

*87% of UK Professionals Pigeonhole Meditation as
a "Sleep Aid", Ignoring Proven Performance
Benefits"*

The Untapped Asset:
2026 Perceptions of Meditation & Performance

January 2026

Author: Simon Jones DipBSoM Founder, klarosity



Meditation for Performance

Executive Summary

In the high-performance environments of Silicon Valley and elite sport, meditation is no longer viewed as a "wellness perk." It is deployed as a cognitive strategy to enhance neuroplasticity, sharpen decision-making, and build resilience.

However, new data suggests UK business culture has not kept up.

klarosity commissioned independent research of 300 UK professionals, managers, and directors to understand how the British business community views meditation. The results reveal a startling "Perception Gap."

While UK leaders are facing an unprecedented burnout and productivity crisis, they are actively ignoring one of the most evidence-based tools for solving it.

Key Findings

- **The Wellness Trap:**
87% of respondents associate meditation primarily with "Relaxation" or "Sleep."
- **The Leadership Void:**
Only 4% see meditation as a tool for building "Leadership Skills."
- **The Innovation Deficit:**
In an economy demanding creativity, only 11% associate meditation with "Innovation."
- **The Scepticism Barrier:**
Despite decades of research, 47% of UK professionals are still "Neutral" or "Disagree" that meditation improves performance.

Contents

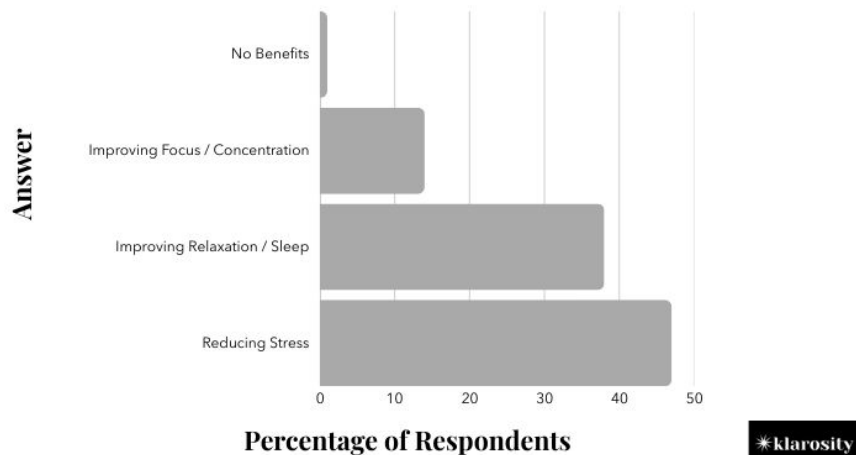
1. **Part 1:**
The Data
2. **Part 2:**
Science Vs Perception
3. **Part 3:**
The Solution
4. **Part 4:**
Methodology Statement

Part 1: The Data

While Silicon Valley founders view meditation as a competitive advantage, our research suggests UK leadership views it as a sedative. The data reveals a stark divide between the science of performance and the perception of business.

1. The Wellness Monopoly

Q: When you hear the word "meditation," what is the first benefit that comes to mind?



The Insight:

Leaders are categorising meditation alongside a "warm bath" or a "glass of wine." They fail to see it as active mental training.

The Question:

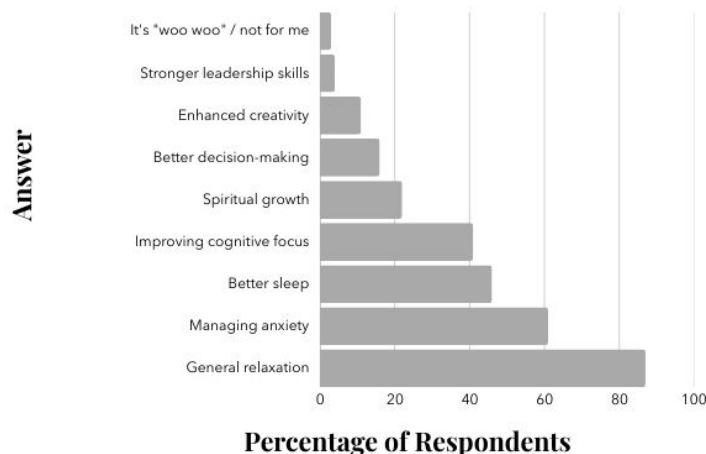
"When you hear the word 'meditation,' what is the first benefit that comes to mind?"

