a life-saver. An 11-year study comparing non-meditators with meditators found significant reductions in illness and a 63 per cent reduction in healthcare costs for those who practiced meditation.<sup>6</sup>

Other research has shown that mindfulness training reduces stress hormones, builds immunity, increases focus, improves sleep and creativity and boosts happiness. Clearly, mindfulness meditation is powerful stuff.

Mindfulness was first introduced to the mass market in the 1970s by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who travelled the world teaching an eight-week course called “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.” It was later discovered that his students had developed greater cortical thickness, which is known to ward off age-related cognitive and mental health diseases.<sup>7</sup> Thankfully, mindfulness practices have now entered the mainstream.

### Strengthening the Mental Muscle

Ready to begin? There are a variety of resources available. Headspace.com offers a mobile app that helps you exercise your mental muscle through mindfulness meditation—with a practice that is simplified for beginners. Using a mindfulness app is a pleasant, if not ironic, upside to being tied to a mobile device.

Whether you choose a technological aid or practice the old-fashioned way by setting aside quiet time for inward focus, mindfulness meditation is an essential tool for professional life in the 21st century. ①

As the founder and voice behind eLeadership Academy™ (e-leadershipacademy.com), Sandra McDowell, CPHR, MA, PCC, SHRM-SCP helps leaders and organizations increase performance and well-being by leveraging neuroscience insights to harness the untapped power of the brain.

1. *Global Mobile Consumer Survey: US Edition (2018)* <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/us-tmt-global-mobile-consumer-survey-exec-summary-2018.pdf>
2. *Optimizing Workflow in the Office (Infographic)*. (2017). Online Course Report. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinecoursereport.com/how-to-achieve-the-ever-elusive-state-of-flow-in-the-workplace>
3. *Does Mind-Wandering Make You Unhappy?* (2017). Greater Good. Retrieved from [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/does\\_mind\\_wandering\\_make\\_you\\_unhappy](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/does_mind_wandering_make_you_unhappy)
4. Morris, R.G.M. (1999). D.O. Hebb: The Organization Of Behavior, Wiley: New York; 1949. *Brain Research Bulletin* 50.5-6: 437. Web.
5. van den Hurk PA; Gionmi F; Gielen SC; Speckens AE; and Barendregt HP. (2010). Greater efficiency in attentional processing related to mindfulness meditation. *Q J Exp Psychol (Hove)*. 63(6):1168-80.
6. Orme-Johnson, D. (1997). *Am J Managed Care* 3:135-44.
7. Hölzel, B.K.; Carmody, J.; Vangel, M.; Congleton, C.; Yerramsetti, S.M.; Gard, T.; and Lazar, S.W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research*, 191(1), 36–43. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2010.08.006>.



# HIRING?

## CALL THE EXPERTS!

See and hear our candidates before meeting them.

- ▶ PERMANENT, CONTRACT, TEMPORARY STAFFING
- ▶ Specializing in OFFICE, INDUSTRIAL and PROFESSIONAL positions
- ▶ Experienced Candidates ready to go!
- ▶ 100% Total Satisfaction Guaranteed

### CONTACT US

VANCOUVER **604.639.1222**  
[vancouver@recruitinginmotion.com](mailto:vancouver@recruitinginmotion.com)

DELTA **604.262.2054**  
[delta@recruitinginmotion.com](mailto:delta@recruitinginmotion.com)

[www.recruitinginmotion.com](http://www.recruitinginmotion.com)

**ANDREW D'ECA**  
PARTNER  
RECRUITING IN MOTION



## VIDEO PROFILES

We provide candidate **video clips** along with detailed resumes making the hiring process faster, less expensive and more effective than conventional employment agency techniques - **Our clients love it because we save them time and money!**



# A Return to Centre: Finding Focus and Results in Frantic Times

By **Garry Priam**

Can you recall the last time during the day you stopped, paused briefly, breathed and fully relaxed? If not, do so.

Did you do this without thinking in the back of your mind, “I need to answer those 100 plus emails by noon, finish that report, or pick up my dry cleaning after work”?

Honestly—when was the last time?

## Slowing Down for Take Off

Do you take breaks during the day—and eating lunch at your desk while working does not count—or in the evening after finishing your never ending to-do list?

Let me make a personal admission to which you might relate. As I was writing and researching this article, I made a conscious effort to be present, stay focused and not allow my thoughts to drift and think about other tasks. I admit, it wasn’t always easy to do, but I like where it has led.

We all know deep down that we cannot maintain the break-neck pace of such multitasking, while also retaining the ability to fully listen to our colleagues and be engaged during meetings. Unfortunately, it’s all too easy to stay on autopilot and continually race through our weeks like we are starring in our own version of the movie *Groundhog Day*.

## Stress Levels Still Rising

All too often, we feel there is no other option but to embrace the pace, but with workplace stress on the rise in Canada and

employees feeling greater pressure from their superiors, the connection is as obvious as it is unfortunate.

“Employees continue to feel stressed despite companies prioritizing mental well-being more over time,” said Stephen Liptrap, Morneau Shepell president and CEO Stephen Liptrap.

More than one third of the 1,500 respondents polled by human resources consulting firm Morneau Shepell reported they are more stressed from work now than they were five years ago. Nearly the same number reported similar growth about stress caused by personal issues.

Moreover, six out of 10 U.S. employees admit their work-related stress levels have shot up in the last five years, while HR departments have increasingly started to look for tactics and even external services that can help to mitigate this key issue.

What can we do about it and how do we get ourselves to slow down and be present in the moment?

## A Move Towards Mental Wellbeing

For starters, we can practice that breathing and consider incorporating mindfulness and meditation into our day.

According to the *MacMillan Dictionary*, mindfulness is a technique to improve mental wellbeing that involves focusing on the present moment while accepting any thoughts and feelings that occur.

That said, there are as many definitions of mindfulness as there are ways to view the world and live your life. What they all agree upon is that the pace of life is too fast and makes too many demands on our time. This holds particularly true when the

‘smart’ technology we carry makes us available 24/7 to friends and work alike. What our technology enables is incredible, but it can definitely leave you breathless trying to keep up.

### A Mix of Pace and Grace

The thing is—as many have already discovered—it does not have to be this way.

I have fond memories of Italy as I had the good fortune to have lived there in six different cities over the course of nine years before moving to Vancouver. I experienced the benefits of slowing down: truly enjoying eating amazing foods, sitting at community tables and just talking and listening. Every moment was about being present and mindful, and it was commonplace to socialize and relax for four to five hours or more.

This did not impair business; it was what lifted the world around it—bottom lines and all.

### The ROI of Returning to Centre

As every organization knows, burnout and lack of concentration impacts leaders and employees alike, but what is less known is that many are taking active steps to remedy this reality.

The Chopra Center reports that many companies are joining the mindfulness movement, recognizing that putting the mental health of their employees first increases creativity, focus and productivity.

Here is some research related to the impact of mindfulness in the workplace:

- 91 per cent reported it positively impacted the culture;
- 88 per cent would recommend it to a co-worker;
- 66 per cent said they felt less stress or had improved stress-management capabilities;
- 63 per cent are better able to manage themselves at work;
- 60 per cent reported increased focus and better decision-making skills;
- 52 per cent can manage work relationships better; and
- 46 per cent reported increased innovation and creativity.

### Mindfulness Already Hard at Work

Consider that Google, Apple, Nike, Salesforce and Facebook already have mindfulness and meditation training in the workplace.

Google believes that meditation can be important for employee mental health and wellbeing. Apple has an on-campus meditation room for its employees to have half hour meditation breaks. Nike has mindful leadership events for its staff. Salesforce opened meditation rooms on every floor of its corporate office in 2016. (And everyone at Facebook just needs a deep breath these days.)

How companies incorporate mindfulness and meditation training in the workplace varies, but the investment of large companies in these strategies illustrates the benefits to productivity and profitability.

### Leading a Change of Mind

As people leaders, it is important that we integrate these potentials ourselves and feel comfortable enough to do so for others in the work environment. Organizational leaders and HR professionals have a pivotal role to play in helping to create a safe workplace and welcoming corporate culture—and mindfulness and meditation can only help.

Mindfulness can help make company managers calmer and more aware of their interactions with colleagues and direct reports, while making staff more efficient in today’s fast-paced and over-stimulated workplaces.

This is because mindfulness helps prevent people from multitasking, which according to scientists is both impossible and a key driver of underperformance. Studies have shown that multitasking leads to poor critical decision-making, low productivity and hours of wasted time.

**“Putting the  
mental health  
of their  
employees first  
increases creativity,  
focus, and  
productivity.”**

### A Change of Focus

As a result of a growing awareness of the importance of mental health and well-being in the workplace, there is a shift away from employers’ traditional response to helping their staff manage fast-paced and stressful work environments. Companies are now moving towards helping workers develop techniques that specifically manage stress rather than workloads.

Mindfulness is an approach to balancing work and time in a way that allows the mind to focus on one task at a time, and to help people understand the full implications

of their actions and decisions.

Simply put, mindfulness is about awareness, concentrating on the moment to allow greater meaning into our lives. It is also an essential tool for returning ourselves, teams and organizations to centre and leading us collectively forward.

### Make More of Less

Every HR professional will agree that less stressed, healthier, more satisfied, better rested and more focused employees create a win-win situation for everybody. HR is the catalyst to championing and implementing this, which in turn helps maintain the important balance and harmony between the employees and the organization.

I challenge you to disengage your autopilot, to find a way to rediscover your focus, to pause and take back your time...in every moment. **🧘**

Garry Priam, B.Sc., Certified PROSCI™ Change Management Practitioner, Adv. Project Mgmt., is an international keynote speaker, corporate trainer, project manager, Italian author and owner of Mossa International Incorporated (mossa-intl.com) which specializes in organizational leadership, change management, team growth and corporate culture development solutions.



By **Ali Najaf**

**I**N RECENT YEARS, THE CANADIAN WORKFORCE HAS SEEN A RISE IN immigrant workers from different parts of the world, at various organizational levels, in both the public and private sectors. At the same time, most companies are making significant efforts to promote diversity and inclusion—in its multitude of formats, including gender, generations, culture, orientation, mindset—allowing employees to proudly share with others who they are and what they represent.

As a result, the workforce is now more diverse, and people are more open and comfortable talking about their personal and professional lives. However, diversity can only prevail in an organization if a mindful effort is made to ensure that it is implemented throughout and in full spirit—rather than for the sake of corporate numbers.

