Jasmin-Chiara Bauer

The Effect of Mindfulness on Entrepreneurs of Early-Stage Start-Up Teams

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Abstract

The concept of mindfulness has been extensively explored. Nevertheless, only little research has been done concerning mindfulness at entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial teams. Based on a case study research strategy conducted in an entrepreneurial setting in Munich and with the Designing Education Lab (DEL) at Stanford University, this paper contributes to the literature on the impact of mindfulness meditation on founders. By conducting qualitative interviews with four founders from four different start-up teams, this master's thesis aims to build on existing work by examining how entrepreneurs benefit from mindfulness practices while engaging in an entrepreneurial team. Hence, this study intends to build theory while elaborating the research question: To what extent does mindfulness affect entrepreneurs in early-stage start-up teams? The analysis and evaluation of the results show that five main benefits of mindfulness meditation positively impact entrepreneurs, namely: being present, stress awareness, focus, value awareness, and social relationships. Based on these research results, the author of this paper discusses several implications for academic institutions in the entrepreneurial field. The purpose is to support entrepreneurial teams in their early stages and prevent them from getting into conflicts, leading to them separating from each other. These results expand on current research studies and serve as a foundation for future researchers to further develop their theoretical knowledge.

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Introductory Remarks

It was mainly out of curiosity than out of conviction, when I agreed to mentoring and supervising Jasmin Bauer's master thesis on the effects of mindfulness on start-up teams. At that time I had not really followed up with Jasmin's major research subject – Mindfulness –. I had read a couple of articles about it in the Neue Züricher Zeitung and some brief introductions into 'Mindful Leadership' conferences and seminars. This did not impress me at all and I came to the conclusion that Mindfulness seems to be another gimmick for the Manager's gadget bag .

But the more Jasmin and I exchanged ideas on her thesis, the more I realized that this kind of shining a light into his or hers inner black box through Mindfulness training, could be – provided it is used pragmatically – a tool for the manager's task of managing oneself. And this was a key subject, which my teacher and friend Peter F. Drucker had covered extensively long time ago. For him improving the productivity of the knowledge worker belongs to the major survival requirements of developed nations.

According to Peter Drucker the productivity of the knowledge worker – and the manager, who is a member of this occupation group – can be enhanced through:

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1 Improving the manager's attention (perception) capacity, which also means enlarging his efficiency, i. e. Doing
things right!
2 Improving the manager's capacity of focusing on priorities, which means enlarging his effectivity, i. e. Doing the
right things!
3 Strengthening the manager's capability as fellow human being, which means developing an ongoing wake respect
and openness for the other.

In other words, illuminating one's inner black through meditation could be a tool for improving the capacity of the knowledge worker, particularly of the manager in managing oneself, in executing his assignments effectively and efficiently and in his leadership task of guiding to right action through words and deeds.

I am very grateful to Jasmin Bauer for helping me to overcome my prejudices and for opening windows, particularly for her excellent guide to the usage of mindfulness training for improving and developing start-up teamwork.

There is one challenge to mention, about which I neither heard nor read within the context of mindfulness so far.

Peter Drucker once said: – The corporation is not only an economic tool, but as a social institution it is also a political tool –. Therefore he concluded, that the manager also has to become an integrator of the political process. I think it is time to make this becoming a subject of the mindfulness training. It could help the manager, particularly the business manager to shun cracker barrel talk and behavior while dealing with political issues, a measure for further development of the manager's understanding of his social responsibility.

Peter Paschek

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