

The High Performance Mindset at Work Training Program: Evaluation of Impact on Department of Education and Training Participants (Team Members)

Michael E. Bernard, Ph.D.

Director, The Bernard Group

Professor, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

University of Melbourne

March 2015

A project supported by the Department of Education and Training (Victoria),
Division of Leadership, Professional Practice and Accountability.



The Bernard Group

Level 27, 101 Collins Street,
Melbourne Vic 3000 Australia

Tel: +61 3 9415 8327

Fax: +61 3 9419 5993

enquiries@workmindset.com

www.workmindset.com

Executive Summary

“The course has shown me how my mental outlook is linked to my work outcomes – regardless of what my challenges are, it is how I perceive them and my outlook towards them that will determine how I solve them. I have made attempts, some more successful than others, to improve my productivity at work. I have also become more aware of the challenges of my colleagues.”

This report provides an evaluation of the impact and benefits of a blended High Performance Mindset at Work training program conducted weekly from 26 February through 21 March, 2015. The program was facilitated by Professor Michael Bernard, Melbourne Graduate School of Education and Ron Issko, organisational coach/consultant who had responsibility for the operation of the technical aspects of the webinar program, Adobe Connect.

Twenty six members of staff (Team Members) from the four branches of Division of Leadership, Professional Practice and Accountability (LPPA) participated in the seven-week program. Their participation follows a four-week High Performance Mindset at Work (HPMW) Training workshop conducted with executive director, directors and managers.

During the HPMW training, participants:

Week 1. Attended a half-day, face-to-face workshop that introduced the high performance initiative of the LPPA Division and the high performance mindset.

Weeks 2-6. Engaged in the on-line six-module E-learning course, *The High Performance Mindset at Work*. Additionally, weekly Adobe Connect, one hour sessions were held for participants that consisted of whole group and small group breakout sessions. These sessions tailored the HPMW program content to the specific work situations and job stressors identified by LPPA managers and participants.

Week 7. Attended a half-day, face-to-face workshop that reviewed the content of the last module of the HPMW E-learning course (Module 6: Individual Action Plan) and had participants discuss the takeaways, impacts and benefits of the HPMW course.

At the conclusion of the final face-to-face half-day workshop, participants were asked to respond in writing to several questions designed to determine the impact of the HPMW program on their mindset and work performance over the seven weeks.

Summary Findings:

1. Over 90 percent of participants found the HPMW program increased self-awareness/self-reflection, expressed a positive emotional response to the HPMW program and its impact, and indicated increased confidence/self-efficacy in doing their job.
2. Over 90 percent of participants have been able to experience first-hand through their own self-directed decision making that developing aspects of their mindset leads to higher performance in challenging, potentially stressful and disruptive work situations and when working with people whose behaviour is difficult.

3. Over 40 percent of participants selected 'confidence' as the first behavioural strength they wished to develop further. 'Confidence' is the least well-developed strength of participants as reflected in the *Survey of Behavioural Strengths* they completed before commencing the HPMW course. Significant growth of participants' confidence is reflected in their post-program evaluation.
4. Participants revealed that they are now more aware of mindset and its importance in high performance. Participant comments revealed differences in which aspects of their mindset they see as opportunities for growth as well as which aspects of work performance have been positively impacted by mindset training. Some benefits noted:
 - greater awareness of mindset and how it influences work performance
 - improved work performance
 - less stress, calmer
 - better work relationships –empathy
 - more confidence in doing job – reduced fear of failure, criticism, more willingness to express opinions
 - less procrastination

Representative evaluative comments by participants include:

"(I am) Changing my mindset to -confidence, being positive and persistent, not afraid to fail, belief in self, being grateful, changing from focusing on negative. Easier to work with and help others, less procrastinating."

"Being more confident in my ability to complete new work tasks, I have proved to myself that I know more than I think I do."

"Making sure I remain persistent on all tasks I take on. Even in tough situations, I use persistence to overcome any obstacles."

"Easier to work with and help others, less procrastinating."

"Realised mindset is more important in my development than I realised. By practicing 'self-acceptance,' I'll strengthen frontal cortex and allow myself in tough, interpersonal conversations to remain calm and reflect."

"Increased consideration of others. Improved frustration tolerance. More confidence in completing new tasks. More time spent building relationships. Less stress when responding to work situations that are challenging."

"Less afraid of failure/needing to impress (self-acceptance, confidence). Catastrophe Scale – can leave work less bogged down by performance blockers. Choosing when to voice my opinion and confidence to speak at meetings out of my comfort zone. Quicker to reduce my frustration. Using my 'getting along' to build contacts and networks."

"Noticing my self-talk and emotions. And being able to monitor and adjust them."

"Manager has given good feedback on my empathy and acceptance of others."

