

BETTER DECISION-MAKING THROUGH MINDFULNESS-BASED STRATEGIC AWARENESS TRAINING

The key features of strategic awareness are wisdom, equanimity, friendliness, and open awareness... Strategic awareness is the awareness that travels without limits into the past recollecting accurate memories while staying in the present moment with accurate perceptions, able to formulate accurate predictions about the future.

- Juan Humberto Young, businessman, investor, and author¹

Ron Roberts was exhausted. It was June 2021, 15 months since the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 pandemic. The CEO of a boutique hotel in the downtown area of Singapore, Ron had been struggling to keep the business afloat. The hospitality industry was among the hardest hit during the pandemic and bore the brunt of travel restrictions. Tourist arrivals had plummeted to their lowest in 40 years due to border closures² and room occupancy rates had fallen sharply by half since the start of the pandemic³. With significant losses in revenue, the hotel struggled to pay workers' salaries, mortgages, and other expenses. The financial stress weighed heavily on Ron, and he often experienced bouts of severe anxiety.

One evening, as he settled down in his office, he began recalling the mindfulness-based techniques to manage the stress that he had learned in a workshop some years ago. He had not been practising mindfulness for some time; perhaps it was time to pick it up again via a refresher course, he thought to himself. Leaping to action, he quickly made a call to his friend, Amanda Lee, a manager at the Mindfulness Initiative@SMU (Singapore Management University). Amanda recommended the Mindfulness-Based Strategic Awareness Training (MBSAT), a course that was tailored for leaders to enhance decision-making skills while sustaining well-being for themselves and others. Ron was keen to hear more, and Amanda arranged for five participants from recent classes to speak with him.

“Sign me up for the next intake!” Ron said excitedly to Amanda a week later, after having spoken to the five participants individually. He figured the course would not only be relevant for himself, but his staff too might benefit from a mindfulness-based approach to well-being and effectiveness. He would also evaluate the suitability of MBSAT for workplace implementation at the hotel.

¹ Juan Humberto Yong, “Mindfulness-Based Strategic Awareness Training: A Complete Program for Leaders and Individuals”, Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

² Adeline Tan, “S’pore’s Tourist Arrivals Fell 85% to 2.7m, Lowest in Four Decades Due to Covid-19”, The Straits Times, February 1, 2021, https://www.straitstimes.com/_.covid-19, accessed October 2021.

³ Tang See Kit, “Why New Hotels are Still Opening in Singapore Despite the COVID-19 Pandemic”, CNA, April 26, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/.tourism-246531>, accessed October 2021.

This case was written by Professor Jochen Reb, Dr Juan Humberto Young and Dr Cheah Sin Mei at the Singapore Management University. The case was prepared solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.