
A Global Leader is a Mindful Leader

*The importance of mindfulness for
individuals aspiring to become global and
cross-cultural professionals/leaders.*

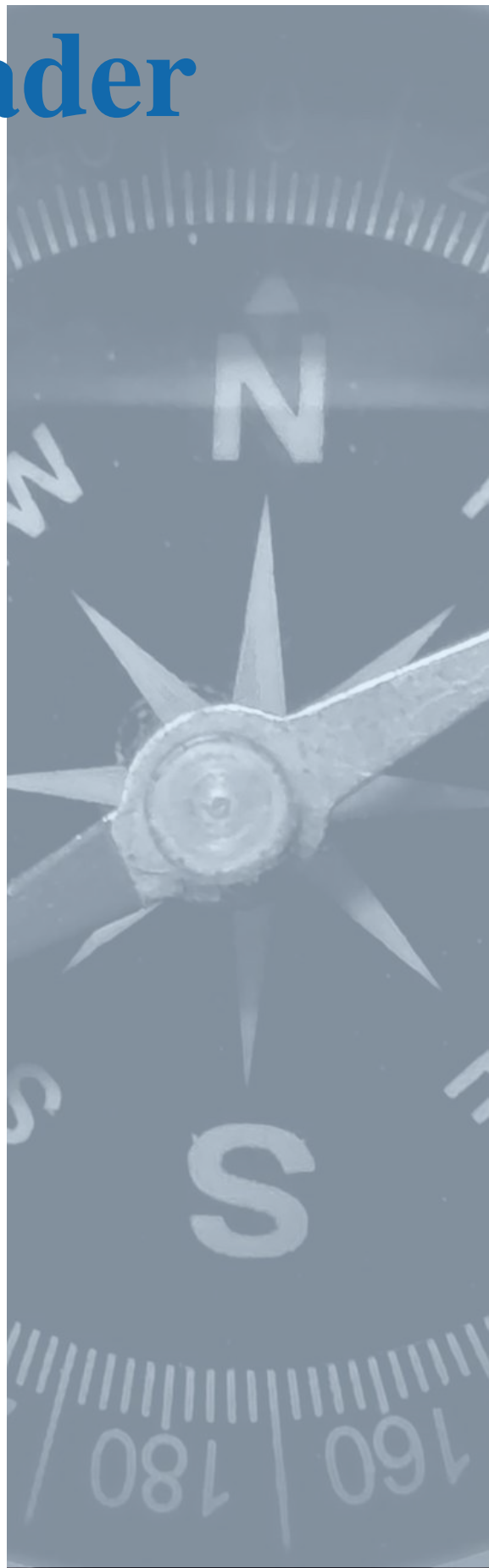
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Being Mindful.



STUDENT: OG

Ivey Business School (CAN)



Article in Brief

BEING MINDFUL

Mindfulness – Being eager and able to understand and learn about yourself and your surrounding environment. Research studies, my personal learnings, experience and interviews have shown that being mindful about yourself is a key antecedent for developing (1) a global and culturally open mindset, and (2) fundamental leadership competencies for becoming a successful global and cross-cultural professional/leader.

KEY LEADER CHARACTERISTICS

- Integrity and Honesty
- Curiosity and (Cultural) Openness
- Empathy and Trust
- Reliability and Health
- Appreciation and Gratitude

9 LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

- 1) *Actively foster your mindfulness!*
 - 2) *Discomfort is normal!*
 - 3) *Be aware of cultural and cognitive filters!*
 - 4) *Reflect on yourself!*
 - 5) *(Actively) seek for and give feedback!*
 - 6) *Set and communicate boundaries!*
 - 7) *Show appreciation and gratitude!*
 - 8) *Be comfortable with failures!*
 - 9) *Accept your leadership imperfection(s)!*
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Being Mindful.

