Given the attention mindfulness has received in mainstream media over the last decade, there’s a good chance you have heard of its rise in popularity. You may have even heard about the fact that companies such as Facebook and Google provide mindfulness training to their employees. But did you know that businesses right here in New Hampshire are providing similar training and experiencing its benefits?

One place that is happening is at the Grappone Automotive Group in Concord. Over the last year, I had the pleasure of giving Communicating Mindfully (CM) training to this year’s Leadership Grappone participants. Owner Amanda Grappone Osmer started the group two years ago to build leadership skills among current employees.

One of the benefits of mindfulness is that it helps increase self-awareness and provides people with an increased ability to identify and modify unproductive patterns of behavior. These discoveries and changes take place at home and at work, both of which impact one’s ability to interact productively with others, including colleagues and customers.

"In our mindful communication sessions with Dan I am observing firsthand that our team members are catching themselves before reacting negatively to their own thoughts, or to co-workers,” said Osmer. “We're having fun while learning a critically important skill.”

While we have not yet been able to measure the financial benefits of CM training at Grappone, Osmer believes there are some. She has seen changes in the way participants interact with customers (or “guests” as those at Grappone prefer to call them) that increase satisfaction. CM participants have also recognized they are less likely to get caught up in frustration and, therefore, are better able to focus on tasks and guide those they supervise. Osmer suspects these kinds of benefits not only lead to increased customer loyalty, increased productivity, and improved work ethic, but also help improve the lives of Grappone’s employees. As a result, the workplace culture becomes one in which employees can speak freely and respectfully, thus sharing vital information that helps reduce mistakes and misunderstandings, while also improving connection, camaraderie, and teamwork. Not only does this kind of communication help a workplace operate more efficiently, but it can also reduce turnover due to increased job satisfaction.

Such experiences are consistent with the findings of a 2013 study by Ute R. Hülsheger et al. that found mindfulness training reduces exhaustion and increases job satisfaction. Other studies have been done in an effort to pinpoint the impact of mindfulness training on the bottom line. In 2015, for instance, Aetna determined that productivity increased after mindfulness training at an annual rate worth $3,000 for every person who took part in the training. The company further calculated an annual $2,000 worth of savings in healthcare costs for each of those same employees. SAP, a German technology company, says it has seen a 200 percent return on its
investment in mindfulness training due, in part, to increased employee engagement and reduced absenteeism.

We are in the early stages of the experiment at the Grappone Automotive Group, but Osmer believes the results are significant and will only increase as more employees receive this training, which will be happening when the next Leadership Grappone group begins in September.

“I am grateful to be taking this class alongside ten of my team members,” says Osmer, “and I’m learning every bit as much as they are.”

NHTI’s Business Training Center offers mindful communication trainings in a variety of formats. Each training infuses mindfulness with essential communication skills that are vital participants’ workplace performance and overall wellbeing.

About the author: Dan Huston is a professor of English at NHTI—Concord’s Community College. He created the Communicating Mindfully curriculum which serves as the foundational course for the college’s mindful communication certificate.

For more information about mindful communication training, contact the NHTI Business Training Center at (603) 234-4022 or nhtibtc@ccsnh.edu.

Mindfulness in Society Conference: NHTI will be hosting its 2nd Annual Mindfulness in Society Conference September 13 & 14th. For more information, visit www.nhti.edu/community-visitor