The perception of meditation in the UK is overwhelmingly passive. It is viewed as a sedative, something to do *after* work to switch off, rather than a tool to use *during* work to switch on.

- **47%** chose "Reducing Stress"
- **38%** chose "Relaxation / Sleep"
- **Only 14%** chose "Improving Focus / Concentration"

2. The Leadership Void

Q: Which of the following do you associate with meditation?



*klarosity

The Insight:

We are in a "Leadership Crisis," yet **96%** of professionals are ignoring a proven tool for building better leaders.

The Question:

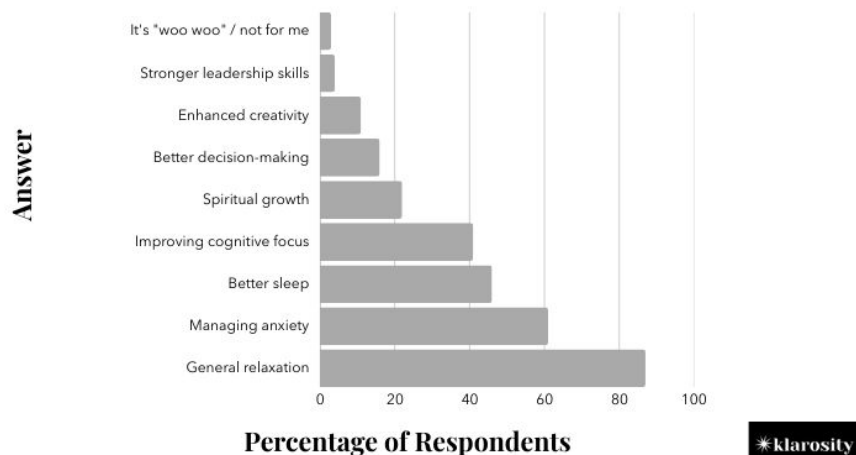
"Which of the following do you associate with meditation?"

This is the critical miss for UK PLC. While research confirms that mindfulness increases emotional intelligence and empathy (critical for modern leadership), UK managers simply do not make the connection.

- **87%** associate it with "General Relaxation."
- **61%** associate it with "Managing Anxiety."
- **...but only 4% associate it with "Stronger Leadership Skills."**

3. The Innovation Deficit

Q: Which of the following do you associate with meditation?



The Insight:

Business leaders are leaving their biggest competitive advantage on the table.

The Question:

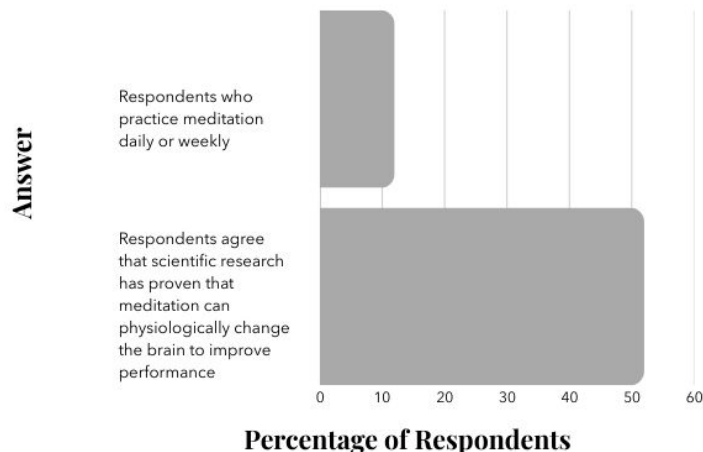
"Which of the following do you associate with meditation?"

While "Innovation" is consistently ranked as a top priority for CEOs, the data shows leaders are ignoring the cognitive input required to produce it. They view creativity as a fixed trait, rather than a cognitive state they can access on demand.

- Only **16%** of leaders associate meditation with "Better Decision-Making."
- Only **11%** associate meditation with "Enhanced Creativity."

4. The Execution Gap

The Execution Gap: Over 50% believe that meditation helps performance, but only 12% practice



*klarosity

The Insight:

The science has landed, but the habit hasn't. Leaders treat cognitive training like a gym membership they pay for but never use.

