Chapter 6
Leading Creative Problem Solving:
A Mindfulness Intervention

Crystal Yolande Herborn
Independent Researcher, South Africa

Frances Scholtz
Independent Researcher, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the potential of mindfulness as a tool to assist us to think creatively when attempting to solve a problem. The study was conducted within an organisational setting and aimed to explore the impact of a mindfulness intervention on the creativity of leaders. A mixed methods research strategy was implemented, and an intrinsic case study employed in the study. The sample consisted of fourteen leaders of an organisation within the South African ICT industry. The data was collected using interviews, MAAS (mindfulness awareness attention scale) questionnaires, alternate uses tasks, and a creative problem-solving exercise. The findings highlighted that exposure to a brief mindfulness intervention seems to have positively impacted the dispositional mindfulness of leaders, as well as appear to have positively impacted their ability to creatively solve a problem. Participants highlighted the notion of pausing, reflecting, and resetting when dealing with daily challenges, which resulted in the PRR model being constructed.

INTRODUCTION

Creative problem solving is needed if we are going to address the complex and pressing challenges that the world is facing. It is therefore of utmost importance that we ask pertinent questions regarding our ability as humans to solve problems creatively. What are the keys to unlocking the creative problem-solving potential of man? Are there tools or habits that assist the human brain to ignite creativity? The chapter will focus on the link between mindful leadership interventions and the ability of leaders to creatively solve problems.

BACKGROUND

Individuals have an astounding twelve thousand to fifty thousand thoughts a day; this, coupled with the fact that the human mind wanders an approximate 46.9% of the time, attests to the notion that a person has a full mind (Shapiro, 2014). Individuals are required to function with these *full minds* in both their personal and professional lives. Shapiro (2014) contends that the practice of mindfulness could be used to mitigate the automaticity with which many individuals have conducted their lives.

The imminence of a fifth Industrial Revolution, coupled with the fact that the business world has to adjust to a rampant evolution in technology, buttresses the need for leaders who are not only mindful and resilient but perhaps even more importantly creative. The role of creativity and innovation as essential factors influencing the success of organisations has been evidenced by various scholars (Khalili, 2016; Gisbert-Lopez et al., 2014). Baas et al. (2008) contended that in order to survive and remain prosperous in a fast-evolving technological world, creativity is vital; this involves novel ideas being generated and innovative products and services being created. Baas et al. (2008) asserted that the relationship between mindfulness and creativity has been neglected in research.

Creativity and innovation are key drivers of success within organisations (Khalili, 2016). This, coupled with the fact that the business world is having to adjust to rapid technological evolution, and a greater drive toward digitisation, further highlights the need for leaders who are creative and innovative. The researchers assert that creativity and innovation are imperative to ensure the sustainability and competitive advantage of organisations. The importance of creativity and innovation is supported by Gisbert-Lopez et al. (2014) who postulated that these qualities are pivotal for the establishment of competitive advantage.

Studies have provided evidence that mindfulness within an organisational context could impact the bottom line of organisations, while also offering an array of benefits, which include improvements in a range of workplace outcomes (Dane & Brummel, 2014). Some of these positive outcomes include greater job satisfaction, increased productivity, reduced staff turnover, and greater creativity (Brown et al., 2007, Wolever et al., 2012, Hülsheger et al., 2013 and Lindsay et al., 2018). However, for the purposes of this chapter, the potential of increasing creativity using mindfulness is the focus point. The research objective of this chapter is to explore the impact of a mindfulness intervention on the creativity and perceptions of leaders in a telecommunications company. The chapter aims to explore after having been exposed to a mindfulness intervention, will leaders within the telecommunications industry be able to use creativity when solving a problem.

Defining Mindfulness

Mindfulness has evolved from being a Buddhist-based tradition (Creswell, 2017) formerly regarded by many as esoteric, however, research now consider it as a non-secular practise (rather than a theory). Mindfulness is the quality of consciousness or "the cognitive ability to pay attention to the present moment without judgement or attachment to a desired outcome" (Keller et al., 2017 p.95). Mindfulness enables a person to cultivate an awareness of purpose in the present moment, allowing him-/herself to experience moment for moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Two key facets of mindfulness are focused attention and open awareness. Focused attention refers to directing attention on a designated object such as breath. If a thought enters the mind, the person redirects the attention back to their breath without engaging with that thought. Open awareness refers to awareness as an open field, so the person may be aware of thoughts arising but doesn't settle on a particular thought (Connell & Thaarup, 2014). Adopting these

Related Content

An SOA-Based Architecture to Share Medical Data with Privacy Preservation

Mahmoud Barhamgi, Djamal Benslimane, Chirine Ghediraand Brahim Medjahed (2011). *International Journal of Organizational and Collective Intelligence (pp. 11-26).*

www.irma-international.org/article/soa-based-architecture-share-medical/56341

Societal Shutdown and Reopening and Reclosing in the U.S. as Expressed in Social Imagery Narratives: COVID-19 Pandemic Seven/Eight Months In

Shalin Hai-Jew (2021). *Handbook of Research on Using Global Collective Intelligence and Creativity to Solve Wicked Problems (pp. 335-453).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/societal-shutdown-and-reopening-and-reclosing-in-the-us-as-expressed-in-social-imagery-narratives/266794

Networks Do Matter: The Socially Motivated Design of a 3D Race Controller Using Cultural Algorithms

Robert G. Reynoldsand Leonard Kinniard-Heether (2012). *Innovations and Developments of Swarm Intelligence Applications (pp. 235-257).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/networks-matter-socially-motivated-design/65816

Opinion on Different Classification Algorithms Used in Internet of Things Environment for Large Data Set

Akhil Bansal, Piyush Kumar Shuklaand Manish Kumar Ahirwar (2019). *International Journal of Organizational and Collective Intelligence (pp. 51-60).*

www.irma-international.org/article/opinion-on-different-classification-algorithms-used-in-internet-of-things-environment-for-large-data-set/218272

RSSMSO Rapid Similarity Search on Metric Space Object Stored in Cloud Environment

 Raghavendra S., Nithyashree K., Geeta C.M., Rajkumar Buyya, Venugopal K. R., S. S. Iyengarand L. M. Patnaik (2016). *International Journal of Organizational and Collective Intelligence (pp. 33-49).*

www.irma-international.org/article/rssmso-rapid-similarity-search-on-metric-space-object-stored-in-cloud-environment/157318