That said, let's explore some of the different ways organizations can set the tone to allow diversity to not only prevail, but flourish.

### **Make Diversity Meaningful and Visible**

Companies need to include diversity and inclusion as one of the fundamental pillars of their organizational culture. In order to achieve that goal in an organization, one person from the executive leadership team should take the ownership interest as a sponsor of implementation to ensure that all available resources are being deployed—and so that a thorough policy is developed and followed throughout the organization.

A company-wide study also needs to be conducted—whether through focus groups or surveys—to understand the demographics of the employee population, and to learn from them how they can be best supported. This gives employees the opportunity to share openly with their managers if they need support.

### **Move Beyond Gender and Numbers**

A lot of companies are striving to have greater gender balance both on their boards and at the executive level, but they also need to be mindful that the world is even more inclusive now, and debate should not solely focus on the gender as this discouragement those people who don't identify with either gender. A more comfortable environment needs to be created which is beyond gender, and companies are now able to add more options to the employment forms, allowing people to identify however they are most comfortable.

### **Tailor Feedback for Varied Cultures**

Today's workforce is also becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicities and backgrounds, giving rise to a new language of business in which some words that might be comfortable for people of one culture might not be for others. Thus, managers need to modify their methods of providing feedback to employees—as in some cultures direct negative feedback is considered offensive and can take a toll on the mental health of the employees.

The other consideration that needs to be accounted for is how managers talk about culture and diversity with their employees, as some employees may not be comfortable to immediately join in or feel offended if they hear misconceptions voiced about their culture.

### **Accommodate a Changing World**

As the workforce is getting more diverse, so is the need to accommodate and provide support when needed. Many people observe religion duties and sometimes with work it becomes hard for them to balance their religious and work life. In such cases, companies can introduce a policy to allow one paid day off apart from the regular vacation allotment to observe their religious celebration once a year.

Similarly, accommodation can take the form of greater flexibility in the working hours. Consider that Muslims keep fast during the month of Ramadan, which means for one month they don't eat food and drink water from dawn to dusk; one of the accommodations that could be made would be to allow them to leave early from work by shortening the break time or even allowing them to work from home for two days a week if possible.

And while the religious example is an obvious one, such flexible accommodation might as easily be extended to those with aging parents, young children, or community volunteering.

### **Create an Inclusive Space With Education and Awareness**

In order to create a culture where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated, an inclusive environment needs to be created. One of the ways it can be done is through educating the managers and employees by creating awareness of other people's cultures and heritage, and allowing others to feel comfortable sharing their stories and traditions.



# Business Go Hand-in-Hand

Another thing that can be done is to host annual company-wide diversity and inclusion training to teach people about common misconceptions and taboos involving other cultures and countries.

Companies can also proudly celebrate 'big' events—such as Diwali, Eid, Hanukkah, Christmas, etc—by hosting events at even a small scale and allowing the employees to wear their traditional clothes on that day, so they can share with others the stories behind the events and create more awareness and inclusiveness.

## Be Aware of the World (as it Happens)

Knowing what is going on in the world is more important than ever with a diverse workforce—whose friends and family span countries and continents. Managers need to stay aware of the fact that something 'in the news' almost always hits far closer to home in a diverse workforce. What can have a huge positive impact is if the managers are aware and able to talk to employees and provide support should such an event occur. A manager need only share that they are in the know and available to provide support to have a huge impact in such cases, to say nothing of increasing employee loyalty and embodying the inclusive culture of the organization.

Companies can also create a diversity and inclusion resource

group in the organization to host small lunch-and-learn sessions throughout the year to promote diversity and inclusion. Such a group can work with senior leadership to create a list of employees who celebrate various events and send them greetings on their big ethnic days—as well as keeping each other aware of world happenings that hit home.

## Be Lifted by our Differences

Ultimately, the success of diversity and inclusion in the workplace rests not only with the leadership team, but throughout an organization. It is only through working together that a team grows mindful and appreciative of its diversity, but such levelling of the playing field yields dividends on many levels.

Not only does acknowledging and celebrating such differences create a more mindful environment, it brings a richness to corporate culture that both buoys and goes well beyond the bottom line. 

Ali Najaf is a graduate from Beedie School of Business with a BBA in HR and is now an active HR coordinator with KIEWIT. He believes life is not made by the number of days you live, but the number of lives you inspire.

## MEET FACE TO FACE

VANCOUVER - VICTORIA: 35 MINUTES

VANCOUVER - NANAIMO: 18 MINUTES

- Free parking at all terminals
- Free drop off shuttle van service
- Ask about money saving fares
- Twin Engine Sikorsky S76 helicopter
- Day and evening flights



helijet.com |   helijet | 1.800.665.4354



# UPside

of

#HRCNF2020

HR CONFERENCE & EXPO

April 28-29, 2020 · Vancouver, BC

# People

## MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2020

Pre-conference Workshop

Dare To Lead: Building a Courageous Culture Starts with You!

## TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020

### MICHAEL C. BUSH

A Great Place to Work for All: Better for Business, Better for People, Better for the World

Unconscious Bias of Hiring Processes

The Artistry of Change: The Top 3 Habits of Highly Resilient People

The Power of People Analytics in L&D

Rights and Wrongs: A Primer on Avoiding Claims of Discrimination

Weeding Out the Impaired: A Look at the Science and Liability of Cannabis Use in the Workplace

Executive HR Forum: The Importance of Championing Others

Networking Lunch

Employees Behaving Badly – True Stories from the Front Lines

Gender and Sexual Diversity – Why Understanding it Makes for Good Business and the Tools to Make You Successful

When the Honeymoon is Over: How Do You Keep the Flame Alive and Nurture a Long-term Relationship?

It's Time to Thrive

Negotiating Acumen for the Modern HR Professional

Innovation: CHROs Talk Driving Agile Workforces Through AI

Health Break

Rising Star Award Presentation



### JOHANN HARI

Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression and the Unexpected Solutions

## SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

Schedule subject to change – visit website for the latest details.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

Award of Excellence – HR Professional of the Year Award Presentation



### CY WAKEMAN

No Ego: How HR Leaders Can Cut the Cost of Drama, End Entitlement and Drive Big Results

Developing Star Performers: How to Plan for Succession and Retain the Best Talent

Building Your Belonging Brand: Leading Intercultural Teams

Labour Shift: An Overview of Changes to the Labour Relations Code in 2019

From Big Data to Your Data: How Data-driven Technologies Are Shaping the Future of Society, Business and the Workplace

Courage to Care: Mental Health and the Canadian Workplace

Ensuring Our Teams Are Ready for What's Next

Gala Lunch with Dueling Pianos Entertainment & FCPHR Awards

BC 2028: Are You Ready? Exploring Practical Tools for Capitalizing on the Future of Work by Tapping Into Underutilized Talent Pools

The Future of Inhuman Resources: How Artificial Intelligence Will Remake Our Businesses, Our Society, and Our Lives

Depression: Creating A Culture Free of Stigma

Indigenous Inclusion – What Do We Do Now?

Whose Job is it Anyway? Developing a Cohesive Onboarding Strategy

Performance Management: Talent Activation that Works

Ice Cream Break

### DR. ROBERTA BONDAR

Management Lessons from Space

# ATTEND CPHR BC & YUKON'S 58<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HR CONFERENCE & EXPO TO EXPLORE HOW INVESTING IN A WELL-MANAGED, SKILLED, AND INVIGORATED WORKFORCE CAN PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT RETURNS.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



### MICHAEL C. BUSH

*A Great Place to Work for All: Better for Business, Better for People, Better for the World*

Entrepreneur, author and creator of 'Best Business' lists across borders, Michael C. Bush has been CEO of Great Place to Work since 2015, guiding the global research and analytics firm in its annual workplace rankings. With over 30 years experience leading and growing organizations, Michael also served on President Obama's White House Business Council.

Ultimate  
SOFTWARE



### CY WAKEMAN

*No Ego: How HR Leaders Can Cut the Cost of Drama, End Entitlement and Drive Big Results*

As an international speaker, leadership expert and New York Times bestselling author, Cy Wakeman is globally recognized for her reality-based approach to leadership—one distinctly minus the drama. Backed by 20 years of experience, she solidly rejects the 'fad' of engagement and replaces it with a return of leadership to leaders, and productivity to business.



### JOHANN HARI

*Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression and the Unexpected Solutions*

One of the most-viewed TED Talkers of all-time, award-winning investigative journalist and New York Times bestselling author Johann Hari set out to answer the mystery of growing depression and anxiety on a global level. What emerged is a story that has since been translated into 15 languages, made into a non-fiction documentary, and is being adapted for a Hollywood film.

WCBC Western Compensation  
& Benefits Consultants



### DR. ROBERTA BONDAR

*Management Lessons from Space*

As the first Canadian woman in space and one of TIME Magazine's "World's Best Explorers," Dr. Roberta Bondar has taken giant steps in exploring the adaptability of the human brain. A renowned speaker on adaptive thinking, she continues to inspire as a leader and visionary for corporations and organizations navigating uncharted territory across North America.

**EARLY BIRD  
DEADLINE  
FEBRUARY 14**

# Register Now!

QUESTIONS? Call 604.684.7228 Toll-free 800.665.1961 Email [CONREG@CPHRBC.CA](mailto:CONREG@CPHRBC.CA)

**REGISTER ONLINE: [CPHRBC.CA/CONFERENCE](http://CPHRBC.CA/CONFERENCE)**

# Mindfulness @ Work:



By **Nancy Painter**

**O**NCE REGARDED AS NEW AGE OR EVEN SLIGHTLY FLAKY, mindfulness is now taught in schools, used to treat pain and depression, and increasingly considered an important factor in good business practice.

## **Purpose in the Present**

According to Wendy Quan, founder of The Calm Monkey, its most common definition comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn, the North American father of secular mindfulness: “Paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the way things are.”

“The definition doesn’t differ when applied to a work situation, but I would say that the implementation and application of mindfulness at work needs to be done in a particular way,” Quan says. She trains and certifies mindfulness facilitators for the workplace, combining change management with mindfulness to help people and organizations through change.

