

Mindful management - strategy and self-knowledge?

Socrates said "Know thyself." He also said "All I know is that I know nothing. Self-knowledge does people the most good, self-deception the most evil." The Dalai Lama described it as follows: "The task of the management is to create a company with a warm, strong heart and to see things as they really are."

A call for an immediate change in management

1. How did you come to mindful management?

There are three components which must be mentioned: my experience, current figures and my self-knowledge.

My experience from 20 years as a consultant and trainer for process management has shown me that more and more people are spending the best years of their lives in a job they don't like, just to buy more things they don't need, and lead a life they don't enjoy.

My personal tip for people in this situation is **work-life-balance**, sometimes called life-domain-balance. It's a subjective state, where the professional and personal sides of life, but also health and life visions are in balance. The individual life essence is rediscovered and can then be developed. If you look closely, you can't deny that something is not in balance. The shocking facts for companies, their employees and the whole world are clear. Unconscious unhealthy conditioning with regard to behaviour patterns prevent us not only from seeing this clearly, but also from taking coherent action.

Conditioning is the acquired behavioural patterns, doctrines and parental expectations, for yourself and others. We learn them over about the first six years of our lives from our social surroundings, and especially from our family. Examples are perfectionism, showing no weakness, pursuing status and prestige, competitiveness, adaptation rather than honesty, showing no emotions, holding back, manipulation, always wearing a smile or always being serious, incentives over performance, or the illusion of material value, as well as non-spoken taboos like power, money, greed, age and fear.

Current facts and figures shock me: 90% of companies have a formulated strategy, but only 10% of them reach their goals. 8 out of 10 bosses expect a significantly more complex environment, but less than half know how to deal with it successfully. Up to 70% of projects in companies fail. 85% of employees are no longer committed. A quarter of productivity is lost because of rumours, insecurity, resistance, and anxiety. Only 7% of firms already have process management and in companies at least 50% of managers are at risk of burn-out.

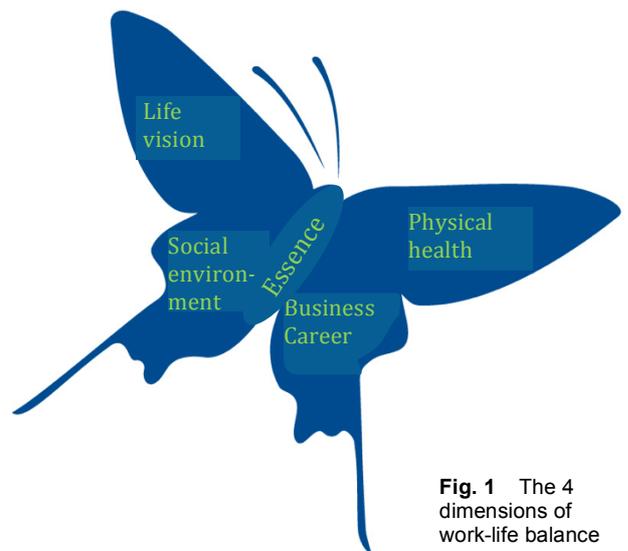


Fig. 1 The 4 dimensions of work-life balance

Experience 1. Self-knowledge through working and living all over the world

Tropical birds, emerald green palms, crystal clear water... What a life! But: unbearable poverty neighbouring almost incomprehensible wealth. Despite the beautiful summer sun, days that are far too long spent in air-conditioned offices. Infinite growth and modern technology? Heat and drought, with monsoon-like downpours. It's like a film. It must be a trick. It was like a wake-up call. I had definitely not planned to spread myself across the world like that. But it changed my life permanently, and for the better. It opened my eyes to the whole picture. As a consultant and trainer, I could collect experience in Switzerland, but also in Germany, a few weeks in the UAE, months in Vietnam, in Saigon and on the other side of the world in Australia, with a year in Sydney. Everywhere the same story. We used methods and techniques, again and again, regardless of whether we were dealing with process development or optimisation. Overall, it didn't lead to the project success desired. I felt, and saw, that something fundamental was not working correctly. I realised that the problem wasn't the methods and techniques, but the lack of awareness and self-knowledge of the people involved. It became clear: **burn-out prevention** and work-life balance are not only an ideal addition to process management, but an urgent one. Since then, my intention has been to introduce mindful management to companies through mindful process management. With this, I mean that the tried and tested techniques for organising a firm (the How) must be filled with new content (the What). Self-knowledge with a sincere pursuit of truth and reality is the only viable solution. The connection of the business sphere and real personal development is inevitable. It's not a matter of changing just the processes or the system, which doesn't have much effect, but supporting people to achieve greater self-knowledge and awareness. These people adapt the system and processes automatically to be coherent, sustainable and fit for purpose. Yes, this is what I want to achieve, it's really worth it.

