

# Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: agile and mindful

## Key contextual facts

- organisations have evolved considerably from the 'network' organisation of the 1980s to the emergence of the cellular organisation of recent years
- a constant theme throughout these evolutions has been the breakdown of barriers.
- to face challenges linked to the breakdown of barriers, the business world relies on 'agility', a concept that can be applied to organisations as well as individuals

## What is the issue?

In an era of technological disruption, the pace at which we live and work seems to be accelerating and many appear to struggle to keep up at a time when human longevity is also increasing. As individuals, we seek to be innovative, creative, agile and flexible and yet, as workers, we are called on to promote standardisation, processes, efficiency and predictability; how can we resolve this apparent paradox?

## What research did the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life do?

In June 2016, the Institute held a round-table 'Dialogue' in Montigny-le-Bretonneux (France) of experts with relevant knowledge and experience from business, the medical sector, from academic disciplines including neurosciences, human resources management and health psychology to explore:

- the historical evolution of the organisation of work
- present and potential future organisational typologies
- how to learn to be ourselves by developing our ability to collaborate
- the emergence, development, use and benefits of practicing mindfulness at work

## What did we learn?

To juggle the demanding 21st century workplace, the practice of mindfulness – which consists in developing a quality of voluntary and intentional attentiveness – may help to facilitate agility.

Three guiding principles to help organisations become more 'conscious' without people feeling forced into mindfulness:

- the practices that lend support to agile behaviours should be no mystery (i.e. no new ideology or religion is needed but a body-centred activity with proven benefits in the neurosciences)
- an impulse such as the challenges of organisational transformation or simply the acceleration of life/work is enticing
- training for a practice such as mindfulness should be initiated by someone with high visibility within the organisation

**Find out more by reading the full report: 'Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: agile and mindful'** (also available in French).

## About the Institute

As an in-house 'think-tank', the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life is inspired by Sodexo's deeply held conviction that improving Quality of Life leads to the progress of individuals and contributes to the performance of organisations. Its role is to gather and develop insight to help Sodexo understand better what are the levers of Quality of Life.

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