

Be well. Get better. Be supported.

Promoting effective people management



In partnership with



What makes a good manager?

Just as business success can - and indeed, should be - defined by more than sales or market share, a good manager is defined by more than business success. Good managers take care of their teams, understand their mental health needs, and can react with the right support, and in doing so, help their respective businesses to succeed.

A challenge to this is that a lot of people are promoted into management positions by virtue of their success in prior roles or projects, rather than a holistic assessment of all their capabilities and appropriateness for the role. In order to effectively leverage leaders and their potential, businesses therefore need to equip line managers with support and a full suite of training to help them fulfil their leadership duties. This is particularly apparent when it comes to staff's wellbeing and mental health.

As pointed out in the Stevenson-Farmer Thriving at Work Report, effective people management is seen as one of the most crucial components in a workplace's ability to maximise the wellbeing of its workforce.

"Employers want to do the right thing, but line managers lack the training, skills or confidence required to effectively support others at a very basic level," the review stated. Further, only 24% of managers have received some form of training on mental health at work, according to Business in the Community's 2017 Mental Health at Work Report.

Factors such as the stigma around mental health often prevent employees from speaking up about what they need and typically leave their managers feeling uncomfortable having these conversations. Line managers must feel both free and properly equipped to have these important discussions with employees at every level.

The good news is that there is no better time for businesses to make improvements or to develop a comprehensive training plan. Legal & General has worked with Inside-Out to take a closer look at how organisations can embed effective people management.



Who are inside out?

Started as a social enterprise, InsideOut is a community interest company with a unique mission of ending the stigma of mental ill-health in the workplace by creating both tools and space for business leaders to learn and share best practices for mental wellness through open discussion of their individual experiences.

Removing the stigma

In the Stevenson-Farmer Report, Adrian Wakeling of Advisory Conciliation Arbitration Service recalled an example from their helpline where one employer said of a member of their staff: "She hasn't got a disability as such, it's just the mental health issues." Irrespective of the diagnosis or correct definitions, perhaps the word 'just' is the worst part of that sentence. If businesses are to evolve and reverse the vast cost of poor mental health, this stigma must be broken and employees must not fear negative consequences of speaking up.

This is further supported by discussions held at the 2017 Not A Red Card Forum we hosted, where roundtable discussions between 160 business leaders, mental health experts and sporting personalities identified a lack of education and understanding of mental health as one of five key barriers to creating an environment where people feel they can ask for help and support if suffering with their mental wellbeing. This lack of understanding resulted in perceptions around mental health such as:

- You can't do your job as well
- Decision making will be questioned
- You will need a lot of time off sick
- Colleagues will have to pick up the strain which will cause resentment
- Your colleagues will treat you differently and worry about saying the wrong thing, or be afraid of causing offence
- It's a 'home' issue, not a 'work' issue
- You will be seen as weak
- Subconscious bias from managers will result
- Fear of discrimination / not belonging / failure / career being affected will exist

Businesses need to address this for people to start having conversations with their managers. Inside-Out believes this begins with training, an opinion mirrored by the Not A Red Card Forum delegates - when discussing solutions that need to be put in place to address the challenges that exist.

Rob Stephenson, Inside-Out founder explains mental health stigma, beginning with the word "stigma" itself: "A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person... Would you feel disgraced if you were to disclose the fact that you had suffered from sepsis? Would this prevent you seeking help to treat it? Would you feel any shame to say that you had experienced it and come through it? No, you would not. Then why should someone suffering from a mental illness feel this disgrace?"

Raising awareness, education and creating new initiatives is a crucial part of the removing the stigma around mental health. Showing staff that you are prioritising health and wellbeing is key. Some of the ways businesses can do this include:

- Embedding health and wellbeing in staff inductions and management frameworks
- Offer resilience training to all employees
- Raising the profile of health and wellbeing (e.g. invite an external speaker to talk about their mental health experiences; identifying and promote mental health champions who are prepared to share their stories)
- Maximising the use of internal communications channels (i.e. intranet, blogs, wellbeing groups, posters, noticeboards, staff newsletters, etc.)
- Organising a launch event involving internal and external speakers to communicate the mental health initiatives to employees
- Setting up a mental health network to help raise awareness, break stigma and improve understanding of mental health in the business
- Taking part in existing mental health initiatives: Mental Health Awareness Week, World Mental Health Day, Time to Talk Day, #SmashingTheStigma, and This is me and the Green Ribbon Campaigns
- Making a statement (e.g. Sign the Time to Change Pledge)

Lead from the top

Effective line management begins at the top. From values to ethics and mental health in the work place, the way in which the senior leadership team acts will ultimately set the unwritten rules of how an organisation behaves and sets the culture, attitudes and behaviours of employees within that organisation.

Line managers and employees will take mental health and wellbeing initiatives much more seriously if they are publicly supported and role modelled by the senior leadership team. After all, colleagues take cues from how leaders behave. This is more than just theory. Mind's resource on promoting wellbeing in the workplace states: "When the CEO speaks out about mental health it can have a huge impact." Here's a great example from Mark Twigg, Executive Director of Cicero Group:

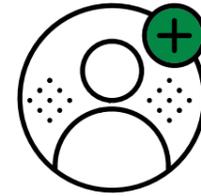
"We had a town hall a couple of years ago where I spent half an hour in front of the whole company talking about my [mental health] experience in my early twenties. The motivation for doing that was obviously a lot of people [had] joined the company in the last four or five years. They don't know much about my background and I think a lot of people look at you as a successful role model in that sense that you've always been successful and that you haven't had to struggle...I wanted people to know that, I wanted them to sense that what we were doing [in terms of our mental health

activity] was authentic. It wasn't just something we'd created because HR programs create these things.

