



Workplace wellbeing 2016: An insight from industry leaders

Do Something Different (dsd.me), the digital wellbeing specialist, asked the University of Sussex to conduct interviews with wellbeing professionals from **Unilever, Royal Mail, Nationwide, Manchester Police, RWE/NPower, NHS Trust** and an **industry consultant** to identify the major challenges facing Corporate Wellbeing in 2016.

Our research interviewees are responsible for the health and wellbeing of over 250,000 employees in thousands of UK locations.

Note: The interviewees are not necessarily clients of Do Something Different and kindly agreed to take part to support this industry research project.



Introduction

Workplace wellness: what is the focus for large employers?

Our research respondents included wellbeing managers in large industrial companies, financial service institutions, high street operations, an NHS Trust, the Royal Mail and a Police Authority – a broad cross-section of UK employers.

Why does wellbeing matter?

The UK workforce is reporting high levels of occupational stress, anxiety and depression.

35%

Stress accounted for 35% of all work related ill health cases In 2014/15 ¹

43%

of all working days lost due to ill health. This is the equivalent of **9.5 million days** (23 days lost per case) and is estimated to have cost the UK economy **£1.24 billion**.²

If you only read 3 sentences, read these:



1. **Mental health** is one of the main focuses for UK employers in 2016.



2. The biggest challenges in delivering effective wellbeing initiatives are **accessibility, engagement** and measuring **return on investment**.



3. **Digital** programmes, delivered to mobile phones, can provide a **scalable, cost-effective solution** for mental health and other wellbeing initiatives.

¹ HR Magazine 'UK workers among the most stressed in Europe'

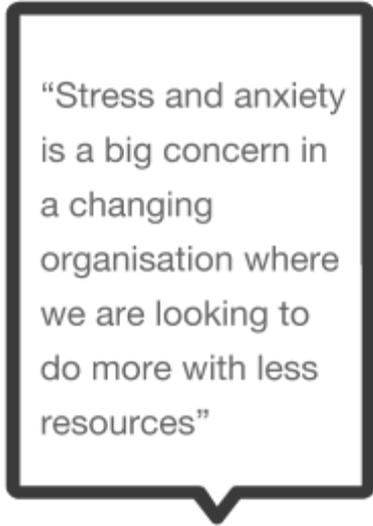
² Health and Safety Executive 'Work related Stress, Anxiety and Depression Statistics in Great Britain 2015'

A focus on mental wellbeing

In all of our in-depth interviews, **mental health – including stress, anxiety and resilience** – was identified as one of the major themes for health and wellbeing initiatives in 2016.

Marie Parkinson, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager for Greater Manchester Police with 12,000 staff, explained why mental health is high on their agenda:

“We are targeting the de-stigmatisation of mental health issues. Stress and anxiety is a big concern in a changing organisation where we are looking to do more with less resources. Dealing with uncertainty of change and the constant pressure that puts on staff whilst being expected to deliver business as usual, it is really important that we support them through this .”



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Neil Hasson, Senior manager for employee engagement and wellbeing at Nationwide told us they have 20,000 permanent employees and several thousand contract and third party individuals working at between 750 and 800 locations.

“Late last year we decided to rebrand our wellbeing offer under the banner of ‘Flourish’. Flourish has four petals – healthy body, healthy mind, healthy family and healthy finances. We have a branch manager roadshow. What they really wanted to know was what we were doing about mental health”

Nikki Kirbell, UK Health and Wellbeing Manager at Unilever, says that Unilever takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing by looking at mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, and sense of purpose..

They offer a wide range of support from an employee assistance programme (EAP) and private medical care alongside their award winning internal mental health resources. In-house, online and face-to-face mental health training is available, through to onsite and subsidised gym memberships and physical activity programmes. The premise is that an employee is no more than one click, one call or one chat away from help.