The Question:

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Scientific research has proven that meditation can physiologically change the brain to improve performance." vs "How often, if at all, do you currently practice meditation?"

The data reveals a stark "knowing-doing" gap. While the majority of leaders accept the evidence that meditation is a performance enhancer, the vast majority still fail to build it into their routine. They treat it as a "wellness perk" rather than a "performance discipline."

- **52%** agreed that meditation improves performance.
- **Only 12%** practice it daily or often.

Part 2: Science Vs Perception

Opinion is divided. The science is not. While 47% of leaders remain skeptical, neuroscientific research has already mapped the specific neural pathways that link meditation to executive function, resilience, and innovation.

Opinion is Divided. The Science is Not

While 47% of leaders remain skeptical, neuroscientific research has already mapped the specific neural pathways that link meditation to executive function, resilience, and innovation.

Myth 1: Focus

THE MYTH:

Meditation is just for relaxation.

THE SCIENCE:

Meditation rewires the brain for focus.

THE EVIDENCE:

Research by Tang et al. (2007) demonstrated that just 5 days of practice significantly improved attention and conflict resolution scores.

THE REALITY:

You don't meditate to "zone out." You meditate to "zone in."

Myth 2: Resilience

THE MYTH:

Empathy is a weakness that leads to burnout.

THE SCIENCE:

Compassion is a renewable performance resource.

THE EVIDENCE:

A landmark neuroimaging study by Klimecki et al. (2014) proved that while "empathy" activates the brain's pain centers (leading to distress), "compassion training" activates reward networks, effectively protecting leaders from burnout.

THE REALITY:

Sustainable leadership isn't about feeling *for* your team; it's about having the resilience to be *there* for them.

Myth 3: Innovation

THE MYTH:

Meditation is a "soft" skill with no hard ROI.

THE SCIENCE:

Meditation drives innovation and strategy.

THE EVIDENCE:

Research by Colzato et al. (2012) found that "Open Monitoring" meditation specifically enhances divergent **thinking**, the cognitive process responsible for generating novel ideas and creative problem-solving.

THE REALITY:

It is not a wellness perk. It is a competitive advantage for strategic thinking.

Evidence and Further Reading

A summary of evidence supporting the benefits of meditation for resilience, cognitive function, improved leadership & creativity:

1. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness in brain regions related to attention and sensory processing. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. Lazar et al. 2005.
2. Experienced meditators show decreased activity in the Default Mode Network (DMN) and increased connectivity with cognitive control regions. Meditation experience is associated with differences in default mode network activity and connectivity. Brewer et al. 2011
3. LKM increases positive emotions, which in turn build personal resources (e.g., resilience, social support), leading to greater life satisfaction. Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. Fredrickson et al. 2008
4. Brief meditation reduces anxiety by activating brain regions for cognitive control (e.g., anterior cingulate cortex). Neural correlates of mindfulness meditation-related anxiety relief. Zeidan et al. 2013
5. Five days of brief meditation training significantly improved executive attention, reduced stress, and enhanced mood. Short-term meditation training improves attention and self-regulation. Tang et al. 2007
6. This longitudinal study showed that an eight-week mindfulness program led to measurable increases in gray matter density in brain regions involved in memory, self-awareness, and emotion regulation. Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. Holzel et al. 2011
7. Meditators show superior attentional control and cognitive flexibility compared to non-meditators. Meditation, mindfulness and cognitive flexibility. Moore et al. 2009
8. Mindfulness training improves the ability to solve insight problems by reducing the influence of habitual thought patterns and cognitive rigidity. Stepping out of history. Mindfulness improves insight problem solving. Ostafin et al. 2012

Part 3: The Solution

Moving Beyond Wellness: A Structured Approach to Meditation Training

The findings in The Untapped Asset report reveal a critical missed opportunity for UK PLC: while the majority of leaders accept the science of mental training, few have operationalised it as a performance discipline.

To bridge this "Execution Gap," we move beyond the passive "wellness" narrative and introduce The Performance Meditation Approach.

This proprietary five-stage training system leverages specific meditation modalities to build the "neural muscle" required for superior decision-making and leadership. It is designed not as a linear progression, but as a recurring training loop to continuously optimise your mental architecture:

01: Reset 02: Fortify 03: Calibrate 04: Ideate 05: Inspire

01. Reset: Regain Your Physiological Baseline

Many of us start our day at a deficit.