“*Remember your name!*” When I watched a

R TED talk by Binta Brown, a former partner at the legal law firm *Kirkland & Ellis*, it genuinely resonated with me and got me thinking:

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- 1) *Do I really know who I am?*
 - 2) *Why have I become the person I am today?*
 - 3) *Am I truly aware of what I am capable of?*
 - 4) *What do I (ethically) value the most?*
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Despite my professional, educational and private life experience as (voluntary) management consultant, former platoon leader, deputy and temporary company commander in the *Swiss Armed Forces*, business student at the *COUNTRY A* and perennial captain of my handball team, I realized that answering the afore-mentioned questions can be more difficult and challenging than initially expected as our lives are never ending learning and development processes. You may now be wondering why the answers to these questions actually matter for fundamentally understanding what it takes to become a successful, global and cross-cultural professional/leader. Let me explain it to you based on my 9005 course¹ and other educational learnings, conducted interviews and lived experiences so far in my life!

¹ – cf. appendix for list of guest speakers

² – cf. appendix for list of interviewees



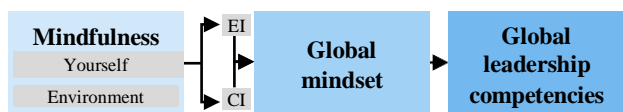
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“The more you practice your mindfulness, the better you understand yourself and your environment.”

- Aneta Kosinska, Business Transformation Lead at NeuraFlash

IMPORTANCE OF BEING MINDFUL

How often have I read in the public media or other sources that today’s fast-paced, volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) and globally interconnected business environment confronts us with and amplifies various (leadership) challenges? With the right attitude and a high degree of mindfulness – in my opinion – we are all capable of turning the afore-mentioned supposed (leadership) challenges into great (learning) opportunities. Not only does this result in the achievement of personal growth and development on a micro level, but also the advancement and a positive impact on other individuals and ultimately society at large (macro level). As Walter van het Hof, Global Head of Industry Affairs and Sustainability at *Trinseo*, pointed out in his guest speech, this is especially important for individuals that are aspiring to get or already hold a leadership role in a globally engaged institution or organization. The willingness to understand and reflect about yourself over time is inevitable for becoming increasingly more mindful and thereby establishing a global mindset and ultimately develop fundamental competencies and skills as a global professional/leader^{3,4}.



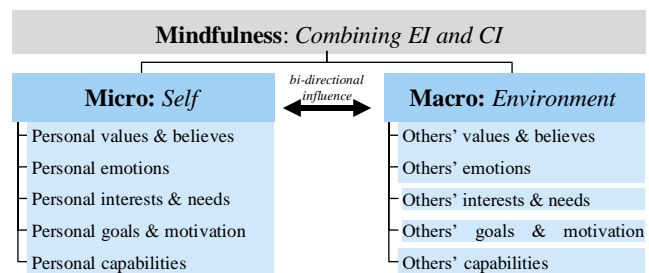
Source: own illustration based on Chandwani et al., 2015, p. 623

In fact, research studies^{5,6} and my interviews have

shown that only then you can truly open up and engage with individuals from foreign cultures and benefit from cross-cultural collaboration advantages on a global scale. But what does «being mindful» really mean?

MINDFULNESS IN A NUTSHELL

Considering Brown, Ryan and Creswell’s definition of mindfulness as “a state of mind characterized by heightened awareness of self and the surrounding environment, and to be nonevaluative and nonjudgmental in experiencing the present”⁷, mindfulness obviously addresses two co-dependent key dimensions:



Source: own illustration inspired by Brown et al., 2007, cit. in Chandwani et al., 2015, p. 619; Tuleja, 2014; interview partners

- (1) *Micro dimension*: On the micro level, mindfulness addresses topics that are highly related to yourself: e.g., your personal values and believes, emotions, interests, needs and goals.
- (2) *Macro dimension*: The macro level on the other hand focuses on how the factors on the micro level then (un)consciously translate into your ways of thinking and behavioural patterns when interacting with other (foreign) individuals.

3 – Chandwani, Agrawal & Kedia, 2016, p. 623
 4 – Reitz & Chaskalson, 2020
 5 – Leary & Tate, 2007, cit. in Chandwani et al., 2016, p. 619
 6 – Tuleja, 2014
 7 – 2007, cit. in Chandwani et al., 2016, p. 619



“If you know and understand yourself, you can positively influence and inspire others.”

