



CORPORATE MINDFULNESS

Focus on Productivity



Solas VR

VIRTUAL REALITY DELIVERS WELLNESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

SOLAS VR – A MINDFUL JOURNEY INTO NATURE

Solas VR Meditations :

**Impactful, Immediate,
Time and Cost Effective.**



In this ebook we explain the science behind the impact of Mindfulness and in particular **Virtual Reality Mindfulness** on individual and team well being and performance.



SolasVR App can be delivered on Stand Alone Headsets such as **Oculus** or Pico. It is also available on iOS and Android stores for Smart Phones.

The technology is accessible, affordable, easy to use and requires very little integration and limited IT support. At the same time, Solas VR provides incremental benefits throughout the organisation and supports better living and working conditions for all.

VIRTUAL REALITY MEDITATION



The uncertainty of current times demands a new approach to employee health and job satisfaction. Employers who prioritize corporate mindfulness gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Solas VR is backed up with multi-disciplinary scientific data for an essential boost in mental wellness and productivity.

The Solas VR mindful experience is one of the few activities that:

- **Nurtures the employer-employee relationship**
- **Deepens the sense of community**
- **Boosts productivity**
- **Enhances mental wellbeing**



Solas VR meditations are ideal for micro-breaks; they allow the mind to experience a relaxing and refreshing time off in nature, while at work. VR technology triggers the mind in the same way the real experience does, meaning the effects of a Solas VR microbreak mirror those of a walk in actual nature.

Mindfulness programs, like the Solas VR app, help leaders and employees reflect effectively, focus sharply on the task at hand, master peak levels of stress, and recharge quickly. On an organizational level, mindfulness reduces sick days, increases trust in leadership, and boosts employee engagement.



As Work From Home is here to stay, managers, teams and employees face new challenges- from team coherence to work/life balance. Solas VR meditations can be an experience shared by team members in different locations, while allowing the mind to relax and to cope with stress. As doctors and other specialists state, remaining calm while working from home is a key to productivity and wellness in general.

2021 Edition

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01

THE BUSINESS SIDE OF
MINDFULNESS



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EMPLOYEE HEALTH IS KEY TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

While it sounds obvious, it is important to remind ourselves that businesses rely on the health of their employees. Employee wellness programs improve not only employee engagement and productivity, but also lead to strong brand awareness. Strong relationships between companies' brand and its stakeholders have become a primary source of competitive advantage. Great Place to Work certified companies are increasingly recognising the importance of employee wellness. Our business vocabulary corroborates this shift, with new terms like **employer branding**, **brand love**, **brand trust** etc becoming the new "keywords" in business plans and on zoom meetings.

Idea in Brief

The uncertainty of current times demands a new approach on employee health and satisfaction. Employers who prioritize corporate mindfulness gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

What we must do now, as managers and team leaders, is to align our approach towards our people with this new framework, in order to become the managers that we aspire to be. In other words, transactional leadership alone is not sufficient for business success. Motivation has replaced fear; empathy has replaced strict rules; retention has replaced turnover.

What makes a good employer today?

The ability of managers to address what **really matters to their employees** and to create an inclusive, rewarding work environment is key. The more empowered and cared for team members feel, the more productive and devoted to their job role they become.

Academic findings show satisfied employees pay more attention to detail, become **better** service providers and contribute positively to corporate image and word of mouth marketing.

