

WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE

What can resilience do for you and your workplace?



Icehouse Insights

A regular series addressing some of the major challenges facing SMEs today. Icehouse Insights also highlights some of the possible solutions you can weave into your business to solve common issues.

This edition:

Workplace wellbeing and resilience initiatives are regarded as key business strategies for today's progressive organisations in helping employees – and employers – cope with and address the daily challenges faced in our jobs.

Why? Many initiatives have been proven to reduce employee stress, create a more relaxed workplace, increase productivity and improve worker engagement according to The Southern Cross Healthy Futures research study.

INTRODUCTION

If you're keen to create a workplace environment that values the importance of a happy, harmonious and productive organisation, this latest edition of Icehouse Insights has some pointers.

Need convincing? Did you know '45% of people in Australia will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime with the resulting absenteeism and presenteeism resulting in around 12 million days of reduced productivity for businesses each year,' says CEO magazine.

Meanwhile, severe mental illness costs the US more than US\$190 billion in lost earnings every year, with depression alone estimated to result in over 200 million lost workdays annually, based on research by the Harvard Business School.

WHAT IS WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE?

Defining wellbeing and resilience is often too small and simple. You probably have your own definitions. The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand suggest 'Mental wellbeing is feeling good, functioning well and feeling connected.'

To many, 'resilience' is tenacity, toughness, grit, fortitude – anything that indicates a positive response to a challenge in any aspect of your life, or 'the capacity to absorb stress, recover critical functionality, and thrive in altered circumstances.' (HBR)

They're not the same, but they do feed off each other to create a positive and identical end result. The most successful owners and leaders use resilience to adapt and then thrive, by making smart businesses decisions in response to crisis situations to make their organisation stronger.

They view wellbeing and resilience as an opportunity to not only respect and care for their teams but grow through change and develop talents and opportunities for others to build robust organisational practices which, ultimately, give them a competitive edge.

The big numbers:

- 72% of entrepreneurs are directly or indirectly affected by mental health issues
- 47% of non-entrepreneurs are directly or indirectly affected by mental health issues
- 23% of entrepreneurs have family members who face mental health issues
- 16% of non-entrepreneurs have family members who face mental health issues

Source: All US National Institute of Mental Health, 2020

BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE TEAM

While this all sounds great in theory, putting practical, workable and accountable measures into the workplace can seem daunting.

Many experts believe the key to being business-resilient is flexibility, primarily because there are many moving parts in every organisation, and some of these parts are more flexible than others and require more attention.

A good first step is to identify those sectors within your business and think about developing a crisis management team within your organisation. It's a simple and cost-effective way to identify any weak spots in the business and reinforce them as a result.

That sounds quite dramatic, but empowering your resilience team to make decisions quickly will save a lot of stress in the future.

According to EY, there are some further unexpected advantages to building a resilience plan. The crisis scenario is dynamic and impossible to predict; however, an informed response could build trust and brand affinity with your customers.

To make this happen, it suggests:

- Engaging staff in a consistent dialogue about actions you are taking to protect and support them
- Engaging with suppliers to properly pinpoint the most material risk exposures and jointly defining mitigations
- Keeping customers and wider external stakeholder groups informed and promoting confidence in your business resilience through clear and consistent messaging

CREATE A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

It's important to regularly check-in with your teams to make sure everyone is ok. It can even be a daily thing.

Bringing mental health to the forefront of your organisational culture will take away any stigma or embarrassment around the subject, and shows that your business places the utmost importance on creating a safe, supportive environment for all.

You're good at spotting if a team member is struggling or not performing to their potential. You know the signs; behavioural change, drop in output, regular bouts of sick leave and so on. But, is this you, too? It's critical that you apply the same empathy and close attention to your own wellbeing as you do to your teams'.

And just as you'd move quickly to address any potential mental health issues in your employees, the same rules apply to you.

When you're away from the workplace...

- 95% of people feel good after spending time with nature (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand)
- High-quality sleep organises new information 40% more efficiently (US National Institute of Health)
- Music that has a tempo of 60 beats per minute increases the efficiency of the brain in processing information (ReachOut.com)

NEXT STEPS...

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand suggests introducing 'Five Ways To Wellbeing' into your life which you can try at home before rolling out into the workplace:

Connect – Talk & Listen, Be There, Feel Connected.

Be Active – Do what you can. Enjoy what you do. Move your mood.

Give – Your Time, Your Words, Your Presence.