"The activity (HPMW program) has been positive for our team. It's given a collective point of reference. Getting along and confidence of team members to speak and share."

HPMW Evaluation I: Affective Response to HPMW Training

Participants were asked to write down on four post-it notes, one word per note that described how they felt using 'feeling words' as a result of participation in the HPMW program and applying what they learned at work. The following notes were provided by participants. Verbatim, one-word participant comments that appear below have been grouped into several categories.

Self-awareness/Self-reflection

attentive, aware, thoughtful, thoughtful, aware, aware, aware, enlightened, mindful, awareness, aware, aware, aware, aware, openness, informed, aware, enlightened, considered, mindful, present, self-aware, realistic,

Positivity

satisfied, happy, grateful, happy, happy, relieved, interested, grateful, achievement, positive, grateful, positive, positive, positive, positive, support, positive, stimulated, interested, interested, interested, pleased, supported, positive, happy, happy, positive, engaged,

Confidence/Self-efficacy

equipped, invested, confident, strengthening, empowered, equipped, centered, hopeful, encouraged, hopeful, motivated, motivated, capable, confidence, empowered, optimistic, confident, hopeful, calm

Other

Challenged, frustrated, annoyed, hesitant, unsure, concern, resistance, challenged, challenged, challenged, frustrated, concerned

Comment: Over 90 percent of participants found the HPMW program increased self-awareness/self-reflection, had an overall positive impact, and increased confidence/self-efficacy is doing their job. A few participants expressed that they felt supported. Four participants found the program challenging (not a negative outcome) and experienced concern. Two of the 26 participants experienced resistance and frustration.

HPMW Evaluation II: Benefits of Behavioural Strengths at Work

Participants were asked to write down the behavioural strength they targeted first during the HPMW E-learning course (Module 5) for strengthening and any benefits they observed from putting strength into practice during the previous week.

Behavioural Strength: Getting Along

“Being more tolerant of someone whose behaviour is frustrating.”

“Feeling more empathic than usual.” Making time for others and their point of view.”

“Working to help others achieve beneficial outcomes. Greater understanding of another’s issues.”

“Getting to know colleagues outside work matters.”

“No longer entangled with a difficult customer managing to find mutual benefit.”

Organisation

“Get things sorted.”

“Organised.”

“I have made financial and emotional commitments to getting to work on time. – and being well dressed. This is my platform for being more organised at work.”

Self-Management

“Quickly returning to a calm state following a stressful situation.”

“Not showing temper or frustration when things go wrong.”

“Not just saying ‘Yes’ but thinking about will I or won’t I or can I get it done and then doing it.”

“Managing emotions to production issues.”

Persistence

“Rewards for being persistent = satisfaction from completing the job, a sense of achievement.”

“Continuing to be creative to find solutions to a production issue.”

“Making sure I remain persistent on all tasks I take on. Even in tough situations, I use persistence to overcome any obstacles.”

Confidence

“More proactive, taking action, taking risks.”

“I have found social situations easier when more confident to speak my mind. I am confident to take on and attack new pieces of work.”

“Taking action, being positive.”

“Facilitates greater ability to put my point across- acknowledge true feelings.”

“Being more confident in my ability to complete new work tasks, I have proved to myself that I know more than I think I do.”

“Belief in self-ability. Results in more developed responsive work....ability to voice opinion.”

“Take the leap, do things without concern.”

“Realise everyone makes mistakes, not just me. So move forward.”

“Take on challenging tasks and speak with confidence.”

“↑ self-esteem -↑ learning opportunity -↑ participation

“Confidence, ‘fake it ‘til you make it.’ Being able to present to colleagues, ask questions and speak my opinion in meetings!”

Comment: Participants had the freedom to choose any of the five behavioural strengths to focus on and apply at work. It is interesting to note that over 40 percent selected 'confidence.' Given that 'confidence' is the least well-developed strength as reflected in the *Survey of Behavioural Strengths* completed by participants before commencing the HPMW course, it is instructive to see that participants selected 'confidence' as the area of growth to target. Furthermore, it would appear that over 90 percent of participants have been able to experience first-hand through their own self-directed decision making that developing an aspects of their mindset (e.g., 'confidence' and the rest) leads to high performance in challenging, potentially stressful and disruptive work situations and when working with people whose behaviour is difficult.

HPMW Evaluation III: Impact of HPMW Program on Mindset and Workplace Performance

Participants were asked to write down on two separate post-it notes the impact of the HPMW program on their mindset and on their performance/effectiveness at work during the seven weeks of the HPMW program.

Mindset: “The course has shown me how my mental outlook is linked to my work outcomes – regardless of what my challenges are, it is how I perceive them and my outlook towards them that will determine how I solve them.” **Impact:** “I have made attempts, some more successful than others, to improve my productivity at work. I have also become more aware of the challenges of my colleagues.”

