



Mindfulness in the Boardroom

Increase Clarity, Collaboration
and Performance

by Dr Elizabeth King

Executive Summary

In today's rapidly evolving governance landscape, boards face unprecedented challenges—from navigating economic volatility and technological disruption to fostering diversity and ensuring ethical practices.

This white paper, *Mindfulness in the Boardroom*, explores how mindfulness can equip directors with the clarity, adaptability, and resilience necessary to excel in this environment.

Drawing on research and practical frameworks, this white paper outlines how boards can implement mindfulness to address key trends such as:

- The integration of AI and cybersecurity oversight.
- The push for greater diversity and inclusion in leadership.
- The increasing emphasis on sustainability and ethical governance.

Through tools like the Mindful Board Assessment Survey (MBAS) and the Board Development Day Workshop, directors can cultivate individual and collective mindfulness, leading to more effective governance. These frameworks offer strategies to improve stakeholder engagement, resolve internal tensions, and enhance organisational performance.

The evidence supporting these insights is robust. Research shows mindfulness enhances individual and team performance and contributes to organisational innovation, resilience, and long-term growth.

This white paper urges boards to adopt mindfulness as a fundamental aspect of governance during uncertain times.

Key Takeaways:

- Understand the transformative impact of a broad and deep application of mindfulness on boardroom dynamics.
- Explore emerging trends and how mindfulness aligns with addressing them.
- Frameworks and tools to embed mindfulness into governance practices.

For boards seeking to lead with greater clarity, collaboration, and purpose, *Mindfulness in the Boardroom* provides a roadmap to navigate the complexities of modern governance while delivering both profit and progress.



Mindfulness is a compass for effective governance in uncertain times.

Cultivating mindfulness in the boardroom can enhance decision-making, reduce conflict, improve risk management, and promote director wellbeing. This significantly contributes to organizational effectiveness, resilience, and growth.

What is the right definition of mindfulness?

Here's the definition I find most helpful:

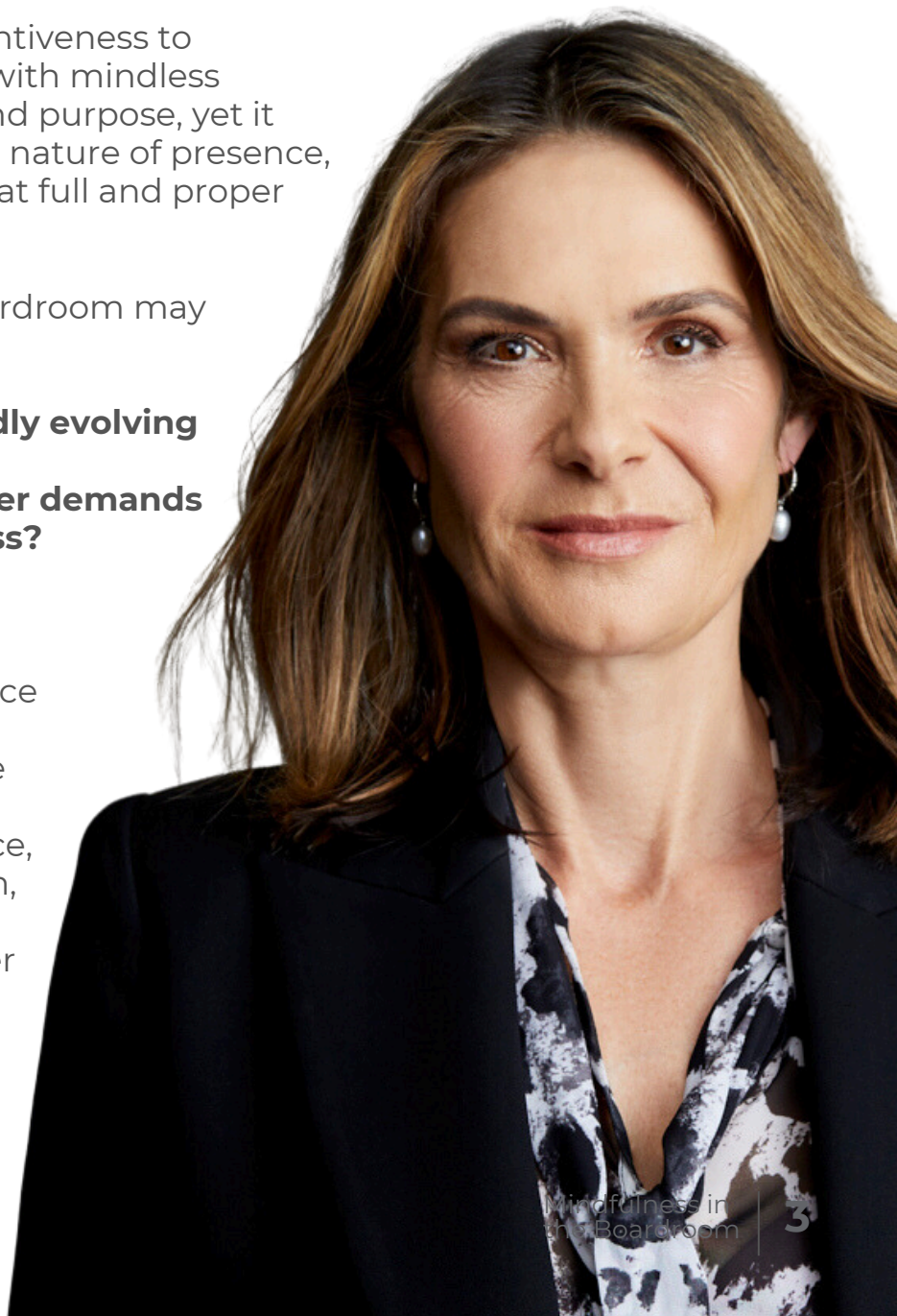
Mindfulness is a state or quality of mind that attends to experience, by giving full and proper attention to presence, context, and purpose.