“Our mental health services include a personal resilience tool as a confidential online questionnaire, where people considered in need of support will then be triaged to speak to a professional and then potentially referred to counselling services. We also run Mental Health First Aid training for our line managers to reinforce our online training tools for our employees and managers on mental health awareness. All employees have free access to the Headspace mindfulness app and 24/7 access to the EAP for wellbeing support.”

Robert Manson, Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing at RWE NPower says his remit is occupational health and wellbeing:

“The wellbeing side is about making people healthy and keeping them energised at work. Particularly in two areas, one is our mental health programme which we call Healthy Minds. The other is our Attendance Management programme. We are also part of, ‘a great place to work’, which is a movement project that helps people maintain a positive work life integration within a positive culture”



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3 major challenges

The in-depth telephone interviews revealed three key challenges that were common to almost all of our research respondents:



1. Accessibility

How to effectively share wellbeing initiatives across large workforces, often in multiple locations.



2. Engagement

The need to provide wellbeing solutions for each personal need and to appeal to different types of workers, from shop floor to mobile workforces or senior managers.



3. Return on Investment

The ability to measure effectiveness and establish wellbeing as a discipline that is seen to contribute to the bottom line.

1. Accessibility



For many large organisations, managing a diverse multi skilled workforce that operates over numerous locations is a part of everyday business. But it represents a major challenge for wellbeing initiatives.

Judith Grant – Group Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing, Royal Mail Group says that scalability is a major challenge.

“We have 143,000 employees, so the challenge is how to ensure interventions are scalable and accessible to all...We have a geographically dispersed workforce so it makes sense to have online programmes. We have many communications channels: RMTV is a weekly TV programme shared with employees online or through team meetings (for those employees who do not have daily access to a work PC). We have a newspaper that goes to everyone’s home. Then we have intranet and online communications for those who have access. To communicate wellbeing we use all these media, in addition to our dedicated wellbeing portal ‘Feeling First Class’, which is accessible to employees through any laptop or smartphone , with lots of wellbeing information available.”

Neil Hasson at Nationwide told us that Nationwide has recently invested in an intranet to be able to scale wellness initiatives to all employees, but Neil says that old-school distribution is still part of the strategy.

“We have a lot of material that goes out on a monthly basis – monthly newsletters highlighting themes for people to consider. I don’t think that is very effective.”

Zipporah Jempeji, Staff Engagement Manager at Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, says that delivery of programmes to their busy staff is a problem:

“Delivery is mainly face-to-face. In terms of promoting, we have an ebulletin and a mailing list. We also write a monthly newsletter. We have our Health and Wellbeing page on the intranet, but this isn’t currently accessible outside work. We have invested in an e-portal for staff to be able to access this information.”

Zoe Eccleston, an experienced health and wellbeing consultant currently seconded to a large global financial services firm points out that focusing on the nature of delivery is vital:

“I worked for a big company for nine years, and you have call centres, you have power stations you’ve got corporate staff – the same type of messaging isn’t going to work for each type of employee.”

ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTION

Is mobile the answer?

Most of our respondents agreed that getting wellbeing out to mobile phones, “putting wellbeing in workers hands” was where they should be heading, but few had yet made this technological leap.

Robert Manson at RWE NPower said:

“I think that mobile technologies will be our future because our employees can access it as and when they want.”

2. Engagement



A common theme that ran through every interview is that when it comes to health and wellbeing initiatives, one size **does not** fit all.

“it’s about trying to tailor what we deliver”

Nikki Kirbell, at Unilever pointed out:

“I think it’s about trying to tailor what we deliver. We have a diverse workforce, not only from a geographical perspective but also in terms of demographics and job role across the country. One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to running successful wellbeing campaigns.”

Marie Parkinson at Greater Manchester Police reiterated this point, also adding that is vital to consider varied working patterns in how programmes are delivered:

“Trying to create events that fit into their particular work patterns and shifts is a challenge. So you have to be careful it’s not just centred on people who work in the office and are 9-5 and Monday to Friday.”