High-stakes environments often leave us in a state of chronic hyper-arousal and physical tension. This "noise" in your nervous system means you are attempting to make complex, strategic decisions while your brain is physically diverted into a survival state.

The Performance Approach:

We use the Relaxation Response, a universal physiological state that acts as the direct biological antithesis to the "fight-or-flight" response. Through targeted training in Interoception (the perception of bodily sensations), we "reverse-engineer" the stress response to shift your system from high-arousal to composed stability.

The Performance Benefit:

1. ***Immediate Recovery:***
Achieve documented reductions in heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol, allowing you to re-access your full cognitive bandwidth.
2. ***Structural Resilience:***
Research shows this training increases cortical thickness in the brain's sensory monitoring hub (the right anterior insula), which acts as a neuroprotective buffer against cognitive decline.

The Science:

Benson, H., et al. (1974): Established the "Relaxation Response" as the universal biological antithesis to the fight-or-flight state. It documents immediate reductions in heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen consumption.

Lazar, S. W., et al. (2005): Demonstrated that meditation experience is linked to increased cortical thickness in the right anterior insula, the hub for interoception and sensory processing. This suggests a neuroprotective effect that can offset cognitive decline.

02. Fortify: Reclaim Your Cognitive Bandwidth

In moments of high pressure, your mind can become trapped in "loops" of rumination.

This high-stakes mental chatter consumes the cognitive energy you need for execution, leading to distraction and decision fatigue.

The Performance Approach:

We move beyond simple relaxation to train the capacity for "Decentering". This is the technical skill of observing your thoughts as transient mental events rather than immutable realities, changing your fundamental relationship with internal pressure.

The Performance Benefit:

1. ***Mental Clarity:***
Proactively reduce psychological distress and the "mental loops" that lead to burnout.
2. ***Decoupled Response:***
Gain the ability to remain objective and non-reactive even when facing intrusive or distractive thought patterns.

The Science:

Jain, S., et al. (2007): A randomised controlled trial proving that mindfulness meditation specifically reduces psychological distress by decreasing ruminative thoughts. It identified a unique mechanism, changing one's relationship to thoughts, that distinguishes it from simple relaxation.

03. Calibrate: Sharpen Executive Attention

The modern professional mind wanders for nearly 47% of the time.

This isn't just a minor distraction; it is a direct cause of inefficiency, poor performance, and the feeling of being perpetually "busy" without being productive.

The Performance Approach:

We use Focused Attention Meditation (FA) training to exercise the prefrontal cortex, the brain's seat of higher-order executive function. By strengthening this "neural muscle," we learn to de-activate the Default Mode Network (DMN), the brain's mind-wandering engine.

The Performance Benefit:

1. ***Precision Focus:***
Enhance your metacognitive accuracy, giving you the ability to accurately assess and optimise your own performance in real-time.
2. ***Attentional Stability:***
Build the capacity to filter out digital and mental noise for sustained periods of deep, productive work.

The Science:

Killingsworth, M. A., & Gilbert, D. T. (2010): Documented that human minds wander 46.9% of the time, which directly causes reduced performance and happiness.

Brewer, J. A., et al. (2011): Showed that experienced practitioners can significantly deactivate the Default Mode Network (DMN), the brain's "mind-wandering engine". It also demonstrated stronger functional connectivity with regions involved in cognitive control.

Baird, B., et al. (2014): Confirmed that targeted training significantly improves metacognitive accuracy (the ability to accurately monitor one's own cognitive performance).

04. Ideate: Unlock Strategic Innovation

Under sustained stress, the mind becomes rigid.

You might find yourself relying on habitual "history" and safe patterns rather than the novel, non-linear thinking required for genuine breakthrough.

The Performance Approach:

We use Open Monitoring (OM) Meditation practices to cultivate a "distributed cognitive control state". By lowering cognitive barriers and reducing rigidity, you allow for broader, more creative conceptual jumps.

The Performance Benefit:

1. ***Divergent Thinking:***
Proven to improve the volume, flexibility, and originality of your ideas.
2. ***Insight Accuracy:***
Increase the frequency of "Aha!" moments by reducing the influence of habitual thought patterns on complex problem-solving.