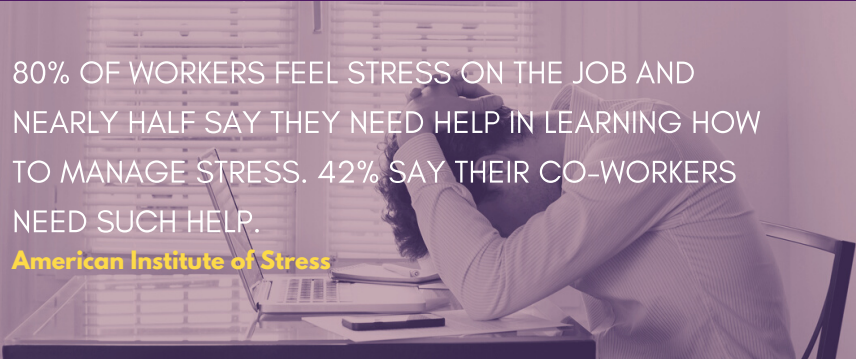
In this context, taking action to boost staff's mental well-being becomes self-explanatory: being individually balanced and calm is the cornerstone of team balanced performance. It is increasingly being recognized that the mental health of employees is a crucial determinant in their overall health and that poor mental health and **stressors** at the workplace can be a contributory factor to a range of physical illnesses like hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions, amongst others. In addition, poor mental health can also lead to **burn-out** amongst employees, seriously affecting their ability to contribute meaningfully in both their personal and professional lives. It is so important, that employers encourage employees to engage in mindful practices before they feel emotionally challenged.

When we started working on the Solas VR meditation app, prior to the Covid-19 outbreak , we knew how important the implications of corporate mindfulness were. By the time we launched the app, things had changed and remote work made joint team activities even more urgent: teams need to introduce new rituals that would enforce the sense of community, especially when working remotely.

Sharing a VR mindful experience is among the few activities that:

- Nurture the employer-employee relationship
- Deepen the sense of community
- Boost productivity
- Enhance mental wellbeing

THE CORPORATE REALITY IN NUMBERS



80% OF WORKERS FEEL STRESS ON THE JOB AND NEARLY HALF SAY THEY NEED HELP IN LEARNING HOW TO MANAGE STRESS. 42% SAY THEIR CO-WORKERS NEED SUCH HELP.

American Institute of Stress



STRESS LEVELS IN THE WORKPLACE ARE RISING WITH 6 IN 10 WORKERS IN MAJOR GLOBAL ECONOMIES EXPERIENCING INCREASED WORKPLACE STRESS. WITH CHINA (86%) HAVING THE HIGHEST RISE IN WORKPLACE STRESS.

Regus Group



EMPLOYEE BURNOUT ACCOUNTS FOR 20-50% OF THEIR COMPANIES' ANNUAL EMPLOYEE TURNOVER.

Kronos & Future Workplace



MEDITATION INCREASES EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY BY 120%.

National Business Group on Health

C H A P T E R

02

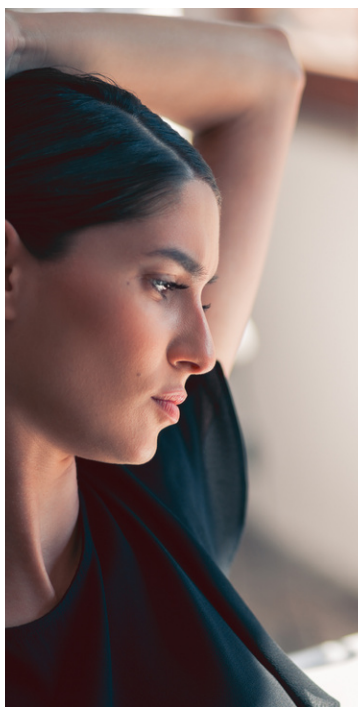
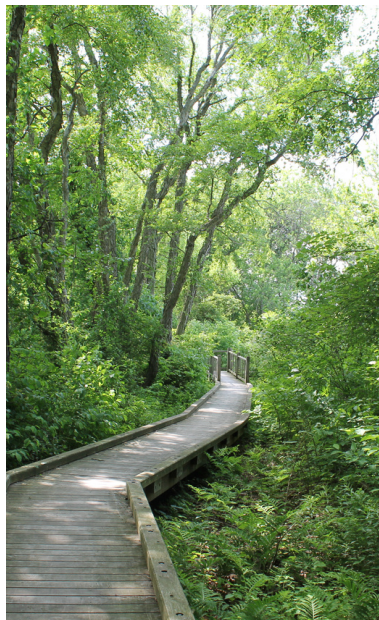
THE POWER OF MICROBREAKS



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The Power Of Microbreaks

A Microbreak is a short break you take from work (or anything that calls for your unhindered attention) in order to help your mind refresh and improve performance. Working for many hours straight, without a break or at least some stretching doesn't signal a hard-working professional.



