

The Mindful CIO Manifesto

The industrial age is over. The information age is here. Our work is less physical and more mentally demanding than ever before, so we must be mentally fit. Forward-thinking organisations have realised this and are doing something about it. Are you one of them? Corporate mindfulness has been adopted by a range of industries for different reasons. From law firms and banks to not-for-profit, government agencies and several Fortune 500 companies. The outcomes are many: improved engagement, retention, wellbeing, safety, resilience, performance, creativity and innovation.

This approach is happening whether you like it or not. And it's yielding results.

This manifesto contains 10 declarations of a Mindful CIO. It describes how successful senior IT leaders operate in the 21st century. It reveals strategies on how to lead high performing teams and deliver outstanding results in a consistent and sustainable manner. The path of a Mindful CIO, described in this manifesto, may not be your path. Not everyone has the courage to take this action. It is up to you to decide for yourself if you will be an early adopter or if you prefer to wait and see the IT Industry transform from a distance.



DECLARATION #1: WE BRING HUMANITY TO THE IT INDUSTRY

We may be living a digital revolution, but we're not robots. We leave behind the lack of appreciation for IT professionals from our past and treat our people and teams with the respect they deserve. We acknowledge that the market is competitive and bright human resources are not easy to attract or retain. IT roles are highly valuable and so are the people that perform them. We encourage our people to bring their whole selves to work.



DECLARATION #2: WE PROMOTE A HEALTHY CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

We cultivate an environment and a culture where talented IT professionals are eager to join and proud to stay. We understand that a healthy work environment has a direct impact on the bottom line. We know it is our responsibility as senior leaders to set the direction and lead by example. This enables our business to grow and improve our company's reputation in the market. It helps us to attract recognized industry leaders and the best IT brains. Our healthy culture and happy team also empower us to acquire and serve better clients. We care for our people. This may have been endorsed by GREAT PLACE TO WORK awards we received in the past. We continue to pursue such recognition of our efforts to offer our teams an environment that promotes wellbeing, ignites collaboration and enables high performance.



DECLARATION #3: WE SUPPORT OUR LEADERS TO GROW

We are aware that today's leaders were often successful technicians first who then moved into management. We recognize that although they are experts in their field, they often have a lot to learn about leadership, people management and human behavior. We provide them with the support they need to grow as people leaders.



DECLARATION #4: WE PROMOTE SOFT SKILLS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

We recognize that relationships are important and they contribute to successful outcomes. We empower our team to master soft skills. We equip them with tools and techniques so they can grow not just technically but also emotionally and socially. This enables them to enjoy themselves more and experience higher performance. Achieving higher emotional quotients (EQ) enables our people to provide better services to our clients and therefore has a positive impact on our business bottom line.



DECLARATION #5: WE PRIORITISE OUR WORK AND FOCUS ON CRITICAL PROJECTS

We are strategic with our projects and apply the 80/20 rule. We know less is more so we are selective and thoughtful about projects we choose to engage. We avoid firefighting. We provide our teams with the conditions and support they need to thrive and strive in today's fast paced, distracting and complex world.



DECLARATION #6: WE RESPECT HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

IT industry tends to attract left brain introverts who struggle to stand up for themselves. They often lack assertiveness and avoid confrontation. Typically afraid of saying "No", they can be hopeless negotiating a reasonable workload and can become easy prey for abusive managers in toxic environments.

We acknowledge this is detrimental for team morale and our credibility with clients. We encourage assertiveness and honest conversations about unrealistic deadlines and workload. In our team it is okay to say NO to excessive workload without guilt. We recognize that extra effort is occasionally required when approaching project deadlines however we aim for a sustainable ongoing working rhythm.



DECLARATION #7: WE DISCOURAGE LONG WORKING DAYS

Historically IT professionals have been expected to consistently work long and odd hours. We know that Christmas and holidays are key times when IT projects go live and while everyone else is out having a good time, the IT folks are working hard behind the scenes so we can all enjoy the benefits of the digital age.

Whilst we still ask that from time to time our team will go that extra mile to "get the job done", this is not the rule. We do not expect our highly skilled digital team to work for long hours in return for a symbolic gift voucher or an occasional pat on the back. We know this is not a sustainable approach in the long run. Balance is what we seek.



DECLARATION #8: WE MINIMIZE MULTI-TASKING AND ACTION ADDICTION

We are aware of scientific research and evidence that multi-tasking is a counter-productive myth. We avoid multi-tasking whenever possible. We consciously aim to focus on one task a time and choose our distractions mindfully.

We practice mindfulness in action. We are conscious of the dopamine kick we get from handling emails. However, we do our best not to be carried away by them. We discourage the need to be perceived as busy. We know that busy does not mean productive. We believe in speeding up by slowing down. We leave behind restlessness and spinning wheels. Instead we value mindful breaks, time and space for reflection.



DECLARATION #9: WE PREVENT BURNOUT

We are pro-active in monitoring, detecting and supporting those at risk of burnout. We enable our leaders and team members with the environment, strategies and coping mechanisms to handle pressure with ease and grace. We speak openly about mental health. Having a mental health day due to stress is not a taboo in our organization. Sometimes it's the best solution.



DECLARATION #10: WE CULTIVATE PRESENCE WITH PEOPLE AND TASKS

We know our presence is the best gift we can give anyone. We practice mindfulness and do our best to be present with the task at hand and the people with whom we communicate. We know the quality of our presence has a direct impact not only to our productivity but also to our relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including our clients. Presence is power.