2. What exactly is mindful management?

Mindful management encompasses the strategies, structures and cultures, and thereby all of the processes in a company, based on self-knowledge.

All activities in a company are part of a **process** - even strategy development and management. In an abstract sense, the overall process of a company is input, processing then output. This applies to every case, and so mindful process management is the consistent implementation of mindful management. Process development, in a holistic sense, is the only point at which conscious changes are actually made within a firm, and self-knowledge is the only effective means of doing this. There is an urgent need to bring more mindfulness into companies. **Mindfulness** is conscious, coherent and authentic action.

Self-knowledge is then the knowledge of who I am, what my motivations are and how I interact in the world with decisions and actions. Self-knowledge is also the knowledge of your own unhealthy behaviour patterns and conditioning. It is additionally the best active burn-out prevention for management and all employees.

3. How is mindful management implemented?

The implementation of mindful management is carried out through mindful process management.

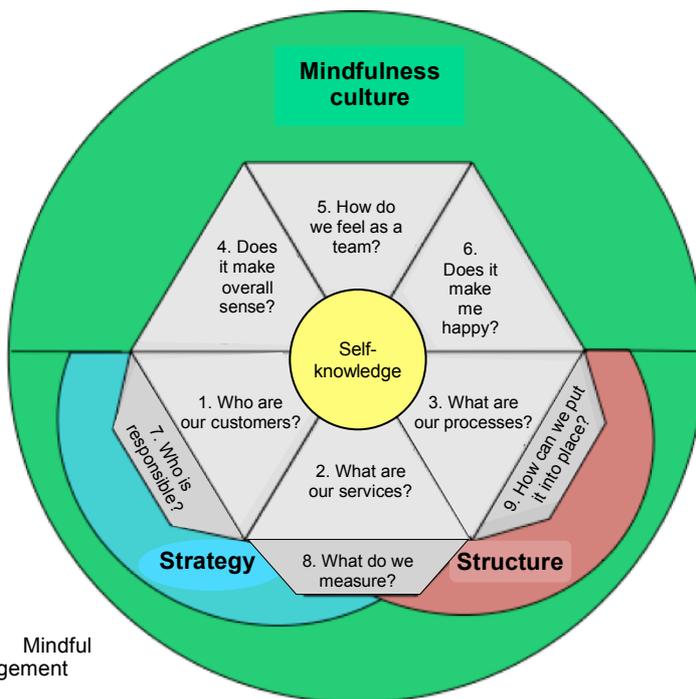


Fig. 2 Mindful management

Process management, understood as customer and company management, comprises the three pillars of process development (methods, techniques), process control (committees, figures) and process culture (values, principles).

Mindful process management comprises consciously structured working processes, guided by strategy, under consideration of the work-life balance of every employee based on self-knowledge.

To implement mindfulness, 10 steps are advised:

The first three steps make up classic **process management**. The second two points lead to **mindful process management**. And finally the last questions lead to **mindful management**. And last but not least, the most important is self-knowledge.