On the contrary, there is academic proof now that our brain ceases to focus after a while; so we stop being productive or creative. This condition is called **The Troxler Effect** and it is like we stop seeing something after paying continuous attention to it. In the same way an item disappears from our view, new ideas and solutions disappear from our minds when we stay focused for too long. Taking a short break and allowing the mind to let go of the project and engage to anything else is an excellent way to regain focus and boost creativity.

Are all microbreaks equally powerful?

Chatting over the water cooler, having lunch, or taking a breathing exercise, do they all result in the same creativity boost?

While microbreaks per se are always beneficial, the brain responds better to certain activities rather than others. A 2016 research published on the Journal of Organizational Behaviour tested the effect of different types of microbreaks – lunch, relaxation, cognitive tasks, social activities – on the relationship between work demands and negative affect. What they found is that **performance actually increases only**

Idea in Brief

Solas VR meditations are ideal for microbreaks; they allow the mind to experience a relaxing and refreshing time off in nature, while at work. VR technology triggers the mind in the same way the real experience does, hence the effects of a Solas VR microbreak are equal to a walk in actual nature

after microbreaks that included relaxation, social activities or nutrition intakes, with the exception of caffeinated products or cognitive tasks which actually aggravate the negative effect. Additionally, a Stanford University research stresses the importance of letting our eyes wander for a while during the microbreaks, feeding our brain with new visual stimuli.

A short walk in nature may be the ideal microbreak, but how feasible is this option for people living in big cities (or under lockdown)? VR technologies provide us with the perfect alternative because Virtual Reality triggers the mind to react as if it is experiencing the real thing. A short VR meditation in nature has the same effect on the brain as an *actual* walk, while the eyes wander among trees and rivers, without having to leave the office. Guided Meditations or breathing exercises create **space** in the mind, multiplying the effect of the microbreak. It only takes a few minutes for the brain to refresh and reboot.

C H A P T E R

03

USING MINDFULNESS TO BOOST
TEAM PERFORMANCE



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Especially in times of uncertainty, mindfulness is a key skill for managers and team leaders, as it is the only way to manage stress reactions and illogical behaviours while under stress. The digital transformation and the pandemic have both challenged mental wellbeing. The fear of the unknown is more intense than ever and the need to reinvent ourselves and to re-establish our routines can be overwhelming. This new reality is taking over rapidly and managers are already looking for new ways to keep their teams motivated and effective- including Virtual Reality mindfulness.

According to a 2018 article published by Boston Consulting Group:

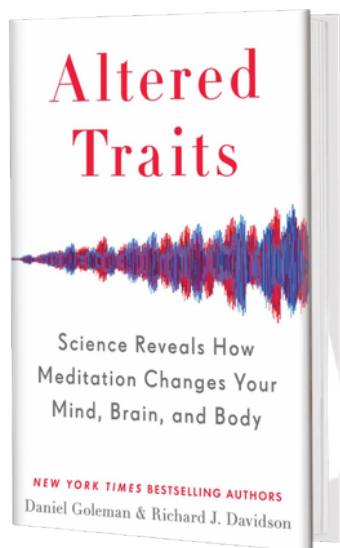
"Mindfulness programs help leaders and employees reflect effectively, focus sharply on the task at hand, master peak levels of stress, and recharge quickly. On an organizational level, mindfulness reduces sick days, increases trust in leadership, and boosts employee engagement. What's more, mindfulness helps to unlock the full potential of digital and agile transformations. New processes and structures are just the starting points for these transformations."

In other words, corporations adopt wellness and mindfulness initiatives as the optimal way to secure clarity in decision making, calmness in communications and employee satisfaction.

