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*The Independent mindfulness information website*



## **Leaders who use mindfulness at work: Case study 4**

**Michael Forlenza, PhD, MPH**

**School of Leadership and Professional Advancement**

**Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA**

### **Job role and business background**

Michael is Assistant Dean in the School of Leadership. His role is both strategic and operational; “I serve on the schools’ senior management team and have responsibility and oversight for 30 staff members, approximately 200 adjunct faculty, and 800 adult undergraduate and graduate students. Academically, I provide both direct and indirect support to undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as non-credit professional development programs”.

The School has an annual budget of approximately \$4 million. Michael’s primary focus is on the development, reorganization, and implementation of school-wide operations and academic programs, policies, procedures, and processes. His role is highly analytic as well as strongly integrative and collaborative; working across groups within SLPA and the University.

### **How did you become interested in mindfulness?**

Michael first encountered mindfulness in the late ‘80’s. His current practice is based on the MBSR. “Being a psychologist, I also look to the neuroscience and contemplative science literature”.

### **How does mindfulness help you in a work context?**

“Mindfulness supports my leadership practice at several different levels simultaneously. First, on a personal level, I find the practice helps me deal with the stress of constant information overload and shifting demands and priorities. It also helps as I manage my staff; I am more present, more thoughtful and deliberative in decision-making. I believe that as I practice mindfulness, I am also a better mentor and coach. It is not that I don’t get frustrated or irritated at times; it’s just that I am more aware of it and I can more quickly recover balance and not blow things out of proportion.”

### **How does mindfulness help your organisation?**

“I think my team runs smoother and more cooperatively. Several of the team members have asked for more detailed instruction in practice. Externally, I have developed a series of well-attended networking events for professionals looking at leadership from a mindful perspective, and I have also developed a graduate course in our leadership program on leading mindfully. This course integrates the practice of mindfulness and the practice of leadership in a very practical way. I am hoping to create a version of the course for corporate trainings.”

### **If a colleague asked you if it was worth finding out more about mindfulness, what would you tell them?**

“Yes. Mindfulness is a set of practical techniques for systematically training your attention. Improved attention will result in better listening, better emotional balance and less stress. For anyone in a leadership position these are keys to success. Additionally, being mindful will enable you to create stronger teams and a more supportive and positive work environment. This in turn will lead to greater productivity and less workplace stress and conflict.”

### **Further Information**

- Duquesne University’s School of Leadership: <http://www.duq.edu/leadership>
- Mindfulnet: Mindfulness in the workplace: <http://www.mindfulnet.org/page9.htm>