## **Growing Leadership Consciousness**

Natalie Michael, CPHR, CEO and executive coach at Waterfront Partners in Vancouver, agrees. “I define mindfulness as conscious self-awareness, and there’s a whole spectrum of activities that fit into that, but essentially it’s being aware of your thoughts, feelings and emotions in the present moment. It’s the same concept in all contexts, but the tactics you use in the workplace might be different.”

“My lens is executive development; I coach and work with CEOs to develop their executive leaders,” Michael says. “One of the key pathways to becoming an executive is learning to tolerate and be present and composed when you’re in the hot seat.”

“I believe the tactics associated with mindfulness are key to helping people under pressure to stay composed and in the moment, and to be resilient. It’s very hard to be an executive some days. Being able to let that go when you walk out the door and walk into your home and family is important, but it’s not easy,” adds Michael.



# Be Here Now

## An Awareness of Autopilot

“Mindfulness is being present in the moment; it means focusing your attention so you’re aware of what’s going on around you, and also what’s going on for you internally—how you’re feeling emotionally and physically, without judgement,” explains Marni Johnson, CPHR, senior vice president of HR and corporate affairs at BlueShore Financial. “For example, being aware that you are feeling frustrated, without criticizing yourself for feeling that way or telling yourself that you ‘shouldn’t’ feel that way.”

“It also means being intentional in your actions—it’s the opposite of behaving on autopilot, where we are going through the motions of something but not giving it our full attention,” Johnson adds. “We can probably all identify with being on autopilot at some point. For example, we arrive at work, but don’t have a recollection of our commute because our minds were somewhere else. Or, we eat lunch at our desks without actually paying attention to what we’re eating.”

## Enter the Wandering Mind

Johnson points to a Harvard University study that found people’s minds are wandering about 47 per cent of the time. “We’re either thinking about the past or the future, not the current moment. That means we’re missing out on a lot of what’s going on around us.”

“We can’t and shouldn’t ignore the past—we can learn from it—just as we need to think about the future, so we can plan for it. The trick is to apply those thoughts of the past and future to what you’re doing in the present,” says Johnson. “For example, tell yourself ‘I tried that, and it didn’t work,’ rather than dwelling on a mistake that happened in the past, that you can’t change. Instead, plan for what you will do differently next time.”

## Casting a Spotlight on Burnout

In May 2019, the World Health Organization added ‘burnout’ as an occupational phenomenon, though not classified as a medical condition, Quan points out. “In my own words, burnout results

from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.”

Quan identifies three dimensions to burnout:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and
- reduced professional efficacy.

“Most executives realize that engaged and productive employees are important to a successful business. There’s been so much research on the benefits of mindfulness that it’s hard to ignore,” Quan adds.

“The benefits are clear—to help their employees’ well-being and resiliency—and yes, some would say to keep employees productive so they don’t go off on stress leave. But there is also increased creativity, clarity of thought, better decisions, improved interpersonal interactions and more. It helps with stress reduction or management and encourages mindful leadership.”

### Stress in Changing Times

“Life has become more stressful in some ways. It feels like we’re constantly bombarded; our technology is designed to foster that addiction to it, with ping-pong notifications and all the rest,” says Michael. “And the degree of change, both personally and professionally, is mind-boggling for a lot of people. It’s easy to have a lot of anxiety and be worried about our futures. Caring for aging parents, having kids at school, whatever is on our minds: mindfulness helps us root ourselves in the current moment and stop worrying. It extends to all human beings, not just executives.”

“Mindfulness has become more prevalent in the workforce as a way to combat stress,” adds Johnson. “It has an impact on employee engagement and productivity at work, but also on overall well-being, which is important since we don’t leave our ‘personal’ selves at the door when we come to work.”

### Pace, Pressure and Uncertainty

“We’re all aware that the pace of change just keeps increasing at work and in our personal lives. Expectations around response times are increasing. Many of us

**“There is  
also increased  
creativity, clarity  
of thought,  
better decisions,  
improved  
interpersonal  
interactions  
and more.”**



Wendy Quan

**“Meet people  
where they are.  
Everyone is  
unique.”**

feel pressure to be ‘always on’ because of the advances in digital technology that allow us to be continuously available at work or at home,” Johnson says. “If we are constantly multi-tasking, our brains are flitting from one to-do to the next and our focus and therefore our productivity suffers. The average Canadian checks their smartphone every 10 minutes—up to 100 times per day. How can we stay focused when there are so many interesting things demanding our attention?”

People are also uncertain about the impact of technology on their jobs, she adds.

“And there’s a requirement to be agile, to be able to switch gears quickly and apply different skills or use different parts of your brain. The world of work requires continuous learning: even if you’re at the top of your game, you won’t stay there if you don’t continue to learn and improve your capabilities. For many people this is exciting, but for others it can be very stressful because learning requires you to step out of your comfort zone,” Johnson explains.

### Not That Difficult to Implement

For today’s leaders that has become a necessary step.

“Emotionally intelligent leaders, executives and HR professionals know that they should do something about mindfulness,” Quan says. “Some just want to ‘check the box’ that they’ve done something, say, by doing a ‘lunch and learn’ or a short-term event, but others understand the value of cultivating the practice and making it part of their culture.”

HR and wellness groups usually are the ones who either initiate or approve a mindfulness program, Quan adds, but they’re busy and might not understand the value of mindfulness, so they don’t consider it a priority.

“They don’t know that mindfulness isn’t that difficult to implement—it doesn’t need to cost much or take a lot of resources. Often the best way is to train staff volunteers to run this on breaks; it doesn’t need to be a situation where they hire a mindfulness company and have a full-on, phased rollout approach,” Quan says. “I take employees who want to do this on a volunteer basis during staff breaks, and I train and certify them as mindfulness facilitators, working in a respectful, skillful way. We know the benefits; we can

only keep them by having staff continue to practice mindfulness.”

### The Benefits of an Open Mind

“We know that one of the key skills for the workforce of the future is emotional intelligence,” Johnson adds. “As our work involves more and more automation, deep human relationships and interactions will be more important than ever. Emotional intelligence involves recognizing and managing your own emotions, understanding others’ emotions and exhibiting empathy, and dealing well with conflict.”

“If you’re being mindful, you’re paying more attention to what the other person is saying and feeling, and you’re more likely to pick up on cues you would otherwise miss,” says Johnson.

Increased creativity and productivity as a result of mindfulness are evident in employee opinion survey results as well as the bottom line.

“Being creative means looking at things differently—with an open mind,” Johnson says. “You can’t be creative if you’re functioning on autopilot (doing

the same things you always do, or following established patterns of thinking), or if you’re under a lot of stress or focusing on things you cannot change or control.”



Natalie Michael, CPHR

### A Priority on the Present

“Mindfulness also helps you learn how to manage distractions and maintain focus so you can be more productive. When you allow your mind to take a break, you improve your problem-solving and critical thinking,” Johnson adds.

“Focusing on the present often reduces anxiety. Good planning doesn’t come from fear or self-loathing,” Michael explains. “In my view, mindfulness is partially about realizing that the stories we’re making up in our heads are just thoughts. It helps us tap into our broader awareness, to see that our thoughts are a story or a tape we keep replaying, and it’s usually quite anxiety-provoking. It’s not a or realistic helpful one.”

“When we’re interacting with people in stressful situations, we need to reset so we’re not carrying each interaction from the past into the present and into the future” Michael adds. “When we’re mindful, we’re able to reset, take a deep breath, root ourselves in the present and move forward. That’s really important at work because there’s a lot there that’s outside our control.”

Professional Development

IT PAYS TO KNOW

## Earn Professional Development Hours with our Seminars

Madura S., PCP, CPHR - Member, The Canadian Payroll Association



There are more than 200 federal and provincial regulations and changes each year. Reduce the risk of being non-compliant and facing fines by staying up-to-date.

Stay Current Stay Compliant

### CPHR members receive Canadian Payroll Association member pricing on one-day seminars and webinars.

In-class seminars are offered year-round across British Columbia. Over 20 topics are available, including *Employment Standards*, *Taxable Benefits & Allowances*, *Learning Payroll*, and many others suitable for those working in human resources or overseeing payroll.

Can't make an in-class seminar? Online seminars and webinars are available live or on-demand. Visit our online calendar for all of our upcoming options.

Register online at [payroll.ca](http://payroll.ca) with promo code CPHRBC to receive special member pricing and earn CPD hours.



[payroll.ca](http://payroll.ca)



## Secular, Sensitive and Optional

"Anyone responsible for implementing or facilitating mindfulness practices should be sufficiently trained to do so, whether in a workplace setting or not," Quan says.

She adds that in order for mindfulness practice to be open and accessible to all, careful consideration must be given to the following:

- **Keep it secular:** While there's value in mentioning that some mindfulness practices have roots in Buddhism, practice in the workplace must be secular, meaning without any religion or spirituality;
- **Be sensitive to trauma:** If someone has experienced past trauma, it's possible that when practicing mindfulness and meditation, strong feelings may arise. Facilitators must be prepared to deal with them; and
- **Let it be optional:** Mindfulness practice should always be offered as an option, so people can choose to participate or not.

## Practice and Practical Considerations

Introducing mindfulness practice can be as basic as starting a meeting with five deep breaths, Michael says. "That alone can change the atmosphere in a room."

"What I've found is that when companies introduce mindfulness practice, it's one of the most popular things among employees. It often requires a champion or an advocate, someone who talks about it through lens of leadership rather than spirituality," says Michael. "Being able to tie it to business is a more appropriate frame for a mindfulness initiative."

Many workplaces are encouraging mindfulness throughout their organizations. "It can be something as simple as an employee who's into this doing a lunch and learn or executive teams doing a meditation challenge," says Michael. "For example, do a challenge where everyone has to do a 10-minute meditation daily with the Headspace app for a month before an important meeting."

## An App-etite for Mindfulness

At a time when there seems to be an app for everything, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are a variety of mindfulness apps available too: Aura, Buddhify, Calm,

Mindfulness Daily, Omvana, Simply Being, and Stop, Breathe and Think among them.



Marni Johnson, CPHR

**"It's a way  
to relax  
and recharge  
so you can  
refocus  
your energy  
and  
attention."**

"I find my biggest distraction is my phone," Michael admits. "Now I grab my phone in the morning and instead of checking email and social media, I set my meditation timer first thing. It reminds me that it's a choice I make."

"Many of the large companies like Google are offering mindfulness programs or training to their employees," Johnson notes. "That's terrific, but you don't need a corporate program to get started on developing a mindfulness habit."

