



The aim of the mindfulness project at Carlsberg is to minimize stress incidents and to increase focus, efficiency and job satisfaction. (Photo: Thomas Nielsen)

Mindfulness is to increase the focus of employees

Carlsberg is involving around 150 employees in a research project on mindfulness. The aim is to minimize stress, increase focus and generate job satisfaction.

TOOL

By Gro Høyer Thielst

Many of Carlsberg's products give the customers double visions and make them lose their acuity, physically as well as mentally. Carlsberg's CIO Kenneth Egelund Schmidt is doing the exact opposite as he launches a four month programme for around 150 employees in 14 countries.

"Carlsberg's IT department consists of highly specialized employees. It is no good telling them to think harder, pull themselves together and focus because it's when one relaxes that the solutions come," says Kenneth Egelund Schmidt, who has practiced mindfulness for a couple of years and who has initiated

"the largest mindfulness initiative in Denmark".

Training the brain

The "Corporate Based Mindfulness Training" programme is delivered by

The Potential Project which conducts global mindfulness training in corporations. The effect of the programme will be documented by researchers from Singapore Management University.

Over the last 20 years, Rasmus Hou-

FACTS | Mindfulness

- ◆ Mindfulness is a concept that can be trained through meditation in order to enhance the capacity to focus and sustain attention.
- ◆ Mindfulness is about being fully aware about oneself and one's reactive patterns. All senses are to be utilized in order to attain a heightened awareness of thoughts and feelings.
- ◆ The aim of mindfulness is to become aware of our actions to such a degree that only the most optimal actions are performed.
- ◆ Several research projects have documented positive improvements as a result of mindfulness training, e.g. improved physical and mental health, less stress, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels and an increased joy of life.

gaard has taught mindfulness and is now the managing director for Potential Project, the world's largest provider of mindfulness to corporations, with costumers such as GE and Carlsberg.

"Carlsberg has cut back significantly. In the IT department it is clear to Kenneth that his staff is stretched to breaking point. Of course he would like to ensure that they don't become stressed. When one is under pressure, then a tool is needed that can make the work more efficiently – that trains the brain to focus on the task at hand, whether one is in a meeting or writing an email," says Rasmus Hougaard and explains how the human brain by default wanders between past, present and future – back and forth.

"Mindfulness trains the neural network in the brain which enables us to be present, right here, right now. This can't be trained through physical exercise where the brain also wanders in all directions," says Rasmus Hougaard and reminds us that several thousand scientific studies document mindfulness as a tool to increase work efficiency, focus and job satisfaction and decrease stress, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Presence and energy

According to Jochen Reb, assistant professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources at Singapore Management University, the project aims to find out how Carlsberg's employees respond to the mindfulness training.

"We want to investigate whether the employees who are participating in the program perform better after the training than they did before. We want to find out if they feel greater satisfaction and commitment to the organization and whether or not they're less stressed than before," says Jochen Reb.

Carlsberg's CIO hopes that the project will minimize mistakes and dramatic confrontations because the staff will learn to listen and be there for each other.

"One exciting thing about mindfulness is it's non-judging attitude. I hope that the employees will find energy to listen to what it's really about. It could be that the solution is not a bigger computer, but rather the service."

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Forward-looking executives use mindfulness

PERK

By Gro Høyer Thielst

Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources at Singapore Management University.

"Mindfulness is a nascent topic among senior executives. It's not yet an accepted tool of management. Some senior executives are talking about mindfulness but only few of them are integrating it. Mindfulness is a cutting edge tool that a few first movers are experimenting with," says Jochen Reb. According to him there is quite some successful research on mindfulness within medicine and psychology but

If one wants to be in the game, one has to come into play. In other words if one wants to be on the strongest team when facing the future's increasing pressure on performance, then it will be necessary for businesses to be at the cutting edge with mindfulness and make sure that management as well as employees are practicing mind training. That is the message from Jochen Reb, assistant professor of

"Mindfulness is a cutting edge tool that a few first movers are experimenting with"

Jochen Reb, assistant professor, Singapore Management University

only little on mindfulness in the workplace. However, this is about to change as Jochen Reb has initiated cooperation with Carlsberg and Potential Project to study the effects of around 150 Carlsberg employees following a four-month mindfulness training programme.

The training is to be conducted by Potential Project which has a global network of trainers. Potential Project's managing director, Rasmus Hougaard sees a great future for the specific training of the mind.

"The interest for mindfulness is explo-

ding. The Google search on mindfulness has doubled tenfold during the last three years – however, it is difficult to say how many are actually practicing mindfulness.

My vision is that mindfulness will be offered by companies just like they offer fruit baskets and exercise club memberships and that mindfulness training will be compulsory in schools."

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