This definition highlights attentiveness to experience, and the contrast with mindless inattentiveness to situation and purpose, yet it leaves open for discussion the nature of presence, context, and purpose, and what full and proper attention involves.

The conversations in your boardroom may be focused on questions like:

- **How do we adapt to rapidly evolving business models?**
- **How do we meet customer demands for greater responsiveness?**
- **How do we lead with warmth and wisdom?**

An approach based on evidence can help. By consciously embracing mindfulness in the boardroom, organisations can cultivate adaptability, resilience, and stakeholder consideration, promoting not only their own prosperity, but also the greater good of society and the environment.



Emerging Trends for Boards

As boards confront a rapidly evolving landscape, staying informed about the key trends shaping governance is essential to addressing emerging concerns.

The following diagram highlights ten critical trends poised to significantly impact boardroom dynamics in the next year. These trends not only reflect but also intensify the core concerns facing boards today—staying relevant, ensuring effective communication and resolving internal tensions.

Navigating the Boardroom in 2025: Ten Trends



Navigating the Boardroom Trends 2025

Boards face a complex and fast-evolving landscape shaped by economic volatility, technological disruption, and shifting stakeholder expectations. Success requires agility, resilience, and a mindful approach to governance.

Directors must balance ethical leadership with strategic oversight, especially as AI, cybersecurity, and sustainability dominate agendas. Inclusive leadership is no longer optional—diverse perspectives drive innovation and better decision-making. Meanwhile, navigating board-management dynamics and addressing director wellbeing are critical for sustainable governance.

The demands for transparency and adaptability extend to compliance, succession planning, and digital transformation, pushing boards to rethink traditional governance models. By integrating mindfulness into their practices, boards can stay focused, collaborative, and purpose-driven, ensuring they not only respond to challenges but also shape the future with clarity and confidence.

Each of these trends presents both challenges and opportunities. By embedding mindfulness into their governance practices, boards can enhance their ability to adapt, innovate, and lead with clarity in an increasingly complex world.



Core **Concerns** for Boards: Balance and Tension

Board Dynamics		
1- Tangible Tensions	2- Silent Strains	3- Foggy Frontiers
Compliance	Communication Challenges	Rapid Technological Change
Risk Management	Group Think	Emergent Challenges
Strategic Planning	Lack of Information	Political and Regulatory Uncertainty
Financial Oversight	Conflicts of Interest	Stakeholder Management
Talent Management	Limited Time and Resources	Crisis Management
What Else?	Limited Influence	What Else?



