

# The ROI of a Mindfulness Program

Is mindfulness good for business?  
Read the case.



How do you enable your employees to be not only deeply productive, but loyal? Engaged, but low stress? Collaborative and communicative, but also focused? For decades, companies have been searching for ways to help their employees lead better lives, whether through anti-smoking initiatives, nutrition programs, or fitness plans. But stress continues to grow. In the new always-on culture of work, it's not just the body that needs a break. There is a new way companies are learning to support both their employees and their business goals – an approach that helps reduce stress, improve engagement, and make for happier employees.

**Disclaimer:** The following brief includes a large swath of research from across the industry. We have noted specifically when the research comes from our team at Headspace. We're excited to be on the cutting edge of mindfulness research, and to share our findings with you.

## Companies are choosing mindfulness

Mindfulness meditation helps to reduce stress, increase focus, and improve relationships, while also promoting a positive workplace.

When we think of learning to meditate, it's common to picture something inaccessible, but mindfulness can be found in conference rooms

across the country. Mindfulness, when practiced not just by an individual but by a company, can lead the whole organization to becoming more resilient and more productive. And the science behind it continues to mount.

# Impacting the bottom line

## Reducing stress for a healthier business

Stress comes with significant costs for businesses. Reports suggest that stress results annually in as much as \$300 billion in lost productivity, almost \$200 billion in stress-related-illness expense, and one million workers being absent every day.

Research shows that mindfulness meditation can reduce stress and can have a significant impact in the workplace by helping people regulate emotions, changing the brain to be more resilient to stress, and improving stress biomarkers. A Headspace study has shown that with just 10 days of Headspace, participants experienced a 14% decrease in stress. A Harvard study even showed that meditation can have a longer-lasting effect on stress than a vacation. Participants of the study were measured for stress levels 10-months later, and the vacationers' stress levels had returned to baseline, whereas the meditators maintained their reduced stress levels.

Workers in many high-stress occupations, such as healthcare professionals, call-center employees, and bankers, have experienced health benefits such as decreased stress after mindfulness training.

One study found that after 8 weeks of mindfulness training, nurses had significantly decreased stress levels and improvement in general health. The same improvements were sustained 4 months after the training.

Employees of a call center working for a financial institution experienced decreased stress after listening to two short meditation sessions daily for 5 weeks. Bonus: The clients of these employees actually had increased satisfaction levels over time.

In fact, in Aetna's first year of implementing a mindfulness program, healthcare costs fell 7%, saving the company over \$6 million. Aetna's study also found that mindfulness increased job effectiveness, with employees gaining an average of 62 minutes of productivity per week. Aetna estimated that additional hour of productivity was worth \$3,000 per employee per year.

A European study involving a diverse sample of workers (including industrial clerks, bankers, hospitality service employees, retail salespersons, nurses, teachers, social workers, and psychologists) showed that after 10 days of self-guided mindfulness exercises, participants reported decreased levels of emotional exhaustion.

Stress might seem like a motivator, but happy employees are actually more productive than unhappy ones – 12% more productive according to one study. What's more, another study showed that happier sales people sold 37% more than their unhappy counterparts.

**12%**  
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## Improving engagement and job satisfaction:

When mindfulness becomes a regular habit throughout an office, it permeates through all the processes and routines, and it's been shown that organizations practicing mindfulness perform more reliably than other similar workplaces. In fact, a Gallup study found that companies with engaged employees outperformed those without by more than 200%.

Mindfulness training for “workaholics” even resulted in less working time, but no change in job performance. They were just able to be more productive during the hours they were at work.



21%  
more productive

In a 2012 study that measured the effect a mindful leader had on employee performance, it was shown that supervisor mindfulness reduced employee emotional exhaustion and actually improved employee performance and engagement. A mindful supervisor was positively related to employee satisfaction. More research still needs to be done on how mindfulness affects teams, but for a number of companies, research has pointed to reduced turnover, higher customer satisfaction and increased loyalty, and improved financial performance.

And that's hardly a surprise: engaged employees are more productive than less engaged employees. A Gallup survey of a diverse group of employees showed that teams with high employee engagement were 21% more productive. And it turns out, mindfulness helps foster the characteristics that enhance engagement, like positivity, emotional balance, decreased stress, and better relationships with coworkers — some of the core tenets of simply being satisfied with your job. In fact, in one study using Headspace, nurses who meditated for 30 days had significant improvements in job satisfaction.

## Promotes collaboration

A brilliant team only succeeds when they can work together. A study involving both small and medium sized businesses found that the companies with the most engaged employees (a byproduct of collaboration) have

26% less turnover and 20% less absenteeism, not to mention a 65% increase in stock value.

### SO HOW DOES MINDFULNESS MEDITATION AMPLIFY COLLABORATION?

**3 weeks**

of Headspace made users

**57% less**

aggressive and less reactive toward negative feedback

**Just 10 days**

of Headspace showed a 27% decrease in irritability\*

**3 weeks**

also resulted in 23% more compassionate behavior

It's also been shown that even if only one side of a relationship is practicing meditation, the relationship will benefit. All of these benefits add up to better working relationships across organizations. In one case study done by A Head for Work, 34 mental health trust clinicians and staff underwent mindfulness training, and 93% reported improved relationships with their coworkers.

In fact, 45 studies on mindfulness in the workplace have shown that mindfulness meditation leads to better relationships between colleagues, which then improves collaboration and resilience within the company during times of increased stress, and this was shown across several industries. And it's not just at work: mindfulness meditation has been shown to make meditators more compassionate and enjoy more satisfying personal relationships.

\* Studies did not use Headspace as an intervention  
NOTE: Headspace is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease or medical condition.

## Improves cognition

Studies show that after practicing four sessions of either meditation or simply listening to an audio book, those who meditated showed reduced fatigue and anxiety. Not only that, but the people who meditated also showed improved

working memory, executive functioning, and sustained attention when assessed on mood, verbal fluency, and memory. Better recall and a better attitude can go a long way on challenging projects.

## Enhances creativity

A stressed mind is closed off to opportunity, and when hundreds of stressed minds are shut off, your company could lose out on significant gains. A survey done by Forrester Consulting for Adobe found that businesses that embraced creativity enjoyed greater market share, outnumbering their competitors 1.5 to 1, and that applies outside of traditionally creative industries. How we approach a set of data, how we tackle

a challenging client, even how we approach scheduling all take creativity. Research into problem solving has shown mindfulness causes a break in the habitual verbal-conceptual processing, indicating there is a direct relationship between creativity and mindfulness. In a separate study, scientists also found that mindfulness promoted divergent thinking, leaving the door open for new ideas.



# Bringing mindfulness to your company

Reducing company stress, improving relationships across departments, and lowering overall costs all benefit the business, but mindfulness also has great impact on individual benefits. Mindfulness isn't something that requires talent. It's a skill you can learn like any other. Mindfulness meditation allows people to be more aware of their thoughts, and thus more aware of and able to control their reactions to those thoughts.

See it first hand by visiting [headspace.com/work](https://www.headspace.com/work).





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