According to Daniel Goleman, there are 3 key benefits to team performance; not only are creativity and better decision making boosted but also a new approach to employee personal development is introduced.



In their recent book, *Altered Traits*, Daniel Goleman, a Harvard psychologist, and Richard Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, provide a scientific view of personal mindfulness benefits. They synthesize three proven benefits of mindfulness that, in combination, allow people to act more effectively in unpredictable environments:



Staying Calm and Open-Minded. Mindfulness practices, such as breathing meditation, are associated with decreased gray-matter density in the amygdala, the region of the brain that initiates a response to stress. This reduces the inclination to interpret an uncertain environment as a threat and thus react defensively. In this way, mindfulness improves mental agility, allowing attitudes to shift from “But we have always done it like that” to “Let’s see what happens if we try a new approach.”

Cognitive Ability. Mindfulness improves short-term memory and the ability to perform complex cognitive tasks. It also frees people to think outside the box, which helps them cut through complexity. In the context of workplace performance, proven results include a higher quality of strategic decision making and more effective collaboration.

Focus and Clarity of Thinking. As Nobel laureate Herbert A. Simon observed, “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.” This insight, first articulated in 1971, is more accurate today than ever before. Maintaining a strong focus in this time of digital information overload is essential. The regular practice of mindfulness routines can reduce mental wandering and distraction. Mindfulness strengthens the awareness of both one’s activities in the present moment and one’s mental processes and behaviors (known as meta-awareness).

C H A P T E R

04

MINDFULNESS & PRODUCTIVITY IN
THE WFH ERA



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Working From Home, a mandatory aftermath of the pandemic, worsens the "busy" culture, as boundaries are hard to set under these circumstances. Like all work cultures, busy culture starts at the top, with leaders who want to appear successful, important, and productive as opposed to taking breaks and time off. While working from home this means emails during weekends, and very loose boundaries between work and family time.



Idea in Brief

According to researchers, WFH will stay, even when the pandemic is gone. The distance among team members might challenge the coherence of the team, while bending of work/life boundaries becomes a new stressor.

Solas VR meditations provides an experience that can be shared by team members in different locations, while allowing the mind to relax and to cope with stress. As doctors and other specialists state, remaining calm while working from home is key to productivity and wellness.

Yet, multiple researches found that this busy culture is counter-productive as it involves high stress levels, sleep deprivation and, ultimately, burnout. Managers today are called to incentivize boundary setting and to provide the employees with solutions that help them maintain work-life balance.

Mindfulness has emerged as an effective initiative, as subscriptions to mindfulness services (like Solas VR) are offered to all home workers, encouraging them to work in a more focused and essential way.

C H A P T E R

05

THE POWER OF VIRTUAL REALITY



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The power of Virtual Reality Technology

Developments in VR technology have been remarkable: new technologies, new applications and a strong interest from health professionals, researchers and academics have put VR at the core of research activity. What we know so far is that Virtual Reality supports learning and boosts memory, helps in chronic pain relief as well as being highly successful for PTSD treatment. For this part of our eBook, we primarily reference academic resources that report results from experiments, with a focus on mindfulness and how VR impacts the brain. There is a broad consensus that VR enhances the meditation experience through content that allows the mind to focus and unwind – like the 360 cinematic videos on the Solas VR app. This can be understood through the fundamental brain biology: as thoroughly explained in a 2019 publication (Neuroscience of Virtual Reality: From Virtual Exposure to Embodied Medicine) **the brain and VR technology share the same basic mechanism: embodied simulations**, meaning representations and predictions of the self in the environment. Simply put, as the brain prepares itself to react to different environments by imagining them, VR provides the mind with these environments in an artificial way. Additionally, according to a Forbes article, *"Meditation, coupled with VR technologies, can be more precise and personalized and make the learning curve easier. Plus, when wearing a headset you are truly transported, making it easier to tune out of any distractions around you and focus"*. Furthermore, VR technology and the brain share another common ground: they are both complex, complicated and hard to understand. But, when they function properly the results are very obvious and well perceived.

