

## Mindful Leadership Resource 6: Creating motivation, momentum and direction

All leaders need to have the ability to motivate others and build momentum around a shared vision. This can be one of the most challenging and demanding parts of a leader's job. A good place to start is understanding how the brain of a mindful leader works.

### Stepping inside the brain of a mindful leader

Do you ever find yourself wondering "What about me"? "What will make me happy"? "What do I want to do"? "Where am I going"?

Thoughts like this are very common. Harvard research suggests that we spend almost half our day lost in thoughts and that this can increase to around 90 percent when commuting or staring blankly at a screen.

In the mid-section of the prefrontal cortex (just behind your forehead) lies the brain area associated with these 'me-thoughts'. This area of the brain becomes active as the brain's default mode. If you are hard at work writing a conference speech, this default mode is inactive. However, the moment your mind starts to wander it switches on your default network, stealing your thoughts away from your work and back to your 'me thoughts' and worries.

This is one of the reasons why staying focused on a task takes a lot of effort. Mindfulness is a technique that anyone can learn to help you increase your focus and manage your attention – a valuable skill indeed in today's distracting workplace.

Mindful leaders need to have a good level of social awareness and the ability to manage relationships. These are functions of the brain's social circuitry. Thinking about yourself ("me thoughts") and thinking about others ("you thoughts") require your brain to use very different brain areas. Emotionally intelligent leaders use both.

Mindful leaders need to learn to lead themselves before they can lead others. They need to therefore activate the "about me." brain areas. In order to be a good leader you also need to also be able to identify others' needs along with the needs of the organization. You need to be socially aware and a good relationship manager.

Your "about you" brain circuits include circuits to help you understand others thoughts; circuits to help you identify others feelings, and a circuits to help you decide if you want to interact with a person.

Whilst individual high performers may be very good at activating their 'me' self- management circuitry, if they unable to tap into their "about you" social circuitry they will never be effective as a leader.

Mindfulness teaches you to identify your thoughts, emotions and physical responses at any given moment, helping you manage yourself better. Mindfulness can also help you to tap into and develop your social circuitry, enhancing your emotional intelligence.

### The role of the modern day leader

A new generation of mindful leaders are slowly starting to reshape global organizations. They focus on customers and employees and suppliers, rather than simply serving the short-term needs of shareholders.

In the 21st century it's vital to focus your efforts on achieving and sustaining superior performance. The best way to achieve this is to motivate and align people around a compelling mission and values, creating forward momentum.

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Doing so can be a delicate balancing act - empowering staff at all levels, whilst working collaboratively across the organization and at the same time concentrating on meeting and exceeding customer's needs.

In the next few pages are some suggestions on how you can motivate others; generate momentum and a shared sense of direction.

## Creating motivation

It's an inescapable fact that leaders must in some way be able to increase the motivation of others.

### <Try this>

Before looking at how you can attempt to motivate others, answer the following questions with a yes or no.

1. I can motivate people
2. Money is a good motivator
3. Fear is a good motivator
4. I know what motivates me, so I know what motivates my employees
5. Increased job satisfaction means increased job performance

How many yes did you score? All the above are in fact commonly held myths!

People need to motivate themselves. As a leader you can create an environment that enables them the freedom motivate and empower themselves.

It's a common misconception that money is people's prime motivator at work. Test after test suggests there's much more at play here. Receiving a fair salary, having a pleasant environment to work in along with job security can stop people becoming de-motivated, but rarely increase motivation.

Fear never motivates people for long.

The inconvenient truth is that different people are motivated by different things. Some people are motivated by job challenges, others by working with a team of people they get on with. Others may be motivated by flexi working or more time with the family. If in doubt observe or even ask people outright what motivates them.

Research shows that increased job satisfaction does not always increase motivation. If the goals of your organization as a whole are not aligned with the goals of the individual, whilst they may be personally satisfied with their work, they may have little motivation to work towards organizational goals.

There is no quick fix golden bullet available to increase motivation. The key thing is to create the right work environment for each of your team members. If this isn't possible, create a working environment that motivates the majority of staff, and closely monitor the impact.

### <Leadership Insight>

There is no one right way to motivate staff. Here are five top tips which may help you.

1. Motivating employees starts with motivating yourself
2. Always try to align goals of the organization with goals of employees
3. Understanding what motivates each employee is the key to supporting the motivation of your employees.

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4. Accept that motivating employees is a process, not a task
5. Implement organizational structures, systems, policies and procedures that actively support employee motivation by using organizational systems - don't leave it to chance.