## Start Where People Are

As for how HR professionals can help convince those yet skeptical?

"Emphasize that mindfulness practice is not a one-size-fits-all," Michael says. "Some people associate it with meditating on a mountain, but for people with very hyperactive minds, going for a run or taking five deep breaths will appeal to them. It's about finding what works for an individual to reset, gain perspective and be present."

"Meet people where they are," Quan agrees. "Everyone is unique. Find out why they got interested in it and what they hope to get out of it."

For HR professionals, introducing mindfulness begins with presenting options, Michael says. "Mindfulness is a never-ending practice; you never arrive," she adds. "Each individual is on an ongoing journey to bring self-awareness and intention so they can bring their more conscious self to their work and their life. This is one option that's a very powerful one for leadership development, communication, stress management, fun. It's one of the options HR can present for curriculum and programs."

"From an individual perspective, like any new behaviour, it takes practise," adds Johnson. "At first you can be tempted to say, 'I tried it and it didn't work for me,' but the more you practise it the better you get at it."

As with any kind of cultural transformation, leadership modelling is also vital. Johnson says, "One way to do this is to end meetings five minutes early and use that time to focus back on the present."

## Wisdoms of Life at Work

"Being mindful allows you to slow down and focus. It's a way to relax and recharge so you can refocus your energy and attention more effectively. Being more aware of what's going on around you also leads to a richer life experience, whether that's fully engaging in a conversation with colleagues, enjoying the cookie you're having on your break, or noticing the fall colours on the trees," Johnson says.

All three women practise mindfulness in all parts of their lives, not just at work.

"It's simply a part of me—who I am and how I live my life, my state of being," Quan says. "I had started to practice it years ago but didn't have a lot of training or

experience with it. A 2010 cancer diagnosis changed how I decided to live my life—now I live it with awareness, intention and a healthy outlook. I deal with stress and life's ups and downs so much better now."

"I meditate," Michael says. "The more stressed I am, the more I meditate. It's a way to calm myself. Sometimes it's also simply going for a walk. If I find I'm ruminating in my mind, I'll do something to get me outside my head and into my body."

"My extracurricular activities require intense focus and living in the moment," Johnson explains. "As a flautist performing in an orchestra, if I let my mind wander, I will play wrong notes or miss a cue. That's required me to develop the discipline to stay in the present moment. It's like a mini-vacation because my mind is only on my music and not on work."

**"You can't  
be creative  
if you're  
functioning on  
autopilot."**

#### A Healthy Step Forward

"I find it helpful to go for short walks at least a couple of times a day—even if only for five minutes. I don't listen to music or podcasts; I just pay attention to what's going on around me. I set myself reminders. It really helps to take a few minutes to step away from a task and reframe," says Johnson.

And that translates directly to the world at work, as Johnson notes: "Encouraging mindfulness can have big payoffs for both employee wellbeing and organizational health and outcomes." 📞

Nancy Painter is an award-winning communication consultant and writer based in Surrey. She is an active member in both the International Association of Business Communicators and the Professional Writers Association of Canada.

# Exclusive savings for every season



With Perkopolis, members can take advantage of...



**GREAT SAVINGS**  
from many national brands



**24/7 ACCESS**  
to our platform



**CONCIERGE SUPPORT**  
via telephone, email  
or live chat

Visit [cphrbc.ca](https://cphrbc.ca) > **Member Matters** >  
**Additional Benefits** > **Perkopolis**

Enter **"CPHRBC"** + your member ID number  
ex: **CPHRBC123456**



Download the Perkopolis App today!



[perkopolis.com](https://perkopolis.com)

# A Change of Leadership (in Mind)

By Ingrid Vaughan

**T**HERE WAS A TIME WHEN LEADERS WERE REVERED AND RESPECTED for being sharp and competitive, even ruthless, in the pursuit of their organizational goals. As long as they delivered results, accountability was not necessary, and many a company ran into trouble because of this.

Those leaders led from the top-down with an iron fist. They commanded and controlled their workforces and treated people as a means to their end and the bottom line. They were courageous, self-reliant risk-takers who stopped at nothing to make things happen and who abhorred showing weakness or vulnerability.

## From Iron Fist to Open Door

Today, leaders are respected for the opposite traits.

People want to follow leaders who know them and understand what they're up against in the workplace. They want leaders who are honest, vulnerable and accountable for their actions—who admit when they make mistakes and apologize when appropriate. They want to know their leaders care about them as people and treat them as equals, working together toward the same goals.

These kinds of leaders have a positive impact on the people who work with and for them, and inspire people to stay in the organization.

In today's tough labour market, the old style leader doesn't have a chance of retaining a high value, skilled and scarce workforce. In fact, the skills that make a leader successful now are the very things that used to be considered weaknesses to be avoided at all costs.

## Four Essential Leadership Traits

**Credibility:** Today's employees want to work for leaders who demonstrate integrity and transparency—in short, credibility. They want to know that their leaders are the same at the executive table as they are in the lunch room with the staff. They want to see real humans who have challenges and struggles just like everyone else—who make mistakes and take responsibility rather than covering them up. A credible leader both extends trust and is trustworthy.

**Inclusivity:** Respected leaders bring everyone in; they are inclusive by nature. They don't lead from the top, making all the decisions on their own and dictating what everyone is to do. They value everyone's feedback and ask for it often. They walk the floor and are in tune with what the employees have to say about important aspects of business success. They work side-by-side with the team, rather than alone in the corner office. They are open and let employees know what's going on in the business and how they are contributing to its success. They don't whitewash problems, but bring them to the group to solve together.

**Agility:** As adaptability is key to survival in today's business environment, leaders need to be agile. This means not holding anything too tightly, navigating change well, and being able to turn on a dime when circumstances require it. If they are seen as credible and have been inclusive, their teams will also be able to turn on that dime, because they trust the person at the helm. Agility requires letting go of old ways of doing things and being willing to re-invent as business and customer demands change over time.

Change researcher and reinvention expert, Dr. Nadya Zhexembayeva's extensive research on organizational life cycles indicates that whereas 50 years ago, a company's life expectancy was 75 years, globalization and the shift in power in the marketplace from buyer to seller is dramatically shortening that life expectancy. By 2001, that same life cycle was 15 years and today, it is down to seven years. Zhexembayeva says that in order to survive, companies must begin the process of reinvention at the middle of this cycle. This means current businesses must be thinking about it every three and a half years.

An agile leader knows and understands this and is willing to make those adjustments and bring his or her team along with them. An inclusive and collaborative approach means they've been informed throughout the process, so they're ready to change when necessary.

**Sustainability:** Burnout used to be a badge of honour. It meant you were committed, hard-working, tough and able to go to the

**“The skills that make a leader successful now are the very things that used to be considered weaknesses.”**

wall for your company. However, burnt-out leaders don't lead well, and those employees who watch it unfold find themselves afraid of what will happen to them if their leaders implode.

Effective leaders plan for and practice sustainable habits that keep them sane, and safe from burnout. They don't work 80 hour weeks—an old-school hallmark; instead, they prioritize family, do things they love outside of work, take care of themselves physically and emotionally, engage in healthy social activities, and often have a deep faith or spiritual connection that sustains and guides them in their actions. In a turbulent, changing, challenging environment, only those leaders who are committed to personal sustainability will survive and thrive.

### Unlocking Mindful Leadership

The challenge with stepping into this type of leadership mindset is that it's often easier (and faster) to just do things yourself rather than include your team. It takes less effort to simply assign tasks—even if people don't know why they are doing them.

Moreover, change is hard, and who wants to reinvent themselves every three and a half years? It's exhausting.

Perhaps the better question is, 'What happens if I don't?'

Here are some questions that can lead you towards becoming more mindful, understanding the importance and growing your leadership effectiveness.

**#1. How credible are you?** Do you do what you say you will do? Do you regularly extend trust to your team members and behave in a way that leads others to trust you? Is your character the same in all aspects of your life (i.e. can people depend on you to be who you are in all circumstances)? Are you willing to be vulnerable with your team—let them see that you sometimes struggle and make mistakes like they do? Do you admit when you're wrong and ask for forgiveness? Are you believable and approachable?

**#2. How inclusive are you?** Do you routinely ask your team for their feedback on how things are going for them and in the business? Do you keep them apprised of things that are important regarding business growth (or business challenges)? Do you take time to get to know your team

members personally—do they feel you care about them? Do you spend time with your employees 'on the floor,' side-by-side, learning where they are struggling or finding success day-to-day? Do you openly affirm and validate them for their feedback and ideas?

**#3. How agile are you?** Are you open to change, and effectively keep your team prepared for changes that may come? Do you easily let go of old ways of doing things and welcome new ideas from your team, as well as constantly look for ways to reinvent your business? Do you hold things loosely, so that if you need to change you can do so quickly? Are you a flexible thinker? Do you help your team practice adapting to change?

**#4. Are you being intentional about practicing sustainable habit?** Burning out is not an option, so what are you doing to ensure it doesn't happen to you? Are you managing your workload so that it's balanced with family and personal time? Do you spend time doing things you love

to do, just because you love to do it? Do you have hobbies and interests outside of work? Do you practice meditation, mindfulness, prayer, or other soul-sustaining habits? Do you make time for friends and social activities? Are you aware of what drains your energy and what gives you joy, and are you making sure there's more energy gains than drains?

Mindful leadership doesn't just happen, but that door is always open. It requires planning, intention, commitment and time. It also means sometimes doing things that feel counter-intuitive. The end result is not only worth it, but essential in running a successful, lasting business today. 

As principal of SMART HR and founder of the Smart Leadership Academy, Ingrid Vaughan supports managers and organizational leaders in growing their leadership skills, and building competence, confidence and effectiveness in leading their teams and creating great cultures.

## Providing employees with the BEST CARE

For more than 40 years, Pacifica Treatment Centre has been on the forefront of addiction treatment. And that's good for you. Because when employees remain in recovery, there is more productivity, fewer absences, and reduced workers' compensation claims.

