

THE BLOG

Meditation: The New Corporate Benefit that Pays Huge Dividends

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Several years ago, Nancy Slomowitz was so fed up that she wanted to walk away from the highly successful and profitable corporation she had built. Her enterprise, Executive Management Associates, has helped redesign the operations of major governmental agencies to eliminate wasteful practices, work more efficiently, and run more profitably. Although the work of the company was saving the U.S. Department of Transportation and others clients millions of dollars annually, the high stress atmosphere had exacted a heavy toll on the quality of life in the workplace. In response, Nancy came up with a novel and unorthodox solution, one seemingly counter-intuitive to the culture of high-powered business and accounting management executives. It was a \$30,000 initial investment on her part that delivered huge dividends.

Nancy told her staff that she was providing a new employee benefit and would pay the costs for anyone interested in learning Transcendental Meditation. “We distributed a memo and asked the local TM center to come and give a lecture. I didn’t think anybody was going to buy into it. I told everybody, ‘I’m putting this out there — it is for you if you want but if you don’t, that’s fine, too’.” At first, only two co-workers signed up, but within the next thirty-six months, more than a third of the workforce was participating. The resulting shift was profound, and the results are documented in a [new short film](#), entitled *The Meditation Makeover: Beads and Incense Not Required*.

The film provides a portrait of Nancy and several of her co-workers who are highly driven Type A personalities and far from the “New Age” poster children that one might associate with a technology that originally grew out of Eastern spirituality (no one wears prayer beads or Birkenstocks). Instead, they prefer things like riding Harleys, coaching youth football teams or going out dancing in their spare time. But their twice daily, twenty-minute meditation periods soon produced tangible results, both in their professional and personal lives. The workplace environment soon grew from toxic to harmonious among many other positive changes.

“People noticed how their energy was renewed from their daily practice,” explains Nancy. “They had a greater capacity to handle more things and multitask. Their prior inability to deal with the stress had resulted in co-workers getting too emotional and snapping at each other. Turnover became a problem and our reputation began to suffer. Now, everyone gets along well, employee retention and satisfaction improved drastically, and our clients and associates look at us and can tell that we are a team.”

Nancy describes her company’s work as “like trying to repair a speeding train while it’s moving.” EMA’s business had started with a \$10,000 purchase order from DOT for a troubleshooting analysis to identify problems. The relationship grew rapidly into managing the entire business operations for massive complex. “They were told that they had to operate like a business but not given the tools to make it happen. We happened to come in at just the right time. A lot of dysfunction was based on outmoded ways of doing business and the resulting difficulties in keeping pace with the accelerated speed of change.”

Nancy’s staff also operates full time at the clients’ base of operations, adding to the stress because they are on display with their customers everyday. She explains, “If someone gets frustrated or is having a bad day, they have to maintain their composure and can’t go mouthing off. You have to learn better ways to talk to the customer than ‘this is stupid — why are you doing it this way!’” On this front as well, TM made a tangible difference.

“The negative energy and the inability to work together without blowing up changed completely. Before you could see the high blood pressure rising as they got defensive and angry when problems arose. No longer were we complaining, attacking each other and eating each other alive. We stick together. There’s a cohesiveness where there wasn’t before, and everyone is proud to be a part of this group.”

Before she made the offer, Nancy had never shared with any of her co-workers that she had been meditating since age 13. Her father had learned TM in the 1970s for health reasons. The rest of her family saw his improvement and joined too, with the more independent and rebellious Nancy being the last.

“For me to come out of the closet with my employees was a big deal. I had never really identified with the TM movement or its groups. And I am not a vegetarian and don’t like Indian food! It was something I did and continued to do because of the obvious benefits. As a teenager, I was very emotional and not able to cope with things. If I hadn’t done TM, I probably would have gone over the edge.”

Nancy had also been a meditator so long that she didn’t consider it to be that noteworthy. But the seed to make it a corporate benefit was planted when her employees began to take notice of her demeanor under stress and started asking pointed questions. “How come you don’t get rattled? You don’t scream at people.” Or, “We didn’t leave until the wee hours last night and you’re fresh this morning. How do you keep going?”

Perhaps the most startling benefit was when Nancy opened up her annual health insurance renewal letter, bracing for the usual ten to twenty-five percent annual increase she had in previous years. After reading the letter, she called her insurance agent to confirm that there hadn’t been a mistake. To her shock, the premiums for her company actually went down for the first time, no doubt a result of fewer claims and healthier employees with the stress reduction and other proven health benefits with meditation.

The Meditation Makeover: Beads and Incense Not Required was produced by the Gilbert Slomowitz Foundation (www.gsfweb.org), a non-profit organization Nancy started that is dedicated to educate the public about the benefits of meditation. The Foundation also makes available scholarships to deserving individuals to learn transcendental meditation.

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