

Mindful Leadership: Case Study from Mindfulness for Change

What is Mindfulness for Change?

A community of people supporting each other to work towards change in the world, whatever the specific change we want to see is. We host events, gather people, and provide platforms for organising and sharing stories and resources.

How we organise is particularly relevant to the conversation around Mindful Leadership.

Because we convene people that for the most part have a regular mindfulness or related practice - yoga, tai chi, embodied awareness practices - we get to see what cultures can be like when the whole group is high in mindfulness, yet applying themselves to work in the world.

One of the ways that mindfulness can lead to change is through transforming not only individuals, but the cultures of teams, organisations, and communities. Can help to oil the cogs in the wheels so things flow more, more creative ideas to solve problems that arise. More values-driven decisions, rather than decisions made from reactivity: we all want to make values-aligned decisions, this is easier to do with mindfulness.

Mindfulness works well with other processes - such as agile project management, Teal self-management, design thinking & codesign, Theory U, Getting Things Done, other tools for working effectively.





What have we noticed with regards to mindful leadership in MfC?

- When people turn up with an assumption that it will be a mindful gathering / event, they show up with an open heart, curiosity, and these things seem to enable community to flow better.
- Mindful people tend to be easy and enjoyable to lead, but have different needs - less reactivity, but more responsiveness. Need to adapt for this. Paradigm shift from command and control to sense and respond. Leading with, supporting, and coaching, rather than telling people what to do and checking up on them. Mindful people able to be aware of what is going on, both internally and situationally, and direct their attention in useful ways.
- Distinction between leaders and followers is transformed - anyone can be a leader, becomes more about people stepping up at right times to give their gifts, i.e. working from their particular strengths at a particular time.
- Meetings very different - not shouting to be heard, but people chiming in at "just the right time". Generally start with short 2 minute meditation to get centred, will have periodic mini-meditations or movement / energiser breaks to keep the energy flowing. When at its best, meetings just seem to flow, everything that needs to be said is said, tasks flow, we enjoy spending time together and work is done effectively. Tendency to sense and respond - when people are mindful, happy to sit and listen until feel a call to speak, then will say something. Spaciousness is really valued, meetings don't go so well when we are rushed or there is a lack of spaciousness.
- General lack of egos. People not in it for credit, don't tend to suck energy from you.
- Conflict handled more assertively, less of an issue. Not avoided, but also not made a bigger deal than it needs to be.
- Leadership becomes more about convening than ordering, and so the invitation to the gathering becomes more and more important: it's important to think carefully about the invitation, and then embody that invitation at the gathering itself. The invitation we've been making seems to draw a

really diverse group of people - ages, gender balance. Something in the inquiry resonates across sectors, ethnicities.

- Finally: it is possible to work incredibly effectively and enjoy it immensely at the same time - we've experienced it! One of the keys is more people in your team or community who have a regular, genuine practice that nourishes them.



Do you trust? A challenge to mindful leaders about trust in organisations:

A fundamental assumption underlying organisations is trust / lack of trust. We find that many rules and processes that aim to control behaviour in organisations can be put down to a lack of trust. Ask the question: would this rule / policy / procedure exist if we all trusted one another? If the answer is no then indicates there is most likely an underlying assumption that people are not trustworthy.

We can often spend a lot of time, energy, and resources developing and enforcing procedures to cover this fundamental lack of trust. It feels far better to work in a high trust environment, and in our experience it produces better work outcomes too. Why, then, don't we spend more time working on boosting internal trust and addressing factors that get in the way of trust?

Invitation: To anyone who wants to contribute to wider change in the world, starting from inner practice: Come meet people in our community - meet people for coffee and a chat, come to an event / meetup / hui, join the Facebook group, sign up to newsletter on website. Get involved to the extent that feels right to you.



Hui food is delicious: nourishing the conditions for change

Here are some of the working groups and projects currently happening if you'd like to know more:

- Working group on wellbeing / empathy / kindness / mindfulness in the public sector.
- Working group on "healing healthcare" - systemic change in the healthcare sector.
- Bunch of different projects worked on by members of the community - e.g. The Mindful Leaders Conference, Mindful at Work, Ovio, The Tech Between, CoLiberate (Mental Health Gym), The Good Registry, Human Skills, Space Yoga Studio, Empower Yoga Studio.
- Bring energy, openness, a willingness to meet people, and the gifts that you already have - that's all you need to get involved.
- Also, consulting work / mindfulness training for you or your organisation: MfC as an organisation doesn't do training or consulting, but a number of our members do, so can recommend people to you.
- Contact: team@mindfulnessforchange.co.nz for details, join Facebook group ("Mindfulness for Change Community"), or sign up for newsletter at www.mindfulnessforchange.co.nz