Core Concerns for Boards: Balance and Tension

Boards face significant challenges that require balancing external pressures with internal dynamics. Below, we explore key concerns and strategies to address them.

Staying Relevant Amidst Rapid Change:

Adapting to evolving industries and market conditions while maintaining organisational identity is a critical challenge.

Strategy:

- Conduct regular strategic reflection sessions to align practices with long-term goals.
- Use foresight tools to anticipate industry shifts and pivot proactively.

Rebuilding Corporate Accountability:

Boards must respond to growing demands for transparency and ethical governance to regain public trust.

Strategy:

- Implement oversight mechanisms like external audits and stakeholder panels.
- Use mindfulness practices to reflect on the societal impacts of decisions, ensuring alignment with stakeholder values.

Resolving Internal Tension:

Conflicting boardroom opinions can hinder decisions. Addressing these tensions is key to fostering collaboration and progress.

Strategy:

- Collective Mindfulness: Use mindfulness sessions to encourage emotional regulation and thoughtful dialogue.
- Apply structured conflict-resolution frameworks to ensure all voices are heard.

Avoiding Groupthink to Drive Innovation:

Groupthink can stifle creativity and lead to poor decisions. Boards need diverse viewpoints to innovate effectively.

Strategy:

- Rotate the "devil's advocate" role to surface alternative perspectives.
- Conduct structured brainstorming sessions with mindfulness techniques to foster safe, creative dialogue.

Managing Limited Time and Resources

Limited time and resources can result in rushed decisions or missed opportunities.

Strategy:

- Prioritise agendas with mindfulness, focusing on critical issues.
- Use mindfulness pauses in meetings to maintain energy and productivity.
- By addressing these challenges with mindfulness and strategic foresight, boards can foster innovation, accountability, and resilience.

In the boardroom, **Mindfulness** is a powerful strategy for unlocking **clarity, innovation, and collaboration** at the highest level.

Mindfulness can support directors as they navigate the challenges of:

- Board Diversity
- Leveraging Technology
- Redefining Corporate Success
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Maintaining an Ethical Framework
- Navigating Paradox

In the complex and dynamic governance landscape, mindfulness offers a promising approach to foster more inclusive, insightful, and responsible decision-making.

Mindlessness in the boardroom:

Poor Decision-Making

Decreased Productivity

Limited Creativity & Innovation

Inadequate Risk Management

Poor Stakeholder Engagement

Decreased Resilience

Mindfulness in the boardroom:

Strategic Insights

A clearer lens, leading to well-informed choices.

Elevated Momentum

Tasks get done with more energy and enthusiasm.

Boundless Brainstorming

It's where out-of-the-box ideas take flight!

Enhanced Foresight

Nuanced understanding of opportunities and potential pitfalls.

Dynamic Stakeholder Rapport

Building genuine and proactive connections.

Unwavering Adaptability

Remaining flexible and forward-focused in the face of challenges.

How Mental Performance Evolves with Mindfulness

State	Definition	Problem	Possibility	Pattern
Wise	Deep understanding	Change resistance	Sustainable success	Wisdom
Mindful	Heightened awareness	Slow process	Ethical decisions	Reflection
Focused	Peak performance	Tunnel vision	Actionable decisions	Presence
Creative	Innovative ideas	Chaotic discussions	New solutions	Attention
Distracted	Scattered mind	Hasty decisions	Unplanned discovery	Reaction

Moving from a state of **distraction** to a state of **wisdom** is a personal journey for each board member and a **transformative process** for the entire board and the organisation it governs.

This journey takes directors from scattered thoughts and disconnected actions to **deeply informed, insightful decisions** based on a rich understanding of the past, a clear vision of our future, and a mindful engagement with the present.

This is about **boosting individual performance, fostering collective intelligence, maximising governance effectiveness, and driving long-term, sustainable organisational growth**. It is a journey that ensures directors are avoiding reacting to the world around them and actively shaping it in alignment with mission and values.

How the Four **Forms of Mindfulness** Address the Core Concerns of Directorship

Mind/Mend the Dynamics: Transform the Board



The Four Forms of Mindfulness - **Individual Mindfulness, Individual Wisdom, Collective Mindfulness, and Collective Wisdom** - guide directors in addressing governance challenges.