Contact us for the highest quality private care at up to **20% less than other centres.**



**PACIFICA**  
treatment centre  
[www.pacificatreatment.ca](http://www.pacificatreatment.ca)

Phone: 604-872-5517  
Toll-free: 1-866-446-0668  
Fax: 604-872-3554  
[info@pacificatreatment.ca](mailto:info@pacificatreatment.ca)

1755 East 11th Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. V5N 1Y9

# HR LeadersTalk with Michael Weeks: Journey Along the Amazon

By **Drew Railton**, CPHR

Michael Weeks leads HR for the Amazon development offices based in downtown Vancouver, B.C., supporting the many Amazon products used and known around the world. He enjoys the speed and challenge of working for a global brand and the unique HR opportunities it provides.



**Michael Weeks**

## Why did you choose HR or how did it choose you?

I originally set out to be an accountant, but quickly realized I didn't have the patience. I worked for a few years driving a five tonne truck moving furniture when I was in college. Being on the road, I was acutely aware that I was the last point of contact for our valued customers and, as such, a pretty vital piece of the puzzle if we ever wanted repeat business.

The problem was that the company treated the employees quite poorly. Employees were talked down to from senior leadership, not trusted and generally not well supported when it came to safety—which is kind of important when you're lifting 300 pound fridges! I saw firsthand the impact on the business when peers spoke about the company, and was witness to negative behaviours such as time theft and poor service among other things. The link from effective people management to business success was apparent. After that experience, I signed up for the BCIT HR program and never looked back.

## What was the breakout project or thing you did to really accelerate your career?

I've been fortunate to work in cultures that supported my growth. The most recent project was the development of an HR data analytics strategy. It started out simple enough, a proposal outlining what was needed to produce real-time access to quality data. I quickly discovered how much I had to learn. I built the case to hire the company's first HR data scientist, oversaw an overhaul of our backend tech infrastructure and integrated the work into another initiative my team was driving at the same time—workforce planning. Ultimately, we were successful linking to our budgeting and strategic planning process and helping solve for recruiting capacity and delivery. Overall it was a two-plus year journey and an amazing learning experience, not to mention a great opportunity to bring my number crunching aspirations into HR.

## What advice do you wish someone had given you earlier in your career?

Take the time to think about what's possible, but always get your day job done. I just participated on a leadership panel and was asked this question. My advice was to make an impact; it's likely not going to come from doing your responsibilities outlined in

your job description. Seek out the white space, figure out how to automate the things that don't add value and do the things that make a difference that no one is expecting.

## What do you think is the greatest emerging opportunity/challenge for HR professionals?

Analytics will continue to flourish, but I see a huge trend towards this concept of talent marketplaces. Consulting has had it for years, but the notion of moving organizational design from traditional,

functional alignment to self-forming around specific projects or initiatives supports the general shift towards gig economies and agile frameworks. It is exciting to see how this all links together to enrich the employee experience and execute faster.

## With social media and technology advancements, what is your prediction for the future of HR as a function?

I see HR departments staffed much differently. Specifically I think you'll see more HR teams hiring developers, data scientists and marketing folks as we drive towards automation and align employee experience with customer experience. Today I work closer with these functions than ever before. At Amazon we already have a large tech development team that sits in HR and we are fortunate to have a lot of functioning tools at our fingertips that drive our business and set us up to be successful.

You hear of movement into things like AI, but I see that as a long game for most companies as it's such a heavy lift to get there. If you dive deep into your data infrastructure, I think you'll find most companies struggle immensely with getting accurate data at even the most rudimentary level.

## Advice for areas or hot skills you would develop as a young professional?

I'm biased as I work in tech but, I would say learn to code. You don't need a degree, but it helps to know the difference between SEO and HTML. I haven't had the hours (or patience) to do this yet, but the world is moving to tech, and knowing what it takes to automate or develop would be a massive advantage even to HR. I just enrolled my 9 year old in a Coding Camp—it's the new life skill.

## Do you have a mantra that helps you get through tough times?

Tough times are the mark of a leader—plain and simple. 📌

Drew Railton, CPHR is managing partner, Western Canada for Caldwell Partners.

# Learn how to investigate and deal with workplace harassment complaints

One of your employees comes to you with a harassment complaint. Do you know how to deal with it correctly and legally? We train managers, HR professionals and internal counsel in workplace investigations and human rights to give you the knowledge and skills to manage a critical issue as soon as it arises.

## Advanced Investigation Techniques

Certificate

### Advanced Investigation Techniques Certificate

Tactical training can help you handle problematic workplace behavior before it poisons your workplace. In addition to our workshops on Basic Workplace Investigation Techniques, you can take our Advanced Investigation Techniques certificate which includes courses on Investigating Complex Cases and Conducting Sexual Harassment and Violence Investigations. Gain valuable training either in our public workshops or at in-house sessions tailored to your organizations specific challenges.

#### UPCOMING COURSES | ADVANCED INVESTIGATION TECHNIQUES CERTIFICATE

|                                                          |                            |                           |                          |                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Basic Workplace Investigation Techniques*</b>         | Jan 28–30, 2020<br>Toronto | Feb 3–5, 2020<br>Winnipeg | Mar 3–5, 2020<br>Calgary | Mar 30–Apr 1, 2020<br>Vancouver |
| <b>Assessing Credibility</b>                             | Feb 6, 2020<br>Winnipeg    | Jun 9, 2020<br>Vancouver  | Jul 10, 2020<br>Calgary  | Oct 14, 2020<br>Toronto         |
| <b>Investigating Complex Cases</b>                       | Mar 4, 2020<br>Toronto     | Mar 6, 2020<br>Calgary    | Apr 2, 2020<br>Vancouver | Sept 15, 2020<br>Toronto        |
| <b>Interviewing and Dealing with Difficult Witnesses</b> | Jun 10, 2020<br>Vancouver  | Jul 9, 2020<br>Calgary    | Aug 18, 2020<br>Toronto  |                                 |

\*To start your Advanced Investigation Techniques Certificate you must begin with Basic Workplace Investigation Techniques. For more information please visit [rubinthomlinson.com/training](http://rubinthomlinson.com/training).

To reserve your place today, or for more information on the courses in our Advanced Investigation Techniques series, call 1-416-847-1814 or visit [rubinthomlinson.com/training](http://rubinthomlinson.com/training)



Rubin Thomlinson  
**Workplace Training  
& Consulting Inc.**



# Seven Tips to Grow Mindfulness at Work

By **Akeela Davis**

**M**INDFULNESS IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF SOLUTIONS recommended for our fast-moving and changing world. It has its own magazines, apps, books and is frequently touted in the media and, of course, by its practitioners. As always, along with the celebrity, myths also develop. Let's clear the air before we take a deep breath of mindfulness.

## Myth-Busting Mindfulness

Mindfulness is not new. Mindfulness as we know it today is derived from the Buddhist tradition of *sati*, and its practices stem from Zen and Tibetan techniques. As a matter of fact, it was in 1881 that the term “mindfulness” was used as a synonym for “attention,” which is an approximate translation of the Buddhist concept of *sati*.

Neither is mindfulness ‘woo-woo’ or ‘flaky.’ The psychiatric and psychological fields have developed a number of successful therapies based on mindfulness in the last 50 years. Based on ancient methods for “calming the mind,” they have been able to help people with depression, anxiety and a host of other maladies—leading to credibility and popularity in the West a while ago.

Moreover, mindfulness is not about stopping to smell the roses. Instead, it is a psychological process of tuning into your emotions, thoughts and the resulting sensations, to understand what is going on within you without judgement.

## Minding Your Mental Muscle

Using simple techniques, in as little as three minutes, it can help to focus and expand mental and emotional capacity, while strengthening your ability to recover more quickly from—as

well as reduce—stress, and improve decision-making in both the workplace and in life.

Neuroscience has proven that the continued practice thickens the area of the brain involved in these activities. It is very similar to weight training for strength. And while continued practice builds the appropriate muscles, a few tips are always handy in the mental gym.

## #1 Turn off the Auto-Pilot

**Become present with yourself:** Ninety-five per cent of your decisions, actions and reactions come directly from your subconscious. To raise awareness, start being mindful of what is happening in your mind. Get started by observing. Pick an activity you do several times in your workday, or set a few alarms, to act as a trigger.

**Become present with your surroundings:** Our environment impacts our thoughts and feelings. By becoming aware of what is happening around you, you will be better able to understand what is happening within you.

**Silence the judge:** One of the most important aspects of mindfulness is observing without judgement. That means not judging yourself or others. Whatever you are thinking or feeling, simply accept it as your thoughts or feelings. It is neither good or bad, nor right or wrong—it just is.

**Become aware:** The next step in understanding what is going on in your mind is recording it. I recommend using a mindfulness tracking sheet or journal.

## #2 Manage Your Emotions

Anger and frustration are very human responses when you're experiencing difficulty with other people. Unfortunately, unbridled emotions tend to make things worse instead of better. Remember, however, that you can manage your emotional responses, even if you can't manage those of other people. Not surprisingly, practicing mindfulness makes you more consciously aware of what triggers your own emotional state and how to better regulate and manage it. Your measured responses are likely to have beneficial effects on others' reactions.

## #3 Manage Your Stress

Many jobs start out with what is called eustress—a moderate or normal psychological stress interpreted as being beneficial for the experiencer. Unfortunately, due to both work and non-work-related circumstances, as well as personal resilience, eustress very often evolves into distress. Distress is stress that is excessive, prolonged and destructive.

Mindfulness is proven to be a stress reducer. Daily mindfulness can enable you to pick up on the early feelings of excessive stress. This can be your trigger to take steps to cope, as well as to build your resilience muscle. Everyone will experience stress at times. Mindfulness practitioners are making the choice to reduce how long the stress affects them, and to improve the shape they are in when the stressors are gone.

## #4 Practice Mindful Communication

Mindful communication is a game changer in terms of relationships everywhere. In the workplace, the barriers to communication include disinterest, interruption, focus, body language, lack of clarity and, sometimes, dishonesty. Mindful communications start with becoming present and clearing the mind of distractions. Be aware that your body language indicates that you are fully present and listening. Know the intention of the conversation, whether the speaker or the listener. Clarify rather than make assumptions about the meaning you understand, and any actions and responses that are the result of the conversation.

Even if you are not able to give the person what they wanted, studies have proven that being listened to, really listened to, makes up for many disappointments.

## #5 Stop Trying to Multitask

Studies at Stanford University show that multitasking kills your performance and may even damage your brain. Researchers at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom compared the amount of time people spend on multiple devices (such as texting while watching TV) to MRI scans of their brains. They found that high multitaskers had less brain density in the anterior cingulate cortex, a region responsible for empathy, as well as cognitive and emotional control.