THE POWER OF VIRTUAL REALITY

CASE STUDIES



Employers are facing a dilemma: Their workforce needs to learn new skills, upgrade existing capabilities or complete compliance training, but may not be able to do so in person given the current environment. Yet, training is especially important now, with employees keen to gain skills, and it may become even more critical when workers start returning to a changed workplace. So how can employers deal with the challenge?

The effectiveness of Virtual Reality in hard skills training has been established for some time now, with the use of simulators for pilot training for example. But, there is now equivalent findings for the case of soft skills, so PWC run an experiment: they conducted the same training programme (inclusive leadership) in three different learning modalities: classroom, e-learning, and VR training and they monitored the results in terms of the process effectiveness and the training outcomes.

VR learners were:

4x

faster to train than in the classroom

275%

more confident to apply skills learned after training

3.75x

more emotionally connected to content than classroom learners

4x

more focused than their e-learning peers

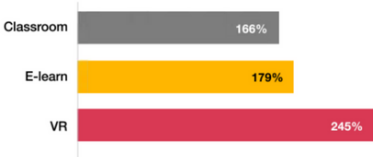
What they found builds a new case on the use of VR in soft skills training:

1. VR training is 4x faster than classroom training. What took two hours to learn in the classroom could possibly be learned in only 30 minutes using VR. When you account for extra time needed for first-time learners to review, be fitted for and be taught to use the VR headset, V-learners still complete training three times faster than classroom learners.



2. VR learners are more confident in applying what they're taught, which is essential in the case of soft skills. What makes the difference in VR training is that learners can practice their skills in a controlled and safe environment.

Improvement in confidence discussing issues of diversity and inclusion after the training:



3. Employees are more emotionally connected to VR content, they understand and remember things more deeply as their emotions are involved. What we actually have here is a game changer for training.

Average emotional connection felt to learning content



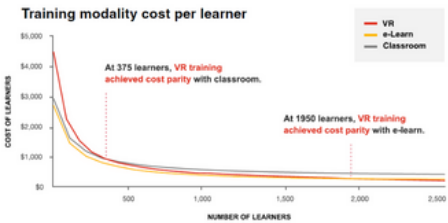
Source: PwC VR Soft Skills Training Efficacy Study, 2020

4. With VR learning, users are significantly less distracted. In a VR headset, simulations and immersive experiences command the individual's vision and attention. There are no interruptions and no options to multitask.

	Classroom	E-learn	VR
How many times were you multitasking or distracted during this experience?	0.78	1.93	0.48
How many minutes do you estimate it took to get back on task?	1	2.63	0.48

Source: PwC VR Soft Skills Training Efficacy Study, 2020

5. VR learning can be more cost-effective at scale. According to the PWC case study, At 375 learners, VR training achieved cost parity with classroom learning. At 3,000 learners, VR was 52% more cost-effective than classroom.



By the same token, in 2019, Prof. Spiegel and his team conducted extensive research, including a comparative experiment with a randomized sample of hospitalized patients. The hypotheses referred to the extent VR technology can significantly help in the treatment of chronic pain. The experiment took place on the Cedar Sinai Medical Center: the patients were randomly distributed in two groups.

In the VR group, patients were asked to use the headset for 10 minutes in the presence of study staff to practice with the equipment, and then advised to use the headsets thrice daily, for 10 minutes per session, and as needed for breakthrough pain over the subsequent 48-hours. Patients in the control group were instructed to tune their television set to the "Health and Wellness Channel", which is available in all rooms throughout the hospital. The programming includes guided relaxation content (e.g. yoga and meditation), discussions about health and wellness topics, and poetry readings.

This practice also resulted positively in pain relief in previous research.

The results confirmed the initial hypotheses that VR would have positive effect on pain relief. As they reported:



"VR significantly reduces pain versus an active control condition in hospitalized patients. VR is most effective for severe pain. Future trials should evaluate standardized order sets that interpose VR as an early non-drug option for analgesia."



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www.solasvr.com