Individual Mindfulness improves focus and strategic clarity, while Individual Wisdom enhances emotional regulation and decision-making.

Collective Mindfulness fosters team resilience and adaptability, and Collective Wisdom allows boards to make ethical, clear-sighted decisions amid uncertainty.

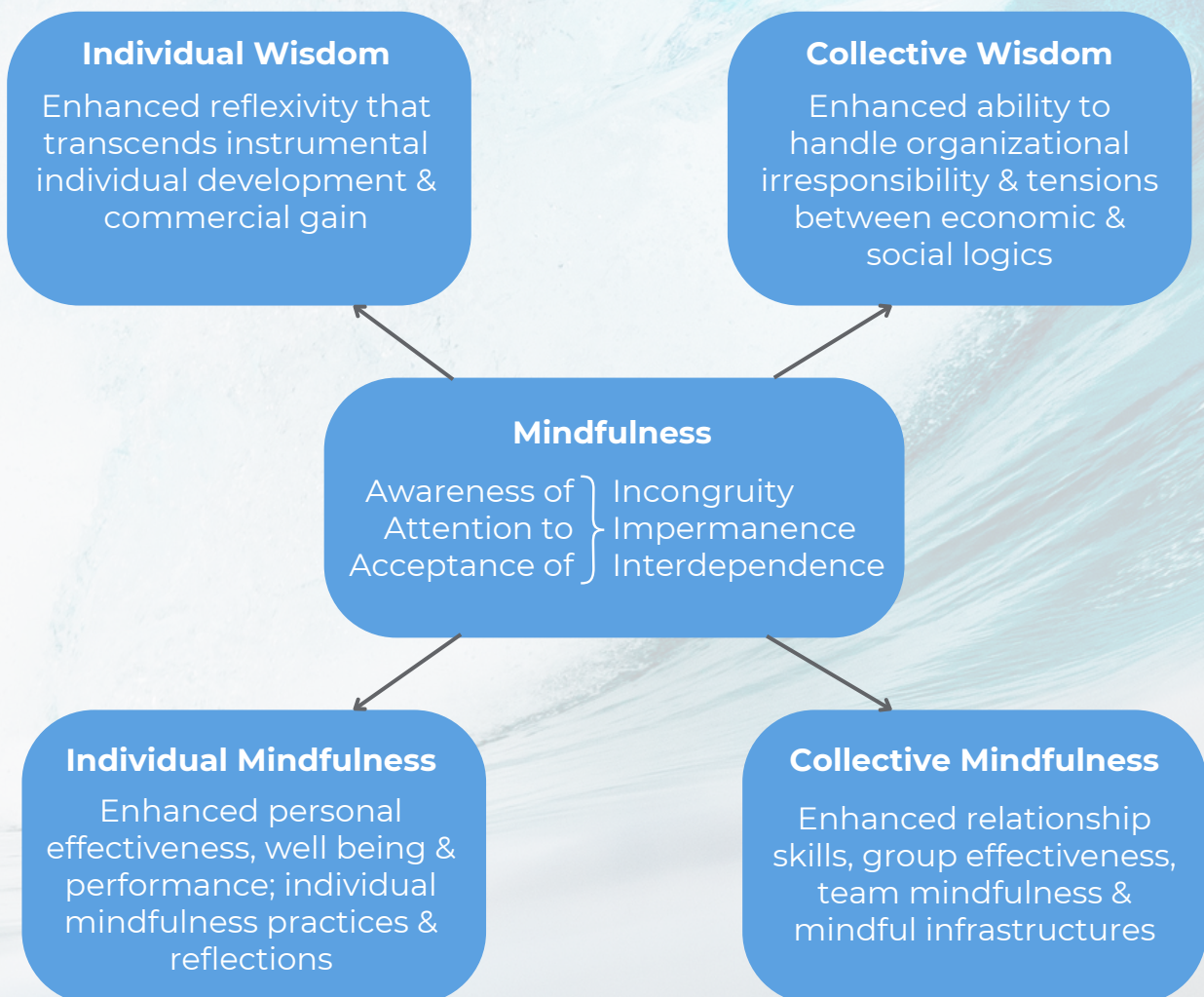
This framework enhances board dynamics, empowering directors to lead with insight and foresight.

