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The Hidden Pandemic: why employee wellbeing matters more than ever and what employers can do to help

Additional responses to audience questions from the webinar

by Dr Nick Earley, Head of Psychology, Happence

& tips shared in the “chat” by attendees

Q: Do you think we will keep having the focus on employment wellbeing after the pandemics?

Nick: Whilst the pandemic has been a horrendous ordeal overall, one of the few benefits has been a greater focus on wellbeing; both for individuals and companies. We have seen wellbeing become a C-suite agenda item in many companies, which can only be a good thing. At the very least, it has meant companies will be better versed not just in the human argument but also the strong economic argument for a preventive approach alongside a reactive approach. Time will tell, but we are optimistic these positive changes will continue in the post-covid future.

Q: What is your best advice for engaging managers in wellbeing programmes? I find this is often met with reluctance.

Nick: As echoed by Janet and Susan, it is important that there is a strong understanding and support amongst the leadership team for a wellbeing strategy that is clearly communicated to all employees, particularly managers.

If leaders are prepared to share personal experiences that can also go a long way to helping employees to take an interest in wellbeing and speak up if they are struggling.

It is incredibly important that employees feel they are working in a culture where they can openly discuss wellbeing and mental health, free of stigma and discrimination.

Having wellbeing champion networks or mental health first aiders can be helpful in keeping the areas of focus fresh, ensuring new managers and staff are clear on what is available and how it can be accessed, and harnessing feedback and ideas from staff on how to improve wellbeing initiatives.

Q: You can have a 'yeah I have that too...and I get on' response which can be invalidating. How would that be tackled?

Nick: Attitudes to wellbeing and mental health can vary dramatically, and this is often due to people having a lack of knowledge on the subject. The best way to tackle these kinds of comments is



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through well thought out wellbeing strategies with campaigns that are inclusive and accessible to everyone in the company and fully backed by the leadership team.

Attitudes to mental health and wellbeing can vary dramatically – often down to a lack of knowledge on the subject. For those that hold attitudes that minimise the importance of wellbeing or espouse the ‘just get on with it’ mentality, it is important to provide education through a leadership-backed wellbeing strategy with advocates and champions at all levels in the business. As was mentioned by Janet, having leaders that are willing to share anecdotal experiences can really help with this.

Q: Would you say the number of people suffering mental health issues will take many years to go back to pre-covid levels?

Nick: It’s very difficult to tell at the moment. However, the events of covid have caused a great deal of stress and trauma for many people, which will likely lead to increased need for mental health provision in NHS services. On the other hand, we are hopeful that mental health and wellbeing have brought the topics more into the public discourse, which will hopefully reduce stigma and encourage people to seek supported sooner.

Q: How do you balance the need for meeting strenuous business targets with wellbeing?

Nick: A focus on wellbeing can actually help businesses achieve their targets. If employees have greater wellbeing, they are more likely to be more focused, engaged and better able to manage stressors that might face.

Stressed or disengaged employees are more likely to be absent from work, not performing at their best or to move on from their roles. All these factors will adversely impact business targets.

Q: We, as a business have had a lot of Suicide and serious incidents in the last year (hotel industry) affecting our colleagues greatly, keen to understand how we can support them further.

Claire: Answered during the webinar but also here are links to some useful resources:

BITC has this excellent toolkit: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/suicide-prevention-toolkit/>

Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Cruse bereavement care: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Useful article: <https://makeadifference.media/mental/covid-19-roundtable-supporting-colleagues-through-death-bereavement-grief/>



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Useful tips shared in the chat:

In regards to the £45-50 billion number, this may be of interest:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/poor-mental-health-costs-uk-employers-up-to-pound-45-billion-a-year.html>

I am a Communications, Engagement and Performance Lead for a staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub. Thoroughly enjoying listening to the discussions today. NHS England and Involvement have set up 12 hubs across the UK to support staff affected by COVID. Worth having a look at their toolkits to see how you can incorporate this into a business too.

Wellbeing development reviews in addition to personal business development reviews!

Would be great if we set up a Working Group where Businesses come together and share best practices.

- There is the Bank Workers Charity
- I believe the Bank Standard Board are doing some work with the What Works Centre for Wellbeing on this @Martin

<https://www.mindfulbusinesscharter.com/>

<https://makeadifference.media/reports/thriving-at-work-global-framework/>

<https://makeadifference.media/reports/thriving-at-work-uk-guide/>