The Science:

Colzato, L. S., et al. (2012): Proved that Open Monitoring (OM) meditation specifically improves divergent thinking, which is the primary driver for idea generation and brainstorming.

Ostafin, B. D., & Kassman, K. T. (2012): Found that mindfulness training improves the ability to solve insight problems ("Aha!" moments) by reducing the influence of habitual thought patterns.

05. Inspire: Lead with Sustainable Influence

Ambitious leadership requires high levels of empathy.

But, empathy alone can lead to personal distress and "depletion-led" burnout. Without a buffer, the emotional load of managing a high-performing team can become unsustainable.

The Performance Approach:

We shift the focus from empathy to Compassion Training. This engages the brain's reward and affiliation networks rather than distress signals, fostering an action-oriented state of leadership.

The Performance Benefit:

1. ***Burnout Protection:***
Create a sustainable neurobiological buffer against the stresses of relational leadership.
2. ***Team Trust:***
Improve empathic accuracy, the ability to correctly infer another person's thoughts and feelings from subtle non-verbal cues.

The Science:

Klimecki, O. M., et al. (2014): Provided the first neurobiological distinction between empathy and compassion, showing that compassion training shifts brain activity to reward and affiliation networks rather than distress signals.

Mascaro, J. S., et al. (2013): Demonstrated that compassion training improves empathic accuracy, specifically the ability to correctly infer another person's thoughts and feelings from non-verbal cues.

Don't Just Relax. Train.



Simon Jones DipBSoM, Founder, klarosity

"We need to stop treating meditation like it's just a spa treatment and start treating it like cognitive training. The data shows that UK leaders are ignoring their most powerful performance asset because they think it's just for sleep. At klarosity, we don't just teach you to relax. We teach you to perform."

Simon Jones Founder, klarosity

About the Author

I'm Si, the Founder of klarosity and an externally accredited Meditation Teacher through the British School of Meditation. I teach meditation to Executives, Leaders, Founders & ambitious Professionals from all walks of life. I've been practicing meditation for over 15 years and experienced first-hand the resilience, focus, and clarity that a consistent practice can bring.

Part 4: Methodology

Methodology Statement: The Untapped Asset: 2026 Perceptions of Meditation & Performance

Overview

This research was commissioned by **klarosity** to investigate the attitudes, perceptions, and usage of meditation as a professional performance tool within the United Kingdom's business community.

Data Collection & Rigour

- **Fieldwork Dates:** November 17, 2025
- **Platform:** Data was collected via **Prolific**, an academic-standard research platform that verifies participant identity and employment status.
- **Sample Size:** N = 300
- **Geography:** United Kingdom
- **Employment Status:** 100% of respondents are currently employed Full-Time.

Sample Demographics

The study specifically targeted a mix of individual contributors and decision-makers.

- **Leadership & Management Cohort:** 172 Respondents (57.3%)
 - *Includes: C-Suite Executives, Business Owners, Directors, Senior Managers, and Managers.*
- **Individual Contributors:** 128 Respondents (42.7%)

Contact

For data inquiries or interview requests, please contact:

Simon Jones Founder, klarosity

simon@klarosity.com

<https://www.klarosity.com>

Survey Instrument:

Respondents were asked five key questions to assess their perception of meditation in a professional context.

To avoid bias, the study did not reveal klarosity as the sponsor during the data collection phase.

Data Access: klarosity is committed to transparency in research. Anonymised raw data tables verifying the statistics cited in this report are available for editorial review upon request.

Contact For data inquiries or interview requests, please contact: **Simon Jones** Founder, klarosity, simon@klarosity.com

- **Q1 (Perception):** *"When you hear the word 'meditation,' what is the first benefit that comes to mind?"* [Single Choice]
- **Q2 (Association):** *"Which of the following professional outcomes do you associate with meditation?"* [Multiple Choice]
- **Q3 (Barriers):** *"What is the main reason you don't have a consistent meditation practice?"* [Single Choice]
- **Q4 (Frequency):** *"How often, if at all, do you currently practice meditation?"* [Single Choice]
- **Q5 (Scientific Belief):** *"To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: 'Scientific research has proven that meditation can physiologically change the brain to improve performance.'"* [Likert Scale]



Meditation for Performance