Fostering **Mindful Leadership** and Directorship

Four distinct development programs can collectively transform leadership and directorship, delivering benefits leading to profit and purpose.

- 1 An individual mindfulness program will help individuals stay present.
- 2 An individual wisdom program will promote kindness among leaders.
- 3 A collective mindfulness program will create dependable, low-risk systems.
- 4 A collective wisdom program will ensure conscious governance.

Four Forms of **Mindfulness** that Support Directorship



Scientific Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been extensively studied across disciplines, demonstrating its profound impact on both individual and organisational outcomes.

Key benefits include:

Enhanced Decision-Making: Mindfulness improves cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation, leading to clearer, more ethical decisions (Good et al., 2016).

Improved Team Dynamics: Practicing mindfulness fosters emotional intelligence, better communication, and stronger interpersonal relationships (Hülsheger et al., 2013).

Increased Organisational Resilience: Mindful teams are more innovative, adaptive, and capable of navigating uncertainty (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006).
Wellbeing and Productivity: Reduced stress, enhanced creativity, and improved focus contribute to individual and collective performance (Roche et al., 2014).

These benefits align with the demands of modern boardrooms, providing directors with the mental tools needed to lead with clarity, collaboration, and purpose.

SELF

- Self-reflection (Epstein 1999)
- Self-leadership skills, through self-regulation (Glomb et al. 2011),
- Performance outcomes (Dane and Brummel 2014; Glomb et al. 2011)
- Perspective and real-time decisions (Glomb et al. 2011)

TEAM

- Emotional intelligence (Brown and Ryan 2003)
- Presence in interpersonal communication (Huelsheger et al. 2013)
- Dissemination of knowledge, interpersonal relationships and decision-making information (Sauer and Kohls 2011; Senge et al. 2004)
- Awareness of current information (Dane and Brummel 2014)
- Resilience of leaders and their employees (Huelsheger et al. 2013; Sauer and Kohls 2011)

PERFORMANCE

- Psychological well-being (Roche, Haar and Luthans 2014)
- Reduction in stress, enhanced creativity and problem-solving (Benson, Proctor and DeMunn 2003)
- General health (Sauer and Kohls 2011)
- Innovation and learning (Levinthal and Rerup 2006)
- Adaptation, creativity and performance (Senge et al. 2004)
- Safety and organizational attention (Weick and Sutcliffe 2006).

¹ King, E., & Haar, J. M. (2017). Mindfulness and job performance: A study of Australian leaders. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 55(3), 298-319.

The Six Elements of Mindfulness



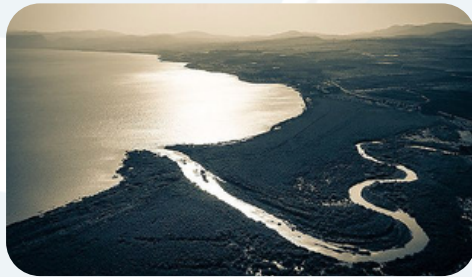
Attention

Ability to regulate attention and meta-cognition. This involves the capacity to sustain attention on the task at hand and choose to alter focus to a distraction or not.



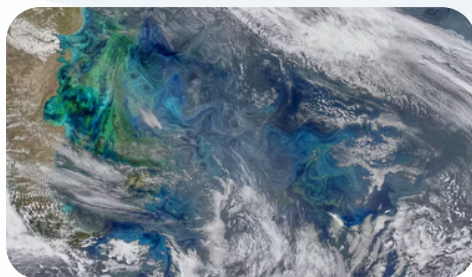
Awareness

Breadth and clarity of awareness. This involves an ability to notice what is going on both externally and internally, inclusive of body and mental activity - without engaging in it.



Acceptance

An attitude of acceptance to whatever is occurring - externally and internally, where internal refers to the body, emotions and thoughts.



Incongruity

An understanding of the inherently disjointed and unsatisfactory nature of life experience.



Impermanence

is a recognition of the impermanent nature of all phenomena and the source of such impermanence - pervasive interconnectedness.



Identification

A capacity to notice and avoid clinging to, and craving for, self-centered satisfactions.