- Jana Reuther, Founder of Jana Reuther LLC



Photography by *Guillaume Galtier* (Unsplash)

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF BECOMING MINDFUL

During the discussions with our professors, guest speakers and my interview partners, the importance of certain (global) leader characteristics, concerning both, the micro and macro perspective of mindfulness, were highlighted various times. Therefore, considering them in your personal growth and development process seems inevitable to become a successful (global) professional.

(i) *Integrity and Honesty*

Each person has a clear concept of her own values and beliefs that are largely influenced⁸ by the home country (culture), (parental) education, and broader social environment. Understanding your own drivers is vital for truly knowing where you will and want to end up as (global and cross-cultural) professional. My interview partners highlighted that especially in today's fast-paced, globally interconnected business context, professionals will likely be confronted with

8 – e.g., Haslam, Poniman, Filus, Sumargi & Boediman, 2020; Morrison, 2001



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“Be bold, be real, be yourself!”

- Sofia Diamantis, Manager at Deloitte Consulting UK

situations, in which an adaptation of their personal values and beliefs might be asked for: However, ask yourself, whether you really want to change and be aware of the potential costs for compromising your personal views and perceptions⁹. Try to avoid cultural, moral and social imperialism! Klaus Tischhauser, co-founder and former CEO of *responsAbility Investments AG*, clearly emphasized that only being clear and honest with yourself and others about what you truly want to be/achieve/do is sustainable for (long-term) success: Do you really want to lead people? Why? Is it just because of today's strong competition on the labour market? Being a successful global and cross-cultural professional does not automatically mean that you have to become a people leader; you can also make a positive contribution and be successful as an employee.

(ii) Curiosity and (Cultural) Openness

It is important to not only focus on your own curiosity and (cultural) openness, but also to foster the one of your subordinates as this will promote out-of-the-box-thinking and creativity. However, being able to positively influence and inspire individuals (esp. in cross-cultural contexts) requires your personal willingness and ability to deeply understand their specific personalities and backgrounds¹⁰. The ‘*Culture Map*’, showcasing typical behavioural tendencies for each country, can

serve as initial step to broadly understand how certain individuals might tend to think and act, improving your CI. Nevertheless, as the ‘*Culture Map*’ focuses on a group of people rather than specific individuals, and therefore is mainly based on cultural prejudice, additionally bringing in your EI is vital to be able to fully sense and conceive a person's background and to know how to interact/communicate/behave adequately. Hence, embracing and being curious about cultural diversity can offer great opportunities and benefits¹¹, if tackled correctly.

(iii) Empathy and Trust

Another fundamental capability of a (global) leader is the (non)verbal expression of empathy for others. Ideally, a global leader is able to deeply understand his/her followers and their specific emotions and circumstances and thereby build a trust-based and psychologically safe environment. A situation of authority, obligation and fear due to lack of empathy should be strictly avoided. This also applies to my service in the *Swiss Armed Forces*: leading with your personality rather than your hierarchical level pays off! Also in a business context, balancing rationality and emotions can be highly challenging. Neither pure rationality, nor pure emotion is ideal in any leadership situation. Prof. Dr. Kanina Blanchard emphasized that emotions should always be backed up with (some) logic and credibility. However, as every individual is different, there is no one-solution-fits-it-all. Especially



“You cannot do it by yourself!”

- *Xiomara Carrillo, CSO of StarTech.com*

in emotionally charged situations and discussions, (global) leaders must understand and embrace emotions of others as this potentially helps to calm down the situation. Using assessment tools¹² like ‘*MEIA-W-R*’ offers great initial insights about your EI and can help you to refine your way of recognizing and adequately communicating and showing emotions.

(iv) Reliability

Leading people means being able to lead people into a certain direction with confidence and reliability. Successful global leaders should be capable of delivering on their promises and commitments and gain the trust and support of their subordinates by showing the willingness to go the extra mile. In this context, however, the importance of setting and accepting personal limits and boundaries must be strongly highlighted. This applies not only to (global) leaders themselves, but also to their subordinates. Despite his/her great responsibilities, a (global) leader must not only learn how to set and clearly communicate his/her personal limits and boundaries, but also to respect and consider those of his/her followers. Learning to say and accept a “NO” is crucial for ensuring physical, emotional and mental health of all parties involved. The alignment of a leader’s and his/her followers’ expectations is a strongly related topic as it clearly influences how reliable another person is perceived.

