



Will You Challenge Your Success Rut?

by **Sam Smith**
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Much has been written in recent years about the benefits of developing a personal mindfulness practice, which is a self-directed approach to relaxing the body and calming the mind by focusing on the present moment. Studies have shown such a practice can result in a range of positive outcomes from a decrease in depression and stress to changing brain activation and immune system response. But mindful practices can also provide insight into how to better lead the organization.

Consider a company that is currently succeeding at a high level. Revenue and profits are growing, and employee satisfaction and customer loyalty are at an all-time high. It's unlikely anyone in this organization would take their foot off the pedal for even a second to become aware of potential problems, especially when its key indicators are telling them that a problem doesn't exist. Or should they?

The wise CEO recognizes the value of being mindful on behalf of the organization at all times, which means intentionally stepping out of a rut (even a good rut) to see the bigger picture of where the train is headed. Rather than coasting through greatness, or getting bogged down by how things have always been done, great leaders force themselves to pause and see the business from a different perspective, so they can make informed choices to create sustainable growth every step of the way. One very effective way to approach this is by defining the company's leadership brand and by empowering a culture of development.

Leadership Brand

Dave Ulrich and Norm Smallwood literally wrote the book on leadership brand. They found some companies create a reputation for developing exceptional managers with

distinct talents geared toward fulfilling their customer expectations. That brand is carried throughout the organization through the purposeful engagement of employees. What results is a consistent experience for the customer, and an intentional approach to how leaders within the organization make choices and measure success. This perspective helps to shift the focus away from the qualities of individual leaders to emphasize leadership itself – more universal methods of securing the good of the firm. In short, it provides the type of perspective and framework to help senior leaders make mindful choices.

Development Culture

It has been said that training happens to a person, whereas development happens within a person. The greatest return on invested energy comes from creating an environment that allows development – the

inner work that leads to wisdom – to happen every day. We encourage and equip the executives we work with to cultivate a greater perspective on developing leaders. Often our long-term relationships begin with an "ignition experience" to interrupt patterns, begin to shift mindsets, and introduce new tools. From that point,

leaders begin using a shared language based on shared experiences to encourage one another and hold each other accountable for higher standards and greater results. With support from the top leading by example, the flywheel is turning and becomes a cultural force of differentiation for the organization.

At the Prouty Project, we use these frameworks and others to help leaders to take their foot off the gas pedal long enough to gain a new perspective and challenge assumptions. If you're ready to challenge your rut, even your success rut, give us a call.

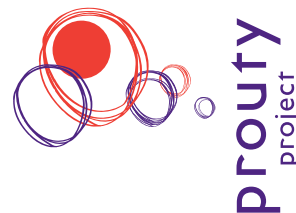
Financial Executives International (FEI) Twin Cities Trusted Peer Groups

The Prouty Project has partnered with FEI Twin Cities to offer a Trusted Peer Group program for senior financial executives. Sam Smith will be facilitating monthly sessions in which members will build trusted relationships and leverage each member's expertise as they discuss the successes and challenges they encounter and engage in opportunities to develop as leaders. For more information about participating in a peer group please contact Sam Smith at sam.smith@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922.

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Stretch 2016:
Cuba



Join us! 2016 Stretch Expedition: Cuba – Friendship Beyond the Headlines. **March 11-20, 2016.**

Informational meeting being held Wednesday, October 21 at 6:00 p.m. at our offices in Eden Prairie. For more information or to RSVP for the informational meeting, contact Jayna Wallace at 952.942.2922 / jayna.wallace@proutyproject.com.

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ISSUE 112
Q4
2015

In Honor of Sydney Galleger

Many of you read about (or heard about) the recent loss of Sydney Galleger, a 17-year-old Eden Prairie High School student and athlete, who passed away on June 12, a week after complications from a simple wisdom tooth removal. A beautiful young woman, a tragic loss.

Sydney's family and friends are working hard to raise \$75,000 to name the new aquatic center in Eden Prairie the Sydney Galleger Diving Pool in her honor.

I have never been to a funeral for a teenager, and I missed Sydney's funeral because I was out of the country. My most recent memory of Sydney

is seeing her in action at a National Charity League father-daughter event just a few weeks before her death.

She was an energetic leader, with a big, big smile.

Every day is a gift. Times like these help me to appreciate that even more. We're taking this

time to hit the pause button, take a step back, and be aware of each step along our journey. This quarter, our team took a look at the role mindfulness can play in business. We hope you give yourself a moment to reflect on these perspectives and your own.

If you'd like to support Sydney's leadership legacy, please send a check payable to Eden Prairie Community Foundation care of "Sydney Galleger Diving Pool Fund" to:

Eden Prairie Community Foundation
8080 Mitchell Road
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

To Diane and Steve (Sydney's Mom and Dad) and Jack (Sydney's younger brother), we offer our hugs, prayers, and support. Sydney will *continue* to make a difference in all our lives.