Doing each task mindfully gives us better recall and a greater ability to understand and formulate appropriate responses, as well as greater productivity than with multitasking.

**“It is neither  
good or bad,  
nor right  
or wrong.  
It just is.”**

If you get bored doing one thing for a long time, you can still ‘uni-task’ with a timer. Set it to anywhere from 20 to 55 minutes to work on one task. Take a five minute break in between each task for a mindful clearing exercise.

## #6 Focus Intent for Productivity

One of the most powerful practices is being intentional. If you are clear on what you want from your day, your relationship, your job, a conversation, or anything you are involved in, there is a much better chance of actually achieving it. The technique I favour is to write my most important intentions in order to identify what could stop me fulfilling the intention, and formulating alternatives and contingency plans to keep me on track.

## #7 Elevate Conflict Management

While conflict is a fact of life, it can damage relationships. Similarly, avoiding conflict by leaving things unsaid can create resentments, anxiety and further tension, which can also negatively impact relationships. This makes mindfulness invaluable in dealing with conflict, if you:

- Step into the present moment with an open mind;
- Consciously free yourself from past baggage for this meeting;
- Leave the judge out of the meeting, as best as you can;
- Don't assume, and always clarify, even if you believe you know what was meant;
- Deal with any issues that arise if and when they actually do so; and
- Make sure your body language is open and respectful.

## A Caveat in VUCA Times

In the last 10 years the role of mindfulness in the workplace has become an important topic for researchers and recent studies show significant improvements in well-being, job satisfaction, job performance and emotional regulation as a result of mindfulness.

However, it would be erroneous to leave you with the impression that mindfulness is THE answer. Mindfulness is part of the answer for employers and employees looking for productivity, wellbeing and engagement in the workplace. The whole picture is an interweaving of self-awareness, motivation, mindfulness, resilience and emotional intelligence.

All of those soft skills are necessary to navigate the Vulnerable, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world we live in. As technology continues to grow and dominate, it is the understanding of ourselves as humans and our desires, that will be the currency of our future. 

Akeela Davis is a productivity, engagement and cultural strategist at [courageousbusinessculture.com](http://courageousbusinessculture.com). Using Motivational Map diagnostic surveys, she co-creates solutions for optimal outcomes.

# Connecting the Dots of Care, Culture and Commerce

By **Amelia Chan**, CPHR

**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. 🧠

Amelia Chan, CPHR, RCIC is founder and principal consultant of Higher Options Consulting Services (HR-options.com), providing a wide range of HR and immigration services for small to mid-sized businesses.

“...a culture  
with care  
at its core,  
wherein those  
critical  
conversations  
happen...”

1. <https://www.hcamag.com/ca/specialization/recruitment/ghosting-the-creepy-new-hr-trend/190329>

# How Psychologically Safe is Your Investigation Process?

By **Robin Turnill**, CPHR and **Mia McCannell**

**M**INDFULNESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY GO HAND-IN-HAND.

A psychologically safe workplace is one where individuals feel confident that their ideas and thoughts will be listened to and are able to speak up freely without fear of retaliation. People who feel that sense of safety are more likely to perform at higher levels and stay with an employer that values them. As a result, many organizations are focusing on how to increase psychological safety in their workplaces.

## In Translation to Investigations

Given how much attention that this critical concept has received in organizations, when it comes to how to make workplace investigations psychologically safe for all participants, there is surprisingly little information.

Given the stress, anxiety and emotional turmoil that invariably occurs amidst workplace investigations, this sense of safety is particularly important, irrespective of if you are the complainant, respondent, or witness. What steps can be taken to ensure that psychological safety is embedded into the investigation process?

## An Anecdotal Investigation

To answer this question, let's begin by taking a look at a situation that pertains to sexual harassment in the workplace—an unfortunately common source of workplace investigations.

*Since starting with ABC Company three weeks ago, Maria has received a warm welcome from the team, particularly from fellow colleague Sam. Each morning, when Maria arrives to the office, Sam greets her with a tight hug. At first, Maria thought Sam was simply trying to make her feel comfortable in her new environment, but as time goes on Sam's hugs have started to make Maria feel anxious and uneasy. She is scared to say anything with fear of jeopardizing her new role. However, two associates, Katie and Hardeep, noticed Sam's behaviour and notified HR of what they had observed. An investigation is now underway.*

## How to Promote Safe Disclosure

As we saw in the preceding anecdote, a primary reason why individuals do not report unethical behaviour is due to fear of

retaliation, including job loss, career growth consequences and social isolation. In other cases, there is the fear that no action will take place to stop the behaviour.

What then can we do to create a safe space for individuals to come forward and report their concerns?

First and foremost, as people leaders, we need to model behaviour that is supportive, inclusive and ethical, to help employees feel comfortable disclosing issues when they arise. If there is not a fundamental trust that exists wherein employees believe they will be supported by leadership when they bring their concerns forward, it is unlikely they will disclose. Trust can be built by walking the talk, leading with integrity, and demonstrating care and empathy for others.

Secondly, creating confidential disclosure mechanisms can ensure that individuals feel protected. Examples include an anonymous hotline that deals with workplace bullying and harassment; having a contracted external consultant or counsellor who employees can direct the concerns to; or appointing an internal person who has been trained to create a safe space for disclosing difficult and sometimes traumatizing issues.

Thirdly, having clear policies and procedures in place regarding disclosure, that are supported with training and reinforced regularly in meetings and employee communications, can ensure that individuals know how they can report concerns and complaints.

### Setting the Stage for Interviews

Establishing a safe and secure environment is a critical part of the investigation process. Once a complaint has been brought forward, it is important to set the stage for interviews to take place.

To maintain the objectivity and neutrality of the investigation process, many employers will contract an external investigator—someone who is unknown to the investigation participants.

The logistics of the interview can sometimes be tricky, but whenever possible, meetings should take place in a location that is neutral and private, and preferably offsite. If participants feel anxious or have any sense of animosity at the workplace, they will be less likely to share and communicate openly. It can also set rumours and gossip into motion if people are observed to be having behind door conversations. Therefore, if off-site meetings are not possible, then it is best to hold meetings before or after regular working hours.

Participants in the investigation process should be told in advance what the meeting is about to ensure they are not left confused and anxious about having a meeting scheduled. It can be a simple messaging to employees that a workplace concern was brought forward, and their viewpoint in the matter is needed and appreciated.

### Making the Investigation Process Psychologically Safe

Once the investigation is underway, it's common as HR leaders that we find ourselves distancing from the parties involved in

efforts to remain neutral and unbiased. Unfortunately, this often means that participants involved are left with lower levels of support. With this in mind, a practical tip is to appoint a support person for participants to go to for emotional support and to answer any questions they may have.

Now, as much it seems ideal for business to remain as usual during the investigation, this is often not possible. Depending on the nature of the investigation, it may be deemed psychologically or physically unsafe for the complainant(s) and respondent(s) to work together. As such, participants may wish to or be required to take time off work, or work in alternate locations or shift times. Time off should be offered to complainants who have suffered a traumatic incident, as a means of providing them with access to sick leave benefits and medical health professionals.

### Caveats and Cautions

However, investigators should keep in mind that mandatory time away from work may also result in feelings of prejudice and guilt, particularly for respondents. You don't want investigation participants to feel as if they are not allowed to talk to anyone at work and become socially isolated. While it is imperative to ask employees to limit their discussions involving the investigation as to not compromise confidentiality, any limitations should not compromise their ability to maintain working relationships.

Once investigation meetings commence, investigators should preface the meetings by acknowledging that the

process may be difficult and emotional. Ask participants if there is anything that they need prior to getting started, make it clear that a break can be called at any time, and ensure they are advised the meeting can be stopped and resumed at a later date if it is too emotionally taxing to deal with at one time. Room set-up is important too—some participants report feeling trapped and claustrophobic. Ask participants where they would like to sit in the room for maximum comfort and feelings of security.

Participants may also be invited to bring a support person with them to the meeting. However, it is advised that this be an external support person due to the confidential matters that will be discussed. Should participants elect to have a support person in the meeting, it is advised that he/she sign a confidentiality document.

### A Mindful Sense of Safety

Ultimately, psychological safety in the investigation process is about providing a safe space for employees to disclose and discuss their concerns freely and without fear of reprisal. If you create this sense of safety, you can expect to see fewer extended leaves and reduced rates of turnover as a result of workplace investigations, and most importantly, an enhanced level of trust and engagement from all participants. **11**

Robin Turnill, CPHR is founder and CEO and Mia McCannel is an HR consultant at Pivot HR Services.

**“There is  
the fear  
that no action  
will take place  
to stop the  
behaviour.”**

# Moving Mindfulness From the Individual to Organizational Level

By **Peter Saulnier**, CPHR

**C**URRENT THINKING ABOUT MINDFULNESS ASSUMES THAT promoting mindfulness in organizations will have beneficial effects for those organizations—but while experience shows that mindfulness may increase the resilience of an individual, other broader outcomes are not guaranteed.

However, when tailored for an organization and shaped by an understanding of effective work design, mindfulness may well provide benefits not only for individuals within an organization, but for its work teams and the organization as a whole.

## **A New Organizational Awareness**

As a result, a variety of mindfulness-based training has been developed for workplaces and for specific target audiences, such as managers. These training programs vary greatly in length and modes of delivery (apps, webinars, in-person) to meet the demands and budgets of organizations. In addition to formal training, a number of informal practices have been developed that foster mindfulness at work: mindful communication, mindful emailing, even mindful transition between tasks.

The general approach to workplace mindfulness is one of promotion in the hope that it will have beneficial effects for employees and their employers. Primary amongst those hopes is that mindfulness-based initiatives are effective in reducing stress and

increasing resilience. In addition, there is some thought that such initiatives can promote mental health, and even help to minimize mental illness. Understandably, organizations are interested to understand the ability of mindfulness to enable employees and leaders to thrive and be effective in the work environment.

It is important to note, however, that an organization must be ready for the introduction of mindfulness practices. For example, there is an emerging debate about whether it is wise, or even ethical, to offer mindfulness training if its primary purpose is to address some of the serious problems of modern workplaces such as excessive workloads or poor management. That said, in many situations, organizational mindfulness can at least help an organization to improve how it operates.

