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Responsible
Business Network



SECURING SENIOR BUY-IN FOR YOUR WELLBEING STRATEGY

March 2015

INTRODUCTION

Taking the right approach to securing senior buy-in for your wellbeing strategy is crucial. This guide provides an overview of the key things you need to know before starting out.

- 1 Context: the mental health at work agenda
- 2 The moral case for action
- 3 The business case for action
- 4 Know your stakeholders
- 5 The risks of doing nothing



1 CONTEXT: THE MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK AGENDA

People are working longer and harder than ever before in a tough business climate – but UK productivity is low by comparison with other G7 nations.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates the cost of mental ill-health to the UK economy at £70 billion per year, or 4.5% of GDP
- One in four people experiences a mental health condition such as stress, depression or anxiety each year. The OECD estimates these conditions cost employers at least £26 billion, or £1,035 per employee, over the same period.



1 CONTEXT: THE MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK AGENDA

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) states that 15.2 million days of sickness absence across the UK in 2013 were caused by stress, anxiety or depression, a dramatic increase from 11.8 million days in 2010
- Studies suggest that 'presenteeism' from mental ill-health alone costs the UK economy £15.1 billion each year, almost twice the cost of employees actually being absent from work
- Mental health conditions are common and the cost to business is huge, but talking about mental health still has a stigma attached to it – it is vital that this is addressed
- Research has indicated that highly engaged organisations have the potential to reduce staff turnover by 87%.



2 THE MORAL CASE FOR ACTION

Mental health conditions are becoming more common, but in many cases people are afraid to speak out and seek support – this culture of silence is resulting in suffering and discrimination for employees across the UK.

- Four in 10 UK employees have experienced stress, anxiety or depression and not told their employer, and over 50% of all workers believe being open about a common mental health problem would damage their career prospects
- In 2015, Time to Change conducted research which found that nearly 60% of people with a mental health problem were waiting over a year to tell the people closest to them about it.



2 THE MORAL CASE FOR ACTION

- More than a quarter of employees have said that a sick day was due to a physical problem when it was actually due to a mental health issue
- Increasingly, businesses are realising their moral responsibility to tackle mental health issues and to help their employees lead happy, healthy lives
- Helping businesses promote positive mental wellbeing throughout society is one of the big challenges of our time – businesses need to treat mental health on a par with physical health and help positive mental wellbeing to become business as usual.



3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

UK Business	Costs of inaction	Benefits of investing in wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UK businesses are paying high costs for remedial interventions, while investing only small amounts in preventative approaches• Proactive businesses will lower overall costs by investing in prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenteeism• High absence rate• Exit/new hire/replacement costs• Loss of individual expertise/relationships• Ongoing high spend on remedial interventions, due to culture of silence and poor support and/or poor take-up• Risk of negative publicity/reputational impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher engagement and productivity• Reduced absence and turnover• Create advocates for recovery/support• Move towards a preventative approach, based on a culture of openness and wellbeing• Enhanced brand/ employer of choice

Each business has unique drivers and hot spots: a bespoke business case is critical.



3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Using external data to develop a bespoke case for a proactive mental wellbeing strategy

- Each organisation will have a unique set of reasons for implementing a mental wellbeing strategy, and the benefits will be different in each case too. When developing your case, make sure it is tailored to focus on specific business needs, and that these play to your strengths as an organisation
- **Bupa's** purpose is to help people lead longer, healthier, happier lives. As such, promoting the mental wellbeing agenda is central to the nature of its business: creating a culture which supports people to be happy and healthy. In the UK, Bupa used the signing of the Time to Change pledge to reaffirm their strategic approach to mental wellbeing, and the company's top 100 UK leaders added their signatures in support of the pledge.



3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Using external data to develop a bespoke case for a proactive mental wellbeing strategy (*continued*)

- There is strong external evidence to help you quantify how much poor mental health is likely to be costing your organisation. Public data from bodies such as the OECD and the ONS can be used to highlight the need in your organisation
- Personalise data and make it relevant by showing how the issues highlighted could affect your business. This is essential to helping your stakeholders and the board understand why action on wellbeing is needed.



3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Using external data to develop a bespoke case for a proactive mental wellbeing strategy

Real-life example: Friends Life

- By analysing claims data, **Friends Life** worked out that mental ill-health is the primary cause of income protection claims. This pointed to a need for the business to take a lead in driving a cultural shift around colleague mental wellbeing as part of a long-term business strategy
- Friends Life also knew from external research that UK employees taking mental health-related absence often do not identify this as the cause, instead citing poor physical health or other illnesses. They knew that this is common across all organisations because people with a mental health problem often don't want to talk about it due to the fear of stigma.