Thanks for your support,

Jeff Prouty
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"C" NOTE QUOTE:

"One thing you learn is that everybody has 24 hours, whether you're President Obama or a working-class gentleman. Everybody has 24 hours, and how you spend it is up to you."

Know the quote?

If you know who said this quote, please send an email to: melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922 by **Monday, November 2**; one guess per person. If we have more than one correct answer, we throw those names into a hat and draw the winner of a \$100 gift card.

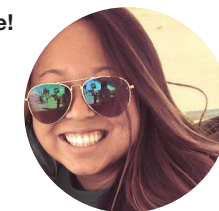
Last issue's "C" Note Quote winner is...

Angie Lee of Finnegans

Angie knew that fashion model Cameron Russell said the following: **"Figure out what's most important to you – which could mean creating something, accomplishing something, or being a part of something. There's this great quote about whether, at the end of your life, you're going to be happy you had a really clean house, or that you wrote a novel. It's so easy to get sidetracked from our long-term commitments."**

Congratulations, Angie!

Angie plans on "being an adult" with her gift card and will get her transmission fluid changed in her car.



Angie Lee



Zen and the Art of Strategy

by **Andrea West**
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Apparently, Steve Jobs was on to something. And no, I'm not talking about creating technologies with a cult-like following. For years, Jobs practiced mindfulness and meditation, those little M words that have been gaining big attention within Fortune 500 companies, professional sports teams, and even Capitol Hill.

I caught up with Justin Baker and Jen Niedzielski, co-founders of Mindful Power, a company that teaches mindfulness to enhance the performance and resilience of executives, athletes, teachers, and parents. They shared insights on how being mindful goes beyond wellness to improve strategy. Here are a few of the highlights:

Mindfulness has been making business headlines everywhere from the New York Times to Forbes. What exactly is it?



Justin Baker

a word for the concept that was antiseptic, they adopted the expression "mindfulness." Kabat-Zinn defined it as paying attention, in a particular way, on purpose, non-judgmentally. That can sound a bit like a fortune cookie. I describe it as having your mind and your body in the same place.

As mindful practices take hold at corporations like General Mills, Google, Goldman Sachs and Aetna, the focus has been on wellness and stress reduction. Beyond that, what's the potential benefit to business leaders?

JB: Seeing the landscape clearly. There can be a disease of positive thinking. In business, you need reality. How many instances have we seen like Enron or AIG where the leadership doesn't recognize what's really happening? When Mulally took over Ford in 2006, he tried to get his managers to acknowledge the problems they were facing. Every time they met, he asked them to hold up a red, yellow, or green light – yellow if there was something to watch out for, and red if there was a real problem. For

two months, it was all green lights. That is very common. Mindfulness is about being with reality exactly as it is so you can make informed decisions. But a culture of blind positivity can be very hard to change.



Jen Niedzielski

is very flexible. It strips off the blinders and allows you to entertain possibilities that you weren't able to see before because you may have been narrowly thinking, "This is the way."

What role can mindfulness play in business strategy today?

JB: Many people say they don't have the time for real strategic thinking. In her book, "Finding the Space to Lead," Janice Marturano from General Mills talked about how they had talented people with vision, yet nothing was happening. One of the benefits of mindfulness is learning how to create space, which sounds soft, until you practice it.

If you're wrapped up in task management, that uses a very specific part of your cerebral cortex. Implicit knowledge, on the other hand, is stored in a different part of the brain. When you're on manual override, in strict task management all the time, it doesn't allow those deeper reserves of implicit knowledge to surface. Marturano talks about how sometimes the best decision is no decision. There's often an urgency in business to make decisions right now to move forward. But contemplation and slowing down can be incredibly valuable to give you time for real vision and real strategic thinking.

JN: It also gives leaders the capacity to define how they measure success. There are countless ways to see success, and you get to choose. However you choose to define it provides the path on which to concentrate your energy. When you define your success from other people's standards, it can feel incredibly inauthentic. Employees can also sense this inauthenticity in their roles. They want to align their values and be part of a bigger vision.

What are some tips to get out of the whirlwind to find the space to lead?

JN: There are many techniques, but cultivating the ability to recognize what you're feeling is the first step. It starts with the breath. Just breathe. The physiology of the breath calms the physical system down and creates space in the mind to gain a little clarity so you can step back and say, "This is essential. This is not essential."

If you're really trying to change the shape and structure of your mind and your life, you need to commit to it like a workout regimen.



by **Peter Bailey**
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The Not-So-Secret Secret to IDEO's Brilliance

This past spring, Sam Smith and I joined Daniel Wordsworth, President and CEO of the American Refugee Committee (ARC) on a Silicon Valley business immersion. The purpose was to go behind the scenes of Google, LinkedIn, IDEO, and IDEO.org to see what made these companies so highly creative and responsive to their market niches.