Mindset: “Aware of my work performance blockers.” **Impact:** “Working on them, need time.”

Mindset: “I am now trying to be more positive and optimistic. That it’s OK to have a commitment to self and healthy living i.e. making sure to go to gym class at lunch.” **Impact:** “Trying to be less scared to express opinions.”

Mindset: “Three step model for dealing with tough situations – Take Stock, Take Control, Take Action. Self-management.” **Impact:** More self-awareness, better self-management, calming strategies.”

Mindset: “Changing my mindset to -confidence, being positive and persistent, not afraid to fail, belief in self, being grateful, changing from focusing on negative.” **Impact:** “Easier to work with and help others, less procrastinating.”

Mindset: “The Catastrophe Scale had the biggest impact on me as I can often lose sight of this in the stressors of everyday work, now I can scale my worries and realise ‘It’s not that bad.’” **Impact:** “Having more confidence within the team and in my abilities, or what I can bring to the group. I am capable.”

Mindset: “Realised mindset is more important in my development than I realised. By practicing ‘self-acceptance’ I’ll strengthen frontal cortex and allow myself in tough, interpersonal conversations to remain calm and reflect.” **Impact:** “Noticing that I’m clearer on what I need to do.”

Mindset: “I have control. That taking time is OK. I’m not always present but increased awareness, means I get present faster. I can choose.” **Impact:** The activity has been positive for our team. It’s given a collective point of reference. Getting along and confidence of team members to speak and share.”

Mindset: “Increased confidence. Increased consideration of others. Improved frustration tolerance.” **Impact:** “More confidence in completing new tasks. More time spent building relationships. Less stress when responding to work situations that are challenging.”

Mindset: “Being aware of my emotions, behavioural strengths and areas of growth required.” **Impact:** “More open with my views.”

Mindset: “↑ - Confidence, Acceptance, Support, Feedback.” **Impact:** “↑ confidence in situations. Awareness of procrastination ↑. Growth. Autonomously working ↑.”

Mindset: “Acceptance of others, Feedback awareness.” **Impact:** “More open to feedback.”

Mindset: “Looking at my blocker of procrastination + emotion. More focus on persistence and calmness in problem solving. Nice refresher to visualising goal setting, being creative and achieving.” **Impact:** “Empathy, getting along, more tolerant.”

Mindset: “I agree with the various commitments to success, others and self, as well as behavioural strengths – growth, feedback, organisation, confidence, self-acceptance, stood out.” **Impact:** “A minor increase in ability to remain calm (self reminder of the importance of this has been reinforced).”

Mindset: “Empathy.” **Impact:** “Increased awareness of others.”

Mindset: “Less afraid of failure/needing to impress (self-acceptance, confidence).

Catastrophe Scale – can leave work less bogged down by performance blockers.” **Impact:** “Choosing when to voice my opinion and confidence to speak at meeting out of my comfort zone. Quicker to reduce my frustration. Using my ‘getting along’ to build contacts and networks.”

Mindset: “Commitment to self – confidence.” **Impact:** “Organising work tasks to prevent feeling overwhelmed, Use of catastrophe scale.”

Mindset: “Positive mindset, nothing is too difficult approach. Healthy living, positive lifestyle, assisting with stress levels and positive mindset.” **Impact:** “Have remained calm during tough situations. Positive approach, positive outcome.”

Mindset: “Noticing my self-talk and emotions. And being able to monitor and adjust them.”

Impact: Higher frustration tolerance and awareness of my strengths in my commitment to others. Manager has given good feedback on my empathy and acceptance of others.”

Mindset: “Understanding the five behavioural strengths and things that are likely to block strong performance and mindset.” **Impact:** “Getting along and what I need to get along by: listening, show empathy, have confidence, belief in myself and skills.”

Mindset: “A refresher of traits worth striving for. A reminder that my self-perceived strengths are not always on the money. Constantly review them.” **Impact:** “Bringing more empathy into workplace relationships. Work strengths that I didn’t know were strengths. I’m making time for (i.e., organisation) with more awareness and pride. Understanding that you do possess strengths.”

(One participant was unwilling to describe impact of HPMW course on mindset – did say s/he less willing to share views at work. One participant didn’t think what s/he learned has impacted work performance as yet.)

Comment: Participants reveal that they are aware of mindset and that it has an important impact on work performance. Participant comments reveal differences in which aspect of their mindset they see as opportunities for growth as well as which aspects of work performance have been impacted by mindset training. Some but not all of the benefits are noted:

- Greater awareness of mindset and how it influences work performance
- Improved work performance
- Less stress, calmer
- Better work relationships –empathy
- Confidence in doing job – reduced fear of failure, criticism, willingness to express opinions
- Overcoming procrastination