3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Using external data to develop a bespoke case for a proactive mental wellbeing strategy.

Real-life example: Friends Life (*continued*)

- To determine the impact of employee mental ill-health, Friends Life analysed external data indicating that the average cost of mental ill-health to UK employers is around £1 million per thousand employees. Friends Life presented these findings to their Group Executive Committee to help secure support for a greater focus on mental wellbeing amongst its workforce
- Use management information to benchmark your performance against national and sector trends and identify hot spots in your organisation where the need for proactive and preventative support is greatest.

3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

Using external data to develop a bespoke case for a proactive mental wellbeing strategy

- When going through the process of securing senior buy-in, set out how you plan to evaluate your programme to benchmark progress and to assess the impact it will have. This is an important aspect of generating support for your strategy
- **Business in the Community's Responsible Business Tracker allows you to benchmark progress over time, and to compare your results with those of your peers.**



3 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION



Expert view

**Helen Wray, Health and Wellbeing Business Partner,
Mars Chocolate UK**

‘Having strong leadership to guide your programme is really important. Make sure that you engage your leaders as much as possible right at the start, otherwise you risk ending up with schemes that no one takes part in. It’s particularly important to get leaders involved in every aspect of your programme, right down to endorsing projects at a local level.

‘For our senior team the key challenge was making sure they were really clear on what we were trying to achieve so that they could articulate our key messages effectively.’



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4 KNOW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Map your stakeholders – work out who you need to approach and when you need to approach them.

- Identify senior figures who are willing to speak out
- Consider how you will make the message relevant to everyone
- Many businesses highlight the importance of creating a mental health champion role at senior level.



4 KNOW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS



Expert view

Georgia Hedley, UK Health and Benefits Specialist, American Express

‘Our approach was a success largely because we identified in advance which stakeholders we should be speaking with and made targeted approaches accordingly. For instance, our legal department was interested in what impact our proposal would have from an employee relations perspective.’

‘There are lots of stakeholders who you’ll need to get on board and provide tailored briefings for in advance. This is key to any successful attempt to get united support behind your strategy, so making sure there is a clear timescale and a planned approach is really key.’



4 KNOW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS



Expert view

**Roger Cotton, Corporate Responsibility Manager,
Friends Life**

‘Securing our Chief Risk Officer as our mental health champion was an important step in demonstrating both to our employees and the public that we are serious about mental wellbeing.’

‘She takes every opportunity to flag the importance of mental wellbeing at internal events, to help encourage as many employees as possible to use the resources available to them. Her role has been key to the success of our mental wellbeing programme.’



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4 KNOW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Expert view

Andy Buxton, Health and Wellbeing Manager, National Grid

'It was a natural decision for our board to offer more committed help for our workforce to support their mental wellbeing. It's an area that we've been passionate about for a long time. We know that there are business benefits from having employees who maintain and improve their wellbeing and are engaged and motivated in their work, but the main reason for us offering support to our people is because it is our responsibility as a progressive and responsible employer. It's simply the right thing to do.'

Richard Seville, Senior HR Manager, P&G

'One of the reasons that we've had such widespread support from across the business is because this is an issue that is relevant to everyone. Mental ill-health can affect anyone, regardless of their position, background or personal life. As such, we have a duty to do all we can to help our employees to be happy and well. This is the first and foremost priority.'



5 THE RISKS OF DOING NOTHING

The consequences of not taking action can be significant, for both businesses and employees.

- Common mental health conditions can soon become worse
- Companies that do not take action risk losing out in the long term
- But the positive news is that more senior leaders are driving transparency.



5 THE RISKS OF DOING NOTHING



Expert view

Lee Murray, Group Head of Occupational Health and Safety, Anglian Water

‘Get leaders involved as much as you can – this was an incredibly important aspect of our Get Active campaign. When you have a collective ambition to take action on an important issue, with everyone in the organisation leading by example, it creates the best opportunities for sustainable change.’



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5 THE RISKS OF DOING NOTHING



Expert view

**Dr Phillip Gibbs, Director of Product Development,
QA and Insights, GSK**

‘Helping people engage with tools and programmes that give them the flexibility to make changes suited to their needs is important, and one of the best ways to help achieve this is getting the right buy-in from leaders and encouraging employees to advocate what you’re doing. Taking this approach is one of the key reasons why our programmes have been successful.’



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WHAT NEXT?

- Start planning your approach and think about which aspects may present the biggest challenge
- Arrange a meeting with your BITC wellbeing advisor to discuss these challenges in depth
- Speak to your BITC wellbeing advisor about communicating a successful wellbeing strategy.