10 Practical Steps for Mindful Process Management

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| 1. Create a coherent strategy | Who are our customers? |
| 2. Define services | What are our services? |
| 3. Develop processes | What are our processes? |
| 4. Consider vision and sense | Does it make overall sense? |
| 5. Include team-building | How do we feel as a team? |
| 6. Pursue a work-life balance | Does it make me happy? |
| 7. Designate institutions and roles | Who is responsible? |
| 8. Provide instruments and figures | What do we measure? |
| 9. Implement plans | How can we put it into place? |
| 10. Introduce self-knowledge and mindfulness | Why am I doing this? |

Experience 2. What is happening in Switzerland and Germany?

I'm shocked. Back in Europe, I'm currently reading the headlines "Young Employees Burnt Out", "Burnout Rankings for DAX Companies with Alarming Figures", "Home Time, But Work Still Calls", "On The Path to an Exhausted Society", "Who is exhausted? Who is ill?". This shouldn't be the case.

Every day I ask myself what it all means. I know project work in the field of process redevelopment or process optimisation in companies here well too, and it's not very different to other places in the world. I would even say that the situation here at home is much worse, and this is because we know the status of the world and in the company. Could it be that the values of career, power and money are leading us down the wrong path?

At almost the same time, I received six meeting cancellations from managers with the excuses: Unfortunately I've got a slipped disc... Since yesterday I've been in the clinic with nerve pain in my leg... I'm having an operation on my elbow, it's been hurting for 2 years... I had a car crash yesterday... A friend of mine wrote that he's going to a burn-out clinic on the Rhine for 4 - 6 weeks... Another acquaintance wrote that he has no time, he's completely booked up with activities... Inside, I'm shocked. Isn't there a link between health and activities? What can I do about it?

I went out to the newsagents, and was surprised again: Geo magazine's front page read 'Lead a better life - Society without economic growth - Is it possible? The detailed article of course supported this idea. Then right there in the biggest daily paper: 20% of Swiss people are suffering from depression. That's every fifth person!

I came back home and found that it was *World Overshot Day*. It's the day when we've already used all of the resources for the year. And it's only August! So globally, we need 1.5 Earths for the resources to recover. In Germany and Switzerland, almost 2.5 Earths would be needed for all the energy and resources we need. Then I read another study which said that 20% of people in employment already have burn-out like symptoms. I'm simply speechless. What more will it take? Unfortunately it seems that many people only begin to understand when they are in pain. That shouldn't be necessary.

4. What is your conclusion and your recommendation?

In short: self-knowledge is THE key. Mindful management through mindful process management is the means to the end. Work-life balance and burn-out prevention are the consequences.

Bronnie Ware, currently on the Best-seller list, has written, based on her experiences with dying people, about the **5 things dying people regret the most**. You won't find any mention of more money, power, implemented strategies, optimised processes or spending more time at work. On the contrary, the dying say something completely different. I find it very thought-provoking.

In terms of conclusion and recommendations, the **use** of mindful management is shown in coherent processes, healthy employees, happy customers and better business success. There is already hope in some companies, where fun rules at work, and even the idea of self organisation through management without bosses is already being applied. It's about time to try something different - in every industry and for every size of company. That's what I'm inviting you to do.

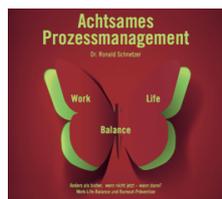
The **categorical imperative** must always be the top priority in each company and for each person: "Act in a way that could become a general rule."

Mindful management based on self-knowledge has the potential to make our working world more coherent and dignified. We are responsible for this ourselves. It begins with self-knowledge, which leads on a personal level to a work-life balance and on a business level to mindful management. **Make a change: if not now, when? If not us, who?**



The 40 page **book Mindful Management** – A compact and comprehensive guide, will be published in the first quarter of 2014. In November 2013, the book Mindful Management will be published. It is in colour, has 300 pages and 150 figures. The 60 minute audio book on the subject is already available.

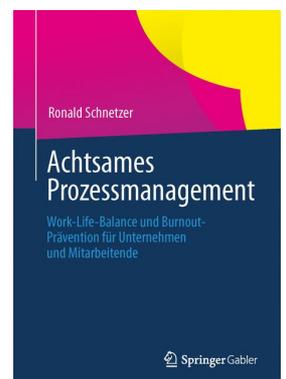
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