This was actually one of my biggest key learnings during my studies at university: If you do not clearly communicate and align your expectations with those of your team members, you will most likely get disappointed – esp. when you are an individual with high personal expectations.

(v) Appreciation and Gratitude

Being a (global) leader means not only recognizing the accomplishments and achievements of your goals, but also those of your subordinates. In fact, as found in research and stated by some of my professors and interview partners, appreciation - albeit small - can have a positive influence on various factors¹³: e.g., increased (job) satisfaction and security feeling, increased engagement and motivation through an improved feeling of belongingness, and a reduced stress level . In my former role as platoon leader and company commander in the *Swiss Armed Forces*, I realized the strong positive impact of appreciation on subordinates. This is especially the case in an environment, where people are “forced”¹⁴ to work and engage with each other. If you respect, trust and appreciate them, they will voluntarily do the same for you. Because remember: “You cannot do it by yourself!” (Xiomara Carrillo, CSO of *StarTech.com*).

12 – cf. appendix
 13 – e.g., Garrido-Vasquez, Garrido-Vasquez & Otto, 2020; Raza, Wisetsri, Chansongpol, Sontawinpongsai & Ramirez-Asis, 2020
 14 – Military service mandatory for every Swiss adult male




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9 (GLOBAL) LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Based on my personal growth and development journey and (interview) insights from (former) global professionals and my professors, I developed a list of 9 specific principles that should support you on your journey in becoming a successful global and cross-cultural leader:

1 Actively foster your mindfulness
Mindfulness is about the willingness to understand yourself and the environment. If you understand yourself, you understand others!

2 Discomfort is normal
Be honest, authentic and integer, but simultaneously open to engage with people from other cultural environments and backgrounds.

3 Be aware of cultural and cognitive filters
Prejudice can (un)consciously negatively affect your perception of others. Use your EI to fully understand and respect a person.

4 Reflect on yourself
Regularly reflect on your values, ways of thinking and behavioural patterns. Did you think/communicate/act adequately? (cf. EI)

5 (Actively) seek for and give feedback
See constructive top-down/bottom-up feedback as great learning opportunity for yourself and your team (esp. EI and CI).

6 Set and communicate boundaries
Consider the importance of mental, physical and emotional health! Learn to say “NO” to recharge your energy level.

7 Show appreciation and gratitude
You should never take anything you receive from others for granted. If you appreciate others, they will appreciate you.



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8 Be comfortable with failures¹⁵
 Do not feel embarrassed! See personal failures and mistakes and those of others as valuable learning and growth opportunity.

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9 Accept your leadership imperfection(s)
 You will never be a perfect leader – nobody will ever be! However, continuously try to improve yourself to have a positive impact.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Mindfulness – Being eager and able to understand and learn about yourself and your surrounding environment is a vital antecedent for becoming a successful (global) professional/leader. First, start with yourself by continuously reflecting on these four questions:

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- 1) *Do I really know who I am?*
 - 2) *Why have I become the person I am today?*
 - 3) *Am I truly aware of what I am capable of?*
 - 4) *What do I (ethically) value the most?*

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Then add three additional questions:

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- 5) *How would others answer these questions?*
 - 6) *Why did/would they answer that way?*
 - 7) *What implications has this on me?*

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Begin to understand, engage with and positively impact the people in your surrounding environment – everything step by step. And always keep in mind:

A global leader is a mindful leader!

15 – BUT: distinguish basic, complex and intelligent failures (cf. Edmonson, 2022)





“Being a leader is like sailing through seas: There will be rough days and there will be good days. The important thing is to keep on sailing.”