## **Moving Mindfulness from Individual to Organization**

Why should mindfulness practice produce significant changes in workplace experience or lead to better organizational outcomes? It seems unlikely that simply encouraging people to practice mindfulness could greatly change the effects of the pressure to perform, or of dysfunctional leadership. Similarly, can we be sure that introducing mindfulness to work environments characterized by blame or even bullying would make a difference to that culture? The answer depends in part on whether mindfulness is incorporated beyond the individual level to the team or organization level.

We can certainly imagine mindfulness practices and skills among team members that could affect team and organization processes and outcomes. These might include such benefits as reduced conflict, improved working relationships, greater awareness of errors or problems in work processes, and ultimately improved team productivity.

We must also take into account how organizational factors might impact these outcomes. For example, the potential benefit for teams or organizations where many individuals are practising mindfulness will be impacted by the extent to which there is:

- a clear, shared purpose,
- a good value fit between individuals and the organization overall, and
- a supportive and authentic leadership.

### Mindfulness and Shared Purpose

In this light, one could define team or organizational mindfulness as “collectively paying attention to the team experiences and their underlying objectives, tasks, roles and structures, in a consistent and non-judgmental way.” Experience has shown that through a sustained collective awareness of purpose, performance, processes and problems, teams are better able to ensure effective team functioning.

Just as one returns to the present moment in the practice of individual mindfulness, so mindful teams will repeatedly turn their attention to purpose and performance. This allows team members to be more aware of the dynamics of their team, and more capable of adopting appropriate team structures and processes in the areas of decision-making, conflict management and overall people management.

Finally, we need to understand how supportive and mindful leadership can lead to important benefits for organizations, including creating the conditions for team productivity and innovation. Compassionate leadership can help to create the conditions for altruism and intrinsic motivation, as well as for

the development of other important characteristics such as risk-taking, speaking openly about errors, concerns and problems, developing better ways of completing tasks, and even for creating a climate of optimism, efficacy and cohesion in teams.

### Of Panaceas and Potential

In addition to developing increased mindfulness in individuals, it is expected that employers will begin to better understand the need for programs incorporating team and organizational mindfulness in all of its aspects.

Meanwhile, given the need to further broaden our understanding of mindfulness in organizations, we must keep in mind the humble acknowledgement that we only know so much—and that offering training in mindfulness simply as a panacea for modern workplace problems will not be successful.

Taken to heart and applied to greater organizational purpose, it is far more likely to lift all boats and bottom lines. Only in

this way can mindfulness in organizations live up to its promise and potential. 

Peter Saulnier, CPHR is a partner and co-founder of Logan HR, a full-service career transition, compensation, and organization development firm and member of VF Career Management.

“Offering training in mindfulness simply as a panacea for modern workplace problems will not be successful.”

## Get the designation of leaders.

Take your career to the next level. Get your CPHR designation without taking the National Knowledge Examination (NKE).

FULL-TIME | PART-TIME | LIVE ONLINE

Visit [AshtonCollege.ca](http://AshtonCollege.ca) for more information.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT DIPLOMA  
Career-ready education | Ashton College

Ashton

JOAN WILD, CPHR  
Human Resources  
Management Diploma, 2009

Vancouver | Abbotsford | LIVE Online

[ashtoncollege.ca](http://ashtoncollege.ca)

# Businesses Need to Keep Housing Costs in Mind

By **Jock Finlayson**

**T**HE ISSUE OF AFFORDABILITY FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN the recent federal election campaign. It also played a role in the 2017 B.C. election that saw the NDP form a minority government. High housing costs in the Lower Mainland and Greater Victoria are at the heart of public concerns over affordability in the B.C. context.

## A Balance of Cost and Income

Globally, the ratio of median house prices to median incomes sits in the range of three to six for most urban communities. In Metro Vancouver, the ratio is closer to 12, among the steepest in the world, while in the Victoria area it hovers in the vicinity of seven to eight. In the heated political debates over housing costs, there is tendency to focus solely on home prices. However, it is also important to pay attention to incomes. After all, in the end, judgements about what's "affordable" are partly informed by the levels of income enjoyed by the broad population.

The financial resources available to people are best measured by looking at incomes after subtracting direct personal taxes and adding back money received from government (such as Employment Insurance, child benefits, and Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan payments). Statistics Canada recently published estimates of disposable incomes for both families and individuals not in families for 2017, covering all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in the country. The agency focused on the incomes of the typical household among families, as well as the typical household consisting of single individuals. All forms of income (including government cash transfers) were counted, except for capital gains.

## A Matter of the Median

The median after-tax income for Canadian families and individuals not in families combined stood at \$52,330 in 2017. Adjusted for inflation, this was up 1.8 per cent from 2016, but it was just 4.6 per cent higher than in 2012.

Among the biggest 35 urban regions in Canada, Lethbridge, Metro Vancouver and Montreal had the fastest growth in median after-tax income between 2012 and 2017. Calgary and Edmonton posted the weakest growth over the same period—with the oil price collapse of 2014-15 being a key factor behind their poor showing.

The accompanying table provides data on median household income for the four CMAs located in British Columbia, several other cities, and Canada as a whole. The highest median income in "urban B.C." is found in the Capital Region (Victoria), followed by Kelowna, Greater Vancouver and Abbotsford-Mission. All four British Columbia CMAs recorded solid increases in median incomes between 2012 and 2017. That isn't surprising, inasmuch as B.C. led the country in aggregate economic growth over this period.

**Median After-Tax Income\*,  
Census Families and Individuals,  
Select Canadian CMAs, 2017**

|                    |          |                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Calgary            | \$63,830 | Victoria           | \$55,800 |
| Edmonton           | \$63,030 | Greater Sudbury    | \$55,790 |
| Ottawa-Gatineau    | \$62,100 | St. John's         | \$55,480 |
| Guelph             | \$60,950 | Kelowna            | \$53,740 |
| Oshawa             | \$60,810 | Quebec City        | \$52,790 |
| Regina             | \$60,080 | Vancouver          | \$52,000 |
| Saskatoon          | \$58,410 | Toronto            | \$51,760 |
| Lethbridge         | \$57,400 | Abbotsford-Mission | \$51,740 |
| Kitchener-Waterloo | \$57,290 | Halifax            | \$51,720 |
| Hamilton           | \$56,540 | Montreal           | \$47,510 |
| Kingston           | \$56,070 | Canada Average     | \$52,330 |

\* In 2017 constant dollars.

Source: Statistics Canada.

## Housing Hounds After-Tax Incomes

Despite this, British Columbia's place in the Canadian—let alone the international—income pecking order leaves much to be desired, particularly considering the high cost of housing in the province. Median after-tax household incomes in B.C. cities are well below the levels reported in the country's richest urban communities, as shown in the table. Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Regina, Saskatoon, Ottawa-Gatineau, Guelph, Oshawa, Hamilton and Kingston all boast median incomes noticeably higher than those in British Columbia CMAs. Moreover, in Vancouver and Abbotsford-Mission median incomes remain lower than the Canadian average, notwithstanding B.C.'s high housing costs and a period of fairly robust economic growth since 2012.

The bottom line is that B.C. has work to do to raise household incomes along with overall living standards. Policy-makers and business and community leaders need to redouble efforts to foster high-wage employment, scale-up more B.C. companies, retain and grow corporate head offices, accelerate productivity, and encourage innovation across the private and public sectors. Unless we up our game in these critical areas, median incomes—particularly relative to housing costs—will continue to look meagre when judged against the most affluent Canadian cities. **PD**

Jock Finlayson is executive vice-president and chief policy officer with the Business Council of BC.



# Dr. Bondar: Reaching From Space to Earth

As the first Canadian woman in space and one of *TIME* Magazine's "World's Best Explorers," Dr. Roberta Bondar has taken giant steps in exploring the adaptability of the human brain. A renowned speaker on adaptive thinking—and a keynote speaker at the upcoming HR Conference & Expo 2020—she continues to inspire as a leader and visionary for corporations and organizations navigating uncharted territory across North America. Through the Bondar Foundation—and the Bondar Challenge most specifically—she encourages people to explore and the ecosystems that connect us all and the world of which we are but a part.

By **Jason McRobbie**

**How did your incredibly diverse academic background affect your experience of being the first woman in space and all that has come after?**

I must say to be the first of anything is always a challenge because people don't know how to frame the reference. It's always based on some other first and people try to put you in a box. I just had to ignore all that—I was the oldest and youngest Canadian women, the first right-handed lady in space. All I wanted to concentrate on was doing the best job I could to represent the country and I felt I could represent the country as well as any man, or as well as any woman—and that was really front and centre. I wanted to make sure that my family was proud of what I had done.

I felt that the training as a neurologist allowed me to cope with some of the many challenges that were not just about the experiment set, but about trying to understand some of the things that went on in space, so I could be a good witness and give some anecdotal evidence about the things that change in space. So the background of being a neurologist played very heavily into my ability to come back with some good scientific observations and suggestions about the way forward for some of the research work that needed to be done for space medicine.

There were many, many things at play in my space flight and they really all came

back to my being comfortable with who I was and the training that I had. I think if I hadn't had as much training and as much education, I know I would not have done as well. I probably wouldn't have been selected.

**As a champion of biodiversity and ecosystems via the Bondar Challenge, how do you think the growing wave of eco-consciousness is impacting the paradigm of business-as-usual?**

I don't think 'business as usual'—anything as usual—is usual anymore. Certainly since the Internet—when everything became so much more available to people to make judgements on, even if not always with the most reliable information base—the world has become a place where it's almost a whirlwind all the time.

So what we are trying to do with the Bondar Challenge—and the Foundation in general—is reconnect people to the natural world because there are things that the natural world does that we could learn from—whether it's flight, which we're still learning from different birds and how they maneuver and trying to incorporate those things technologically in plane design; we're looking at dragonflies and how they move around and how that I think would help us develop robotic systems that will fly independently on Mars.

There's lots of stuff that I think that would help us with our innovation and our

creativity, to help us with our own coping with the world, let alone trying to be more eco-conscious in the sense of being better recyclers with clean air and clean soil. So there are different aspects and we are really trying to get people to understand the ethics of being a human being—to be able to ask, 'what am I doing that impacts another life form and how can I do it better, and how can I encourage other people to participate so that the world is a fairer and more just place for not just human beings, but for other life forms?'