IDEO.org, the perhaps lesser-known social-cause cousin of the famous IDEO, practices its novel, human-centered design approach on critical social issues. Their resume of life-sustaining innovations includes game changers like creating a solar lantern where there was little access to electricity, increasing crop yields with low-cost plant sensors in the Philippines, and even a unique approach to family planning education in Zambia.

Given their track record of solving complex social challenges, you might think IDEO has a carefully guarded magic bullet as their secret weapon – a clever-solution cheat sheet of some sort. The truth is, each of their ideas are generated from one of the lynchpins of mindfulness: slowing down to truly listen without expectation.

IDEO.org's guide book for practicing human-centered design extols that "There is no better way to understand the people you

Many of our programs are 8-10 weeks long with homework in between. We not only meet, discuss, meditate, and practice, we also create homework that is intellectual, intuitive, and meditative. You have to really experience it, root it down, and make it a practice.

JB: It's about habit change. The best evidence right now suggests that adult neurons take anywhere from 4-8 weeks to grow and solidify their connections, which is probably why lasting change takes time and effort.

are designing for than by immersing yourself in their lives and communities." In practice, that takes a level of humility, self-discipline, and time commitment not often allowed in today's fast-paced business environment.

On too many occasions, consultants, like designers, have preconceived notions about what a client or a community needs. Yet we're finding more every day that no single tool can be applied anymore. It is only through community or client immersion and through deep listening and artful interviewing, that we can tap into the real needs of the people we want to serve and have greater success in developing sustainable tools and solutions that work.

At the Prouty Project, we try to practice these techniques as we work with our clients so that our solution is fresh, sustainable, and specific to the unique challenge at hand. As Patrice Martin, Co-Lead and Creative Director of IDEO.org says, "We want to give ourselves the permission to explore lots of different possibilities so that the right answer can reveal itself."

Want in on the secret? Go to IDEO.org and scroll through the webpages of mindful consultants and designers who are adept at the fine art of listening.

1
INSPIRATION
Immersion Interview



2
IDEATION
Download your learnings
Brainstorm
Rapid Prototyping



3
IMPLEMENTATION
Roadmap Pilot
Keep Iterating



Great Companies are Undeterred by Discomfort

by **Mike Felmlee**
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In June, I joined a group of 18 fellow adventurers on our annual Stretch Expedition. This year's trip focused on a 7-day walk across northern Spain along the Way of St. James, also known as "El Camino de Santiago." Some of us were using this experience to enhance our spiritual journey, others were walking towards something, others to leave things behind, and still others were simply out for a long hike through some of the most beautiful and amazing scenery in the world.

All of us were looking to take a step back, hit the pause button, and be more mindful of how we were choosing to live our lives.

We arrived in Madrid and took a train to Ponferrada to begin our 120-mile walk to the city of Santiago. At first blush, walking sounded easy enough. Just put one foot in front of the other until you arrive at your comfy bed and delicious meal 15 or so miles down the road. And it is easy to walk 15 miles for the first day, maybe the second. But, the third day gets tougher. And, then comes the fourth, the fifth, and every day and beyond.

For me, the experience became a metaphor for the work we do. I asked myself: how can we help our clients and their organizations be even more mindful of each step? To not get overconfident about the first 10 miles, defeated by the long road in the middle, or focused solely on the destination? How do we help them ensure they're not growing too fast, or holding back too much such that they miss the sweet spot in their strategy to do something truly extraordinary?

Many times on the Camino, I would be thinking about how badly my feet hurt, how long it would take to walk up the next huge hill, or wonder when we would finally arrive at our destination for the evening. But when I could quiet my mind to focus on taking just one step at a time, it brought me peace and clarity about the true joy of the experience. I felt gratitude for everything that arose: pain, victory, reflection, exhaustion, and everything in between. Progress really did come from consistently putting one foot in front of the other – just not how I first imagined it would be.

In Jim Collins' bestseller, "Great By Choice," he talks about the 20-mile march as a metaphor for managing growth in business.

If your team had to embark on a 3,000-mile walk from San Diego to Maine, how would you approach it? Collins argues consistently taking 20 miles at a time, regardless of the conditions, yields the best results. On the days when it's more than 100 degrees and you want to rest in the cool of your tent, you march 20 miles. On the days when it's comfortable and the wind is at your back, you march 20 miles.

It's all about not getting deterred by discomfort. Great companies continually experience the discomfort of having unwavering commitment to high performance even in difficult conditions. And they also experience the discomfort of holding back in good conditions. Can you imagine holding your people to performance markers that delineate a lower bound of acceptable achievement in difficult times? Can you live by self-imposed constraints that actually create an upper bound for how far you'll march when facing robust opportunity and exceptionally good conditions? Great companies actually do this consistently.

If you'd like help along your 20-mile march, give us a call. We love helping companies to create consistency on their path to success.

Buen Camino!!!