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Zipporah Jempeji at Islington NHS Foundation shared similar concerns:

“The biggest challenge in terms of getting staff to engage was hindered by their shift patterns”

“From an organisational context, the biggest challenge in terms of getting staff to engage was hindered by their shift patterns. The general fact we are a hospital with staffing challenges, means staff are often late or have to rearrange. And we lack space to provide these services.”

Engagement is not only about tailoring programmes to individual need.



46%

Recent research shows that (46%) of employer respondents cite lack of time as the biggest obstacle to increased participation in wellness programmes.³ Taking time out to talk with professionals, sit in a classroom, or take part in activities, particularly for a mobile workforce, is less and less likely.

³ Employee Benefits ‘89% say wellness programmes boost happiness and wellbeing’

Judith Grant at Royal Mail confirms this is a major challenge:

“The majority of our employees are not directly contactable via work email, as they are delivering and collecting the mail. Online membership of our ‘Feeling First Class’ wellbeing portal is over 12,300 at the moment and growing – this is a great number, but as it is only about 9% of the Royal Mail Group population, we have a way to go.”

ENGAGEMENT SOLUTION

How can we empower individuals?

One of the ways to improve engagement is to make programmes individually tailored and allow employees to choose the areas they most want to target.

Robert Manson at RWE NPower said:

“My top priority is to integrate wellbeing and to empower people to make choice. I want to provide them information that is timely and appropriate.”

3. Return on Investment (ROI)



All of our respondents said that gathering accurate, reliable data is an essential part of any health and wellbeing initiatives, but nearly all of them agreed that this is a big challenge.

Nikki Kirbell, at Unilever, an acknowledged leader in the wellbeing field, agreed it's not easy:

“Wellbeing is a tricky area to try and measure. We’ve tried to improve our understanding with national and work stream health and wellbeing scorecards. We use the anonymised aggregated data to help us formulate our wellbeing strategy. This includes data from private medical insurance, occupational health and our anonymised resource utilisation. We also gain quantitative and qualitative feedback from campaigns with our employee survey. This data set also helps us with our ROI analysis and provides good benchmarking for future strategy.”

Robert Manson at RWE NPower sees quantifying benefits as an essential part of his role:

“For me, it is understanding what health and wellbeing really means. There are a lot of people who think ‘we haven’t got time for that fluffy stuff’. It’s getting the managers to start viewing health and wellbeing as an integral part of their business. We need to back it up with facts and figures. We want them to see that there is a business case for wellbeing by showing evidence in a decline of sickness absence rates and a growth in productivity.”



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Zoe Eccleston , industry consultant, told us:

“It’s quite varied. It should be very clear what your outcome is before you start the activity. Nothing is in isolation so it’s difficult to attribute anything particular to what you’re doing. You might want to work it out by looking at attendance. I use satisfaction questionnaires.”

Marie Parkinson at Greater Manchester Police says:

“We look for an improvement in sickness absence. We look at performance indicators in terms of work and how well things are going. We use Survey Monkey satisfaction surveys.”

Judith Grant at Royal Mail agrees that measurement is hard.

It's challenging. We mostly measure it through sickness absence reduction – we have seen real improvements in attendance through our initiatives over the last two years.

ROI SOLUTION

How can we measure change?

One way to measure change is to make benchmarking of behaviours, before and after, as an integrated part of any health and wellbeing initiative.

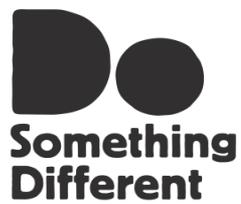
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<http://dsd.me/business/programmes/>

Thank you.



dsd.me
@onedoatime
hello@dsd.me

+44 (0) 1273 781140

Do Something Different
11 Jew St
Brighton
East Sussex
United Kingdom
BN1 1UT

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