Integrating Mindfulness into Board Activities: **Practical Steps**

Mindfulness can transform the way boards operate by fostering focus, emotional regulation, and clarity in decision-making. To embed mindfulness into boardroom practices effectively, consider the following steps:

Start Meetings with a Mindful Pause

Before diving into agendas, dedicate 5 minutes to silence or a guided mindfulness practice. This allows directors to center themselves, clear distractions, and approach discussions with greater focus and presence.

Implementation Tip:

Use a timer and prompt directors to close their eyes, focus on their breath, or reflect on their purpose for the meeting.

Consider inviting a mindfulness facilitator for initial sessions to set the tone.

Introduce Reflective Check-Ins

At the beginning or midpoint of a meeting, ask directors to share brief reflections on:

- How they're approaching the discussion.
- Any tensions or opportunities they observe.

This creates space for transparency and emotional awareness, fostering stronger collaboration.

Implementation Tip:

Use prompts like: "What perspective do I bring to this decision today?" or "How am I engaging with the challenges before us?"

Practice Mindful Decision-Making

Before critical votes or strategic decisions, introduce a "Mindfulness Moment":

1. Pause for reflection and encourage directors to consider ethical, long-term, and stakeholder implications.
2. Pose mindful questions, such as:
 - a. "What assumptions might we be making?"
 - b. "How does this align with our core values and purpose?"

Implementation Tip:

Create a checklist to guide mindful evaluation during decisions.

Cont. Practical Steps

Create Space for Active Listening

Integrate mindful listening techniques during discussions:

- Ensure each director speaks without interruptions.
- Encourage summarizing or reflecting on others' points before responding to promote understanding and reduce miscommunication.

Implementation Tip:

Set “active listening” norms for meetings, ensuring directors focus on the speaker and avoid multitasking.

Schedule Regular Wellbeing Breaks

In longer meetings, incorporate short mindfulness or stretching breaks to sustain energy and engagement. A 3–5 minute break for mindful breathing or light physical movement can recharge focus and reduce stress.

Implementation Tip:

Provide mindfulness apps or audio guides for directors to use during these breaks.

Use Mindful Debriefs Post-Meeting

After meetings, encourage directors to reflect on:

- What went well and what could improve.
- How mindfulness influenced their engagement or decisions.

This fosters continuous improvement and reinforces the value of mindfulness in governance.

Implementation Tip:

Include a brief mindfulness assessment in post-meeting surveys to gauge effectiveness and identify opportunities.

Incorporate Mindfulness into Development Programs

Offer regular mindfulness training as part of director development initiatives. This builds skills like emotional regulation, focus, and resilience, enhancing overall board effectiveness.

Implementation Tip:

Schedule quarterly workshops or retreats that combine mindfulness practices with governance training.

Integrating mindfulness into board activities is not about overhauling existing processes but enhancing them with deliberate pauses, reflections, and practices that encourage thoughtful and ethical leadership.

By starting small and embedding these steps into routine practices, boards can cultivate a culture of clarity and collaboration that supports long-term success.

Case Studies

Mindfulness has demonstrated measurable success in enhancing governance and leadership. Below are two examples showcasing its impact on risk management and director wellbeing.

Case Study 1: Enhancing Risk Management in a Multinational Corporation

A global financial services organisation faced regulatory pressures and increasing complexity in risk management. Directors struggled with reactive decision-making and internal tensions during key discussions.

Mindfulness Intervention

The board adopted mindfulness practices, such as mindful pauses before risk evaluations and reflective decision-making processes, focusing on long-term and ethical impacts.

Outcome

- Improved prioritisation and clarity in addressing risks.
- A notable decrease in decision-making errors.
- Enhanced collaboration and reduced conflict among directors.
- Mindfulness empowered directors to approach risk with greater strategic foresight, ultimately improving organisational resilience.

Case Study 2: Reducing Director Burnout in a Tech Company

A fast-paced tech company faced challenges with director burnout due to the demands of innovation and stakeholder expectations. Symptoms included fatigue, disengagement, and stress-related absenteeism, complexity in risk management. Directors struggled with reactive decision-making and internal tensions during key discussions.

Mindfulness Intervention

The company introduced mindfulness training, including guided breathing exercises and stress management workshops tailored to board members.

