

## - Diversity in the workplace

# MINDFUL INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

## CAN BRING ABOUT MORE HARMONIOUS, HEALTHY WORKPLACE

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A new study suggests the real payoffs emerge when an individual's mindfulness is translated into mindful interactions and relationships. Such interactions infused with intentionality, compassion and presence can bring about more harmonious and healthy organisations.



“An understanding of how individuals bring mindfulness with them to work, and how these practices may contribute to interaction and relationship quality, is especially relevant as work landscapes are ever-changing and interdependence is increasingly becoming the norm,” said Christopher S. Reina, Ph.D., an associate professor of management and entrepreneurship in the VCU School of Business. In the study “Your Presence is Requested: Mindfulness Infusion in Workplace Interactions and Relationships,” which was published in *Organisation Science*, Reina and management professors Glen E. Kreiner, Ph.D., of the University of Utah; Alexandra Rheinhardt, Ph.D., of the University of Connecticut; and Christine A. Mihelcic of the University of Richmond explore how individuals bring mindfulness to work and how it infuses their workplace interactions.

These practices may be formal, such as engaging in a mindful pause before beginning a meeting, or informal, such as listening to someone with a high level of attention.

The qualitative study draws on the experiences of actual leaders to explain how they bring mindfulness into the workplace. Primary

data sources included interviews and on-site participant observation.

The researchers conducted 30 formal interviews with managers, professionals and consultants who practice mindfulness in the workplace, and more than 50 informal interviews with a wide variety of individuals who apply mindfulness principles at work.

“Interestingly, interviewees noted how other individuals around them had noticed the emotional effects of their mindful behaviors on interactions and relationships,” Reina said. “We found initial evidence that our interviewees’ efforts toward bringing their mindfulness into the workplace were seen by their colleagues as having a positive effect.”

High-quality connections are shown to improve individual functioning, and positively affect group outcomes, such as psychological safety and trust.

In addition to mindfulness arising within an interaction, the study also found that mindfulness practices could be used to set individuals up for success in future interactions, such as when preparing for a difficult or important conversation.

“Mindfulness reminds us that our thoughts and emotions are complex,” Reina said. “They are contextualized by prior events experienced within a social environment, and within this social environment, individuals must be aware of both their own and others’ thoughts and emotions in order to navigate these complexities with skill and compassion.”

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