"We wanted people to understand that quite a lot of the senior management team of Cicero have had difficulties throughout their lives and that you're by no means unique if you are struggling with your mental health. It's something I think that is much more widespread than people think it is. So, I spoke for about half an hour. It's a very open conversation. I remember almost crying three or four times, and quite a lot of my colleagues were quite touched by that and I think they felt an emotional connection, which almost immediately changed the whole dynamic within the business."

The fact is that the message needs to come from board level to ensure engagement among staff. The City Mental Health Alliance suggests that businesses "Formalise/raise awareness of expectation that all managers discuss wellbeing and workplace risks with their direct reports."

So, what does this look like in everyday workplace life? Simple things leaders can do to support a campaign include encouraging all staff to take lunch breaks and to work healthy hours, and to implement some of the initiatives detailed above.



Role models

The mission and success of Inside-Out, supports the fact that having senior leadership support for mental health, can also help identify mental health role models across the business.

Fear of progression is a major factor that stops people disclosing poor mental health conditions or ongoing challenges. However, getting buy-in from senior leadership, to have them act as role models, you can show that mental health and wellness is not a glass ceiling that blocks career advancement.

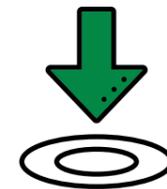
According to Inside-Out, there are two types of role models that have a huge impact on effective people management:

- People with lived experience: These are people who have experienced mental health challenges first-hand and are speaking out about it. They can be in a

leadership position, which will help with the leadership engagement point; or they can hail from any level in the business—which may make them even more powerful due to their relatability. This type of role model will help break the stigma, helping create a culture where it's ok to talk about your mental health.

- Healthy behaviour role models: Line managers and senior leaders who model best practices and healthy work habits (such as taking regular lunch breaks, properly delegating when on annual leave, unplugging on weekends and working flexibly).

There are several strategies businesses can implement to ensure that executives, line managers and employees are prioritising conversations about mental health and wellbeing.



Assess your current position

Just as with any key business strategy, it is crucial for businesses to assess their position relative to tackling the stigma around mental health if they are to develop and implement a successful plan.

Resources such as the CMHA Guide: Thriving at Work or the Stevenson-Farmer review can give businesses an idea of good and best practice. The business can then see how well they benchmark against this when compared to their current position. Identified gaps can then help better direct the efforts of the company to implement change where it is needed. For example:

- Mental health plan - Does your business have one and is it accessible to employees?

- Awareness - How well have you developed mental health awareness in the work place? Have you shared stories? Do you have mental health champions or role models available for staff? Are employees aware of existing campaigns such as Mental Health Awareness Week?
- Talking/Opening up - How comfortable are employees about discussing their issues?
- Managing expectations - Do line managers deal with mental health issues successfully?
- Monitoring - Are you auditing the resources available for line managers (e.g. training, advice line, HR support etc.)?



Put wellbeing into a management framework

Historically, line managers are tasked with assessing employees on performance and, commonly, on financial success. To help break down the stigma and make mental health part of everyday conversations, organisational values should seek to include wellbeing too. In fact, wellbeing should also be included as a measure in line manager performance competencies.

This is where training and support for line managers come in. In a time where mental health and wellness is becoming an integral part of the business agenda, training for managers in this area is a prerequisite to effective people management. Just like managers may need skills training to meet the demands of their job, so do they need training to be able to talk appropriately about mental health with employees and provide support for those who are struggling.

The CIPD has undertaken significant research in partnership with Affinity Health at Work and have identified several management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work. These competencies can be applied to managing health, including mental health and wellbeing:

Respectful and responsible management of emotions and having integrity

- Is respectful and honest to employees
- Behaves consistently and calmly
- Is thoughtful in managing others and delegating

- Managing and communicating effectively about existing and future work
- Monitors and reviews existing work, allowing future prioritisation and planning
- Deals with problems promptly, rationally and responsibly
- Listens and consults with team, providing direction, autonomy and development opportunities to individuals

Reasoning/managing difficult situations

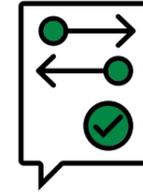
- Deals with conflicts fairly and promptly
- Seeks advice when necessary from managers, HR and occupational health professionals
- Offers a supportive and responsible approach to issues

Managing the individual within the team

- Available to talk to privately, one-on-one
- Demonstrates a relaxed approach, such as socialising and using humour

Seeks to understand the individual in terms of their motivation, point of view and life outside work

Line managers are pivotal to this process. Proper training, along with the right levels of ongoing support will help ensure employees open up and start the conversation about their health and wellbeing.



Ongoing Measurement

The next element of significant importance is monitoring what's going on and how employees are coping with mental health in the workplace. By keeping track of the risks posed and how employees are feeling, managers can understand better how to look after their mental health and make improvements to the support they offer.

Here are some ideas that can help:

- Employee surveys (anonymised) to help routinely monitor and compare how your employees are feeling – collecting both quantitative and anecdotal information
- Ensure questions in surveys allow benchmarking against others
- Establish and monitor employee mental health and wellbeing network
- Productivity checks to see if there are any shifts in output
- Temperature checks to evaluate employee stress that follow HSE line management standards (www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/)

- Absence monitoring
- 360-feedback on line managers
- Monitoring website traffic and views to see how many people are engaging
- Gather information from Mental Health First Aid champions
- Exit interviews
- Referrals data (Employee Assistance Programmes, Occupational Health, psychological)

It's not enough to tell employees to be aware and supportive of mental health. To truly make a difference, it is incumbent on businesses to show line managers how to do so. Incorporating wellness competencies into a management framework and working with experts to develop effective training is both a concrete and effective way make sure employees at every level are aware of your firms intention to make mental healthcare a key part of corporate culture.

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