Outcome

- Increased engagement and creativity among directors.
- Improved meeting productivity and reduced absenteeism.
- Directors reported feeling more focused and energised, contributing to more innovative solutions.
- These mindfulness practices helped foster a sustainable governance culture, ensuring directors could meet challenges without compromising their wellbeing.

Case Studies cont.

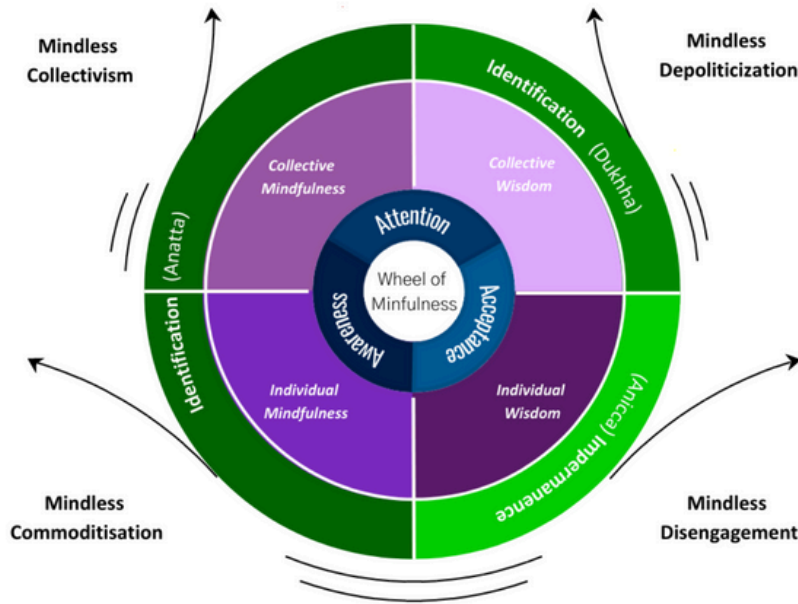
These case studies highlight the practical benefits of mindfulness, including improved risk management, enhanced decision-making, and sustainable leadership practices. Boards that embrace mindfulness as a governance tool can build clarity, resilience, and a more collaborative environment.



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Board Development Day



Is your organisation experiencing:

- Challenges with rapid digital transformation
- Heightened regulatory scrutiny
- Slow incident response times
- Inadequate stakeholder engagement
- Pressures from climate change
- A lack of cohesion in decision-making

✓ **Up to 20 people**

✓ **In-person, or online delivery**

Studies have shown that mindful leadership results in 33% more ethical decision-making, and enhanced organisational outcomes.

A report from McKinsey also highlights that boards practising mindful leadership achieve a 25% higher level of stakeholder trust and alignment with long-term goals.

Includes

- ✓ A **pre-workshop diagnostic assessment** that determines the current levels of mindfulness within the board, and identifies strengths and areas for growth.
- ✓ A **2 hour workshop** that introduces and cultivates mindfulness practices tailored for board members with a focus on the principles of Attention, Awareness, and Acceptance.
- ✓ **Strategies** to enhance presence and reduce cognitive biases.
- ✓ **Techniques** for fostering a psychologically safe board environment.
- ✓ **Practical exercises** for integrating Mindfulness' into decision-making.
- ✓ **Working lunch** (1 hour) with facilitated discussions and practical applications.

Mindfulness in the Boardroom Survey:

The Mindful Board Assessment Survey (MBAS) is a practical tool designed to measure and enhance mindfulness in corporate governance. It helps boards assess both individual and collective awareness, fostering more intentional decision-making and stronger leadership.

Boards can access the MBAS in two ways: as an individual self-assessment for personal reflection or as a confidential board-level survey to identify collective strengths and areas for growth. These insights support more mindful governance, improving productivity, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement.

If you are ready to embed collective and substantive forms of mindfulness into the very fabric of your organizational governance, scheduling a Board Development Day with your board is the first step.

Take our Mindfulness in the Boardroom survey below.

Visit Survey



Book a Board Development Day Workshop

Book a core workshop, or choose to maximise your program by adding one-on-one coaching with Dr. Elizabeth King over three months, including access to a personalised online coaching platform.