## Generating momentum

Momentum is sometimes the only difference between winning and losing in business.

Momentum can be defined as “the force of movement”. It’s no good having the best product but no motivation to sell it or develop it further. Your ability to create momentum towards a collectively desired goal is what will make you stand out as a great leader. But momentum can often prove illusive and it’s not enough to simply achieving it, you need to maintain it too.

How do you know if you’ve got momentum? If you handle all the obstacles and challenges you face as if they were nothing, you have momentum! Things happen easily, one success follows another and growth comes quickly. As a leader you quickly move on from mistakes, and are able to flex and change to meet the challenges ahead. Employees working for organizations with momentum are motivated, want to achieve more, and strive for greater success.

Achieving momentum can be like driving a juggernaut – moving forward at first can be slow. Think of the law of inertia: an object in motion stays in motion, but an object at rest is motionless. Momentum is the result of getting moving. Momentum starts with you as a leader, and then ripples outwards and its effects can be felt by your whole team.

As a leader, you are responsible for the forward momentum of your team; you can’t delegate this to anyone else. Here are three steps to help you create momentum.

### Step one – motivate yourself

Start by creating a vision for where you want to go, and use this to motivate yourself. As your motivation increases to achieve the vision it is likely to have a knock on effect on your team and those around you. Momentum always begins with you, the leader - from you it flows to others around you.

### Step 2: Put in the effort up front

As alluded to earlier, getting started can be the hardest part. Top athletes put in a lot of training and effort to get off the starting blocks. The more wins you and your team have, the more confidence is created, and the more momentum will increase. In the very early stages of creating momentum it is vital to overcome any barriers that come your way. Later as momentum increases this becomes easier, but in the early stages apply focused effort to quickly overcome challenges.

Try to create wins for your team. When others observe that success, they are more likely to feel motivated themselves.

### Step three- follow each success quickly with another.

When you achieve something or meet a goal, don’t rest on your laurels, immediately set another! By all means celebrate success – this is always a good thing to do. Just don’t stand still for long or your momentum will slow down and stop, and may be hard to restart again. Take advantage of the motivation generated by success to continue the forward motion you’ve started. Reward yourself, but keep moving forward.

Creating momentum is never easy. It takes hard work and effort, but once gained, it can transform your organization.

## Building a shared sense of direction

Once you have motivated staff and have generated forward momentum, you need to ensure that everyone is pulling in the same direction. This can be achieved by working collaboratively to build and maintain a shared sense of direction.

Some say that your most difficult task as a leader is aligning people around your goals, visions and organizational values. This becomes even harder when you are working globally. Local employees may feel more loyal to native cultures than their organizations. Business practices that work in Europe or the US may not always easily transfer to staff working in the Far East. In the past many leaders have tried to solve this problem with rules, training, and compliance audits, and have been shocked at the lack of compliance.

In order to build and maintain a shared sense of direction you need to find ways to get all employees to genuinely commit to the mission and values of your organization. By creating the desire to want to be part of something greater than themselves, employees are more likely to set aside their personal differences in pursuit to the greater good.

## Considering why anyone should follow you

As a leader, why do others follow you? There are three main reasons why people follow a leader.

1. People will follow you if you have a clear sense of direction. If you are heading in a direction others want to go, people will follow you. If your goals and match theirs, they are likely to follow.
2. If others see you as someone who is able to make a difference and achieve your objectives, they are likely to follow you.
3. People follow leaders who are trustworthy, and don't try to manipulate others for selfish purposes. Being focused on helping others rather than just yourself motivates others to follow you. Lord Stone's case study in Chapter 4 is a good example of this.

## Leadership and followership

'I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?' (19th century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli)

The flip side of leadership is followership. Studying why people follow leaders will help you to create followers and become an effective leader. Another starting point is considering why people do not follow you, or fail to follow other leaders in your organization. A lot can be learned from observing how the actions of leaders impact on their followers.

As discussed above, people don't just follow anyone. It's no good ordering people to follow you and expecting them to simply do so! You have to give them a very good reason them to follow you.

### <Leadership insight>

- Leaders create followers, which in turn create leaders.
- People will follow someone they trust, or like, or supports them.
- People follow ideas rather than objectives.