**With change a constant, but the direction not always certain, what are those traits that individuals and organizations need to nurture for navigating uncharted territories?**

Well, first thing, I think change is a constant in one sense, but it is a continuous flow. It is continuously changing, which is more difficult to predict. If it was constant, then we could predict the kinds of things that would occur. It sounds a bit pedantic, but it implies that there are ups and downs and you can't really predict the course of it, so one has to basically have—and I hate to keep using this toolkit analogy, but people seem to like it—a skillset that allows one to be much more nimble in any environment.

One of the things I talk to people about is that you can't be nimble if you don't have a good sound background that you

can go back to and from which you can pull other things out in order to cope with things. I also believe it's important to be attentive to the kind of things that are working for you in your personal environment, as well as your professional one. Quite often what we learn from our personal life we carry over to our professional one and vice-versa.

I also believe that the more engaged people are in society in an ethical human way, it's going to help. Those are the individuals that will bring in new life and new ideas. We need to have people who will come from a variety of sources to be able to solve issues in an innovative way, otherwise it would have been done by the people who had the cloned brains in the first place. One needs the diversity and flexibility—not to be a clone. One doesn't want to have a cloned brain from just one university or one business or one setting all of one's life.

### **Given the ongoing disruption and potential of emerging technologies, how can HR professionals best create/support the sustainable success of an organization?**

I am not an HR person, so I look at it from a different level of human behaviour, how human beings have to deal with change at any level, and technology is something that definitely does change. Technology requires ongoing engagement because technology may change, but if you haven't kept up with the previous iteration of the technology it's really hard to jump a generation.

I believe in continuing education in any business, so HR really has a role to play with encouraging that and to try to help people and to help companies be able to support people's ongoing education—have them go somewhere for a week for education, let them continue developing those skills.

Refreshing skills and learning new ones, if it's done in a negative way, no one is going to want to do them and they're going to dig their heels in or go to their unions—they'll hate it. But if it's done in a way that they know they are going to benefit on a level—that they are going to be either rewarded for professionally or has some application in their personal life, something they value—that's what it's all

about. It's all about trying to understand where those overlaps are within someone's value system and what it is that the company is trying to do. That's what HR people really need to spend the time doing with each person.

I think the whole business of continually refreshing people's connection to a company, refreshing whatever the technology is and trying to be more forward thinking about what might be next, really helps to better position people with the understanding that the learning needs to keep going—it's fluid. Being able to say, 'okay and here is what we will be learning six days, six weeks or six months from now,' is really important because people like to be recognized like that. They like to know what's ahead, what's planned, who's behind them and how much they're valued reflected in what kind of time they're given to learn some new things.

### **Having inspired so many and achieved so much, how have your own inspirations changed over the years, and what fuels you most now?**

The thing that fuels me most now is the same thing that has fuelled me in the past—to inspire other people, to be able to share with them information that they can use to make their lives better and to encourage people to always be moving forward with their skillsets—especially in learning new things. Embracing new information and knowledge is critical, and has always been critical to my life.

The experience of being in space did change some of the direction I wanted to take and some of the decisions other people on the ground made changed some of those decisions I was going to make. I was inspired to do certain things and then doors were shut on me, so then I decided that they might have shut some doors, but they didn't shut them all. So I chose another door.

I think what continues for me is just that—not shutting doors, to keep them open, so no matter what happens, there is always a door I can open. To go into space, for me, inspired me to have an even greater presence because very few people get to have the experience, and not just the experience of being in space, but to have the wisdom and ethics I have always had because of my family. I was taught about

the value of life and to always embrace new ideas, to look and see and learn.

For me, I looked at the planet and realized I had a larger role to play and even as a Canadian, where we tend to have smaller roles in the world, I did not want a smaller role, not for my ego's sake, but because it would be a lost opportunity. So that's why the Foundation and the Bondar Challenge was very important for me—to extend that reach—and photography is something I have done all my life and I am professionally trained in, so when other doors were shut, I decided the time was right and ran through that door.

That's how I went into another world of applying my space flight to life and that's what I am doing now through my photography and the Foundation. There are things I am still able to do in my life to reach from my vantage point in space to inspire others to look at the world and all of its life forms differently. That's what continues to inspire me—to know that I still have the ability to touch people in a way that, without the space flight, would not have occurred.

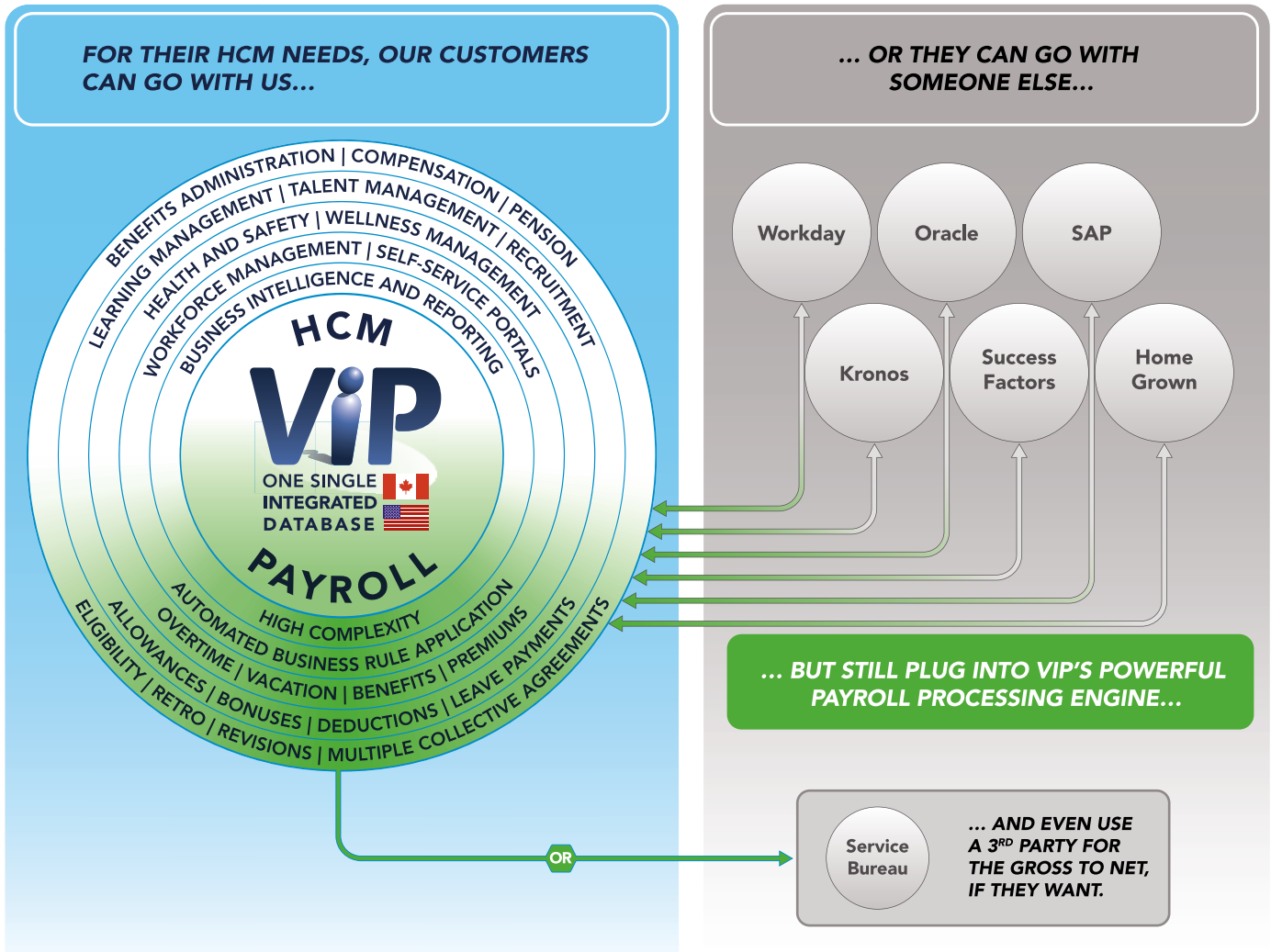
### **What parallels do you see between natural ecosystems and the rising call for diversity in the workplace?**

I think having a respect for the natural world and the vastness of its ecosystems helps us understand, wait a second, we ourselves create our own ecosystems in our business, in the physical space we've created, the manufactured space, and it is complex. This is why diversity is so important to us because no one culture has the answer to what is best because best shifts all the time. We have to understand that better—that the diversity of the human world is just as great as the natural world.

But the natural world has learned how to incorporate one with the other and knows all these things without even having books or computers, so we're playing catch up as human beings—trying to understand how our human ecosystems can interweave and how we can learn from each other. Tying all of our diverse brains together is a nifty idea because no two people think the same. If you do, then we go back to the beginning of our conversation because you are talking about clones and that never works. People who are clones die out because of lack of diversity. 

# HAPPY / STUCK WITH YOUR CURRENT HCM BUT YOU NEED SOME SERIOUS PAYROLL PROCESSING POWER?

VIP's Ultra HCM Configurability is the answer.



The configurability described above is not just a theoretical model it is a real solution being used by existing DLGL customers today!

Our customers have some of the most complex payroll needs in the country which only a solution like VIP can effectively handle.

By extending our configurability to include other HCM solutions, our customers don't have to worry about their payroll needs.

**VIP Payroll can continue to do the heavy lifting!**  
**Why take the risk?**

VIP is available in  
**SaaS,**  
**Cloud or**  
**Private Cloud,**  
**or On-Premise**  
**or Hybrid**

Contact Martine Castellani or Zachary Schiller (450) 979-4646

[www.dlgl.com](http://www.dlgl.com)



**SINCE 1980...**  
**"WE DO NOTHING ELSE..."**



# Getting coverage for special authority prescriptions is like getting a patio table on Granville Island.



Go with someone who's in the know.

Anar Dossa, Director, Pharmacy Services

## Make your employees *Pacific Blue Cross Members*.

At Pacific Blue Cross, we're locals. We know B.C. and the B.C. health care system – including how to utilize our unique relationship with the B.C. Ministry of Health to reduce prescription wait times. In fact, Pacific Blue Cross is first to partner with B.C. PharmaCare, giving Members fast, paperless access to special authority drugs.

Call 1 877 PAC BLUE | Talk to your advisor | Visit [PacificBlueCross.ca](https://www.PacificBlueCross.ca)

**BC's #1 Health  
Benefits Provider**