Contact



Partner for Insights

Dr. Elizabeth King is dedicated to equipping non-executive directors with the knowledge and strategies needed to navigate uncertainty and drive meaningful impact. Her pioneering research in second-generation mindfulness provides a unique lens on leadership and governance, helping directors make sense of emerging challenges and opportunities.

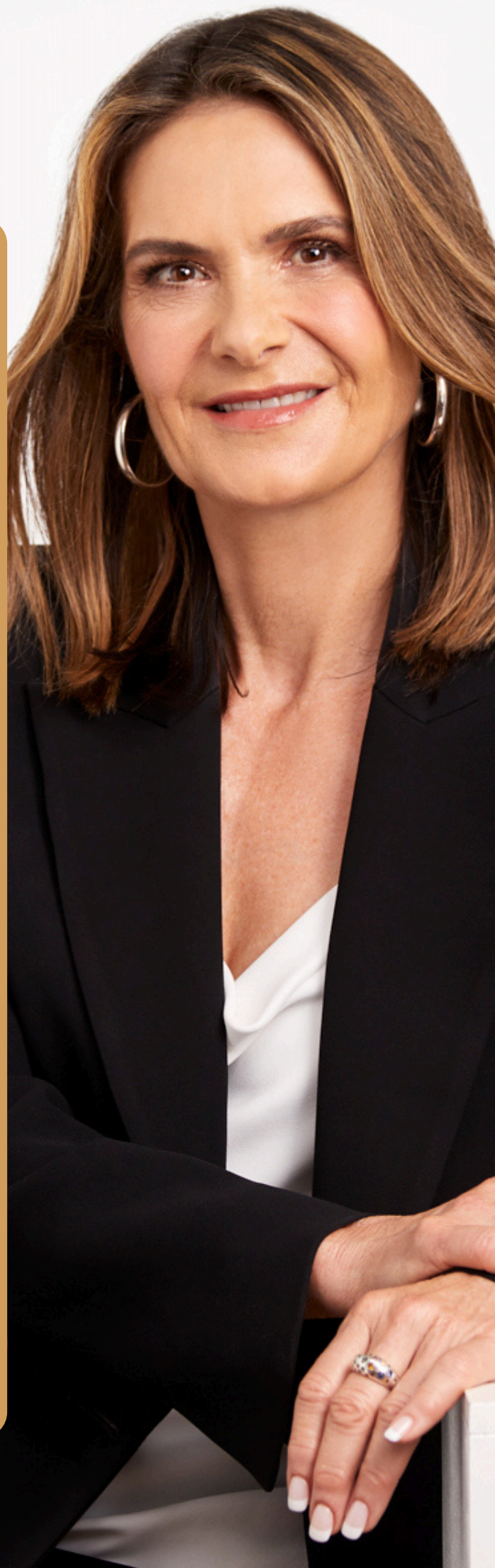
With extensive experience advising top-tier organizations, Dr. King offers practical, research-backed insights tailored for board leadership. Her approach integrates research, practice, and education, ensuring directors are empowered with actionable strategies to enhance decision-making, governance, and resilience.

Her academic credentials include a Ph.D. in Performance, a Master's in Coaching Psychology, an MBA, and a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She is also accredited in Mind-Body Medicine from Harvard Medical School. Dr. King serves on the board of the World Federation of Mental Health and is an active member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

CONTACT US TO DISCUSS A BOARD DEVELOPMENT DAY

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References and Further Reading

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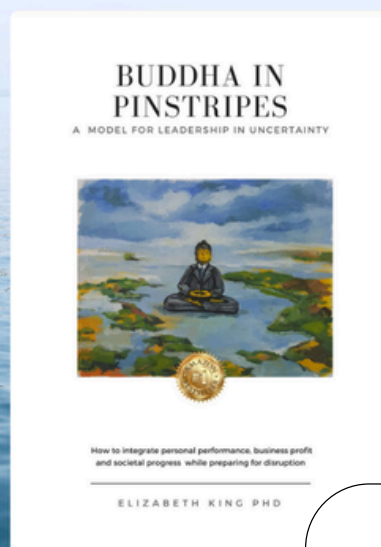
For a full explanation of the theory behind this program, download our book - Buddha in Pinstripes

Download the e-book

Buddha in Pinstripes

A Model for Leadership in Uncertainty

By Dr Elizabeth King



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