- Sofia Diamantis, Manager at Deloitte Consulting UK



Appendix (1/2)



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

cf.	compare with
CI	cultural intelligence
cit. in	cited in
Dr.	doctor (academic title)
e.g.	for example
EI	emotional intelligence
EQ	emotional quotient
esp.	especially
et al.	et alii/ae (e. and others)
GL	Global Leadership
IQ	intelligence quotient
p.	page
Prof.	professor (academic title)
vol.	volume
VUCA	<u>v</u> olatile, <u>u</u> ncertain, <u>c</u> omplex, <u>a</u> mbiguous

WORD COUNT

1859 words

(excl. article summary, appendix & footnotes)

Appendix (2/2)



9005 CLASS GUEST SPEAKER

(i) Guest Speaker 1: Walter van het Hof

Since November 2017, Walter van het Hof works as Global Head of Industry Affairs and Sustainability at Trinseo, a luxembourg chemical group. With over 14 years, his previous involvement at The Dow Chemical Company has been the main part of his career so far.

(ii) Guest Speaker 2: Xiomara Carrillo

Xiomara Carrillo currently holds the role of the Chief Sales Officer (CSO) at StarTech.com, a technology corporation headquartered in London, Ontario (CAN). Carrillo has over 20 years of experience in 'International Market Development' and had major influence on StarTech.com's international expansion.

(iii) Guest Speaker 3: Rakesh Chitkara

The last position of Rakesh Chitkara before his retirement was Senior Director at the company Abbott Healthcare Pvt Limited in Delhi (IND). For the major part of his career, Chitkara was engaged in positions focusing on Corporate Affairs in chemical companies.

(iv) Guest Speaker 4: Dr. Hayden Woodley

As Assistant Professor at Ivey Business School, Dr. Hayden Woodley is currently engaging in topics around organizational behaviour, leadership and followership. Prior to his Ivey engagement, Woodley worked as Assistant Professor at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) and completed an M.Sc. and B.Sc. in 'Industrial/Organizational Psychology'.

CEMS ALUMNI EVENT SPEAKER

(i) Guest Speaker 1: Dr. Jana Reuther

Before professionally organizing and conducting mental health coachings and therapies for companies and individuals, Dr. Jana Reuther worked in Consulting and Corporate Venturing. In addition to her CEMS double degree master's program, she did a PhD at the Center of Entrepreneurship of the University of St.Gallen (CHE).

(ii) Guest Speaker 2: Aneta Kosinska

Since May 2022, CEMS Alumna Aneta Kosinska is working as Business Transformation Lead at NeuraFlash, a firm focussing on transformation services. Prior to that, she has collected working experience as employed and freelancing management consultant.

INTERVIEW PARTNER

(i) Interviewee 1: Klaus Tischhauser

Before his retirement, Klaus Tischhauser was co-founder and former CEO of the responsAbility Investment AG, a firm focusing on investments and micro financing for companies in different (frontier) markets. Since its founding in 2003, the company has invested over USD 13.4 billion in 74 countries. Overall, Klaus Tischhauser has over 25 years of experience in the finance sector.

(ii) Interviewee 2: Sofia Diamantis

Since 2021, Sofia Diamantis, CEMS Alumna, holds a Manager position at Deloitte Consulting UK with a focus on corporate technology strategy. Prior to her Deloitte engagement she has been working in various other companies.

USEFUL ONLINE ASSESSMENT TOOLS

(i) Culture Map

The 'Culture Map' tool allows you to interactively explore and compare ways of thinking and behavioural patterns of different cultures and countries. Moreover, it is also possible to determine your personal characteristics of the 7 dimensions, the tool is based on.

(ii) CARL Assessment

The 'Competency Assessment of Responsible Leadership' (CARL) evaluates your personal degree of 'Responsible Leadership' based on 5 competence areas. Based on your test inputs, the platform provides specific and valuable insights and advice about concrete areas of improvement.

(iii) MEIA-W-R Assessment

'MEIA-W-R' is a widely recognized, multidimensional assessment tool that measures your Emotional Intelligence (EI) based on 11 dimensions. In addition to numerical test results, the tool also provides you with a detailed report with individual development implications and advice.

WAMPUM LEARNING LODGE

Website: <https://indigenouslearningspace.uwo.ca/>

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