## Daring to be different - Unleashing your own unique leadership style

Mindful leadership is about being authentic and true to your values and beliefs. You may have completed a self-diagnostic tool to help you to understand your leadership style preferences and your core values. If you haven't yet,

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now might be a good time. You will find a free basic leadership style preference tool on the resources page of [www.aheadforwork.com](http://www.aheadforwork.com) (Resource 1)

If you have not already done so, use the insights gained to create motivation, momentum and direction by unleashing your own unique leadership style. By shedding the heavy burden of trying to be someone you are not, maximizing your strengths, and harnessing the power of mindfulness, you can lead in a way that sings to your strengths and allows you to be the best you can be.

Take your time – there’s no hurry. Let your new way of leading gently unfold over time. If you get stuck or can’t see a way forward, you might like to try the following.

### <Try this>

1. Settle yourself into a chair, sitting in a comfortable, confident, upright position that embodies your intention to practice mindfulness.
2. Close your eyes or hold them in soft focus gazing downwards
3. Start this exercise by focusing on the present moment sensations of breathing\*. Pay attention to the physical sensations of breathing – as the breath comes in and the breath goes out. Maintain a focus on your breath for around five minutes.
4. If your mind wanders, kindly and gently escort it back to focusing on the present moment sensations of breathing. Feeling the breath coming in, and the breath going out.
5. Ask yourself “As a leader, what can I do to be true to myself”\*\*. Sit and wait for a response. Don’t try overthink, or start analysing, just observe and witness what unfolds
6. Acknowledge the images, thoughts, or emotions that emerge, and make a conscious note of them
7. After five minutes, refocus your attention onto your body. Tune into how your whole body is feeling, each and every part of it, at this moment in time. Release any tension you may be holding (if any)
8. When you are ready to do so, open your eyes. Make a note of any insights gained.

\* If for any reason you have practiced mindfulness of breath and dislike it, you can instead focus on any sounds that surround you. Try to focus in on the qualities of the sound – loud or quiet, sharp or soft, regular, or irregular. Try to avoid labelling the sounds just listen to the raw qualities of the sound.

\*\* You can replace this question with a question of your own. This technique is usually most effective if you only focus on one question each time, Ensure your questions are short and concise and really encapsulate the issue you are trying to address.

## Turning strategy and vision into action and growth

In order to keep pace with change, you need to regularly adapt your strategies. If you want to get ahead of change, a more strategic approach is needed. You have to anticipate trends and proactively define new and innovative ways forward. In order to do so, you must be agile and authentic.

### Creating a compelling vision

Large organizations spend a considerable amount of time and energy creating their vision statements. Branding and communication experts are drafted in to help the top team define their vision for the future in a manner that will motivate staff and inspire belief, confidence and desire in customers. Smaller organizations sometimes suffer from having no vision, or a vision that is too wordy, difficult to remember and feels unachievable. Visions are intended to paint a vivid picture of the organization and where it’s heading. Less is often more! You need to make your organizational visions memorable and inspiring but also achievable.

H2 Creating synergy and shared values



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It's believed that human brains have more circuitry associated with social cohesion and co-operation than circuitry associated with competing and winning.

In order to create synergy and shared values gather together workers from different sub-cultures. Ask them to work together on areas of common ground. Start the meeting with a three-minute focus break (see Mindful leadership for dummies), explaining that participants will be working together for the next few hours, you want them to gain the most from this time and that this technique helps them clear their minds and allow them to do so.

Get each participant to write down five things they feel need to be worked on – each written on a different piece of paper. Gather the pieces of paper and group them into themes and areas of commonality. These areas of common ground are the things to work on first.

Try to work in approach mode. You may remember from reading Mindful Leadership for Dummies, approach mode is when you are actively trying to find a solution to make something good or positive happen, rather than working hard to avoid a catastrophe or something bad from happening. When in approach mode, you're more open to new and innovative ways of doing things. By practicing mindfulness for a few minutes at the start, and between, each part of the task, you're more likely to come at the task with fresh ideas and clarity of mind.

## Managing yourself for peak performance

When leading others and working hard to create synergy, it's really important to manage yourself too. Doing so will keep you in the optimum mind state to observe the dynamics at play in the room and the needs of others, and keep things steered in the right direction.

Sensations held in your body can have a major impact on the decisions you make. If you're holding anger or fear in your body at an unconscious level, doing so can impact on your decision making and planning, even if you're not aware of it doing so. In a similar way, tapping into your present-moment bodily sensations immediately after making a decision or plan can help you recognize how you really feel about it at an unconscious level. If you're happy, calm or excited, the decision is probably right. If you're fearful, anxious or uncertain, you need to examine why, and possibly review what's going on.