Take Notice – Remember the simple things that give you joy.

Keep Learning – Embrace new experiences, see opportunities, surprise yourself.

Going Deeper, Xero offers a five-step plan – simple actions small business leaders can introduce to forge a robust culture of wellbeing

Step One: Getting to know your team

The first step to improving wellbeing in the workplace is knowing your team.

No doubt you're communicating with your team throughout the day – through emails, instant messages, texts and phone calls.

But a key way to help improve wellbeing is to have some genuine face-to-face conversations in person or on video calls.

Authentic discussion about who they are and what makes them tick goes a long way to creating an environment of belonging which fosters wellbeing. This month, spend some time with each of your team members talking to them. It doesn't need to take long, but it is important to do.

Step Two: Fostering connections within your team

Helping your team build connections with one another helps them maintain a healthy outlook on life and is a crucial part of their overall wellbeing. We spend so much time at work, why not make the most of it and reinforce a healthy culture of camaraderie between your employees? Investing in fostering a good culture doesn't have to cost a lot of time or money.

Step Three: Supporting others to look after themselves

Aside from strong interpersonal relationships, wellbeing is also about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. So often we get caught up in the day-to-day of working, it can be easy to forget about taking care of our physical health. From exercise to making healthy life choices, there are plenty of habits employers can encourage their employees to pick.

Step Four: Making it okay to ask for help

Seeking professional support doesn't need to be a last resort. Foster an environment that removes the stigma too often associated with low mental wellbeing in the workplace. This can help empower your team to ask for help before they really need it.

Step Five: Making a long term commitment to wellbeing

If you're looking to make a long-term commitment to improving wellbeing in your business, you could consider creating a personalised wellbeing plan or establishing wellbeing policies, signalling your dedication to fostering a culture of wellbeing in your business.

Don't forget to take your team on this journey too - there may be someone who has a passion for wellbeing and this could be a dedicated part of their role.

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Dr Sven Hansen, founder of The Resilience Institute, delivers research-based resilience solutions to secure safe, resilient and productive workplaces around the world.

I have three recommendations for the CEO. First, walk the talk. Second, build an inclusive framework to build and attract resilient people. Third, be patient and persistent.

Resilience, wellbeing and mental health have moved to centre stage. Directors, CEOs, senior executives, current and future employees are paying attention. An interplanetary visitor could conclude that we have been destroying resilience, wellbeing and mental health for a century. The solution will take time and intelligence.

Starting with the third, quick fixes don't work. The solution is not a workshop, a shiny app, or a bright pill.

A world-class sports team takes a decade to build. Changing behaviour through the deliberate development of physical, emotional and mental skills is hard work. Your people need a compelling case, evidence-based information and the coaching support to sustain and extend success.

Building resilience is a journey of at least three years. To succeed the leader must be committed. The following steps may help you:

1. Socialise the idea widely getting input and engagement from your community
2. Develop a framework that resonates with your culture and strategic goal
3. Communicate widely and walk the talk in the top team

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4. Assess the physical, emotional, and mental strengths and risks in your teams
5. Select a few high-impact, winnable battles like sleep, presence and fitness
6. Give people room to make their own choices
7. Provide consistent reminders and support while celebrating wins.

The second recommendation is to develop a framework to build and attract resilient people. At present, organisations are wrestling with multiple and often overlapping or conflicting initiatives.

These might include safety, mental health, wellbeing, psychological safety, mindfulness, EAP, positive psychology interventions, and more.

This will confuse your people, overload

executives, and leave you at the mercy of providers with conflicting goals. You need to integrate these initiatives with a common and positive language.

For example, talking about burnout reduces human beings to appliances. Adversity is the crucible of growth and connection. Expect your people to bounce forward fast.

The most productive and creative people wrestle with mental and emotional issues.

Connect risk and strength. Many providers can bring fear and suffering to light by focusing on the drama of depression, anxiety and other disorders. This may increase risk in your teams. Perhaps focusing on sleep quality and consistency would have a better effect on mental health – along with many other personal and work benefits.

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Rather than focus on bullying, show your people how to have respectful, caring and honest conversations. These tough conversations develop self-awareness, impulse control and empathy. Performance, wellbeing, trust and safety follow.

Finally, walk the talk. If you want to develop your team's ability to bounce, grow, connect and flow, you need to set the example. Be visibly involved in the programme design, communication and roll-out.

Demonstrate that you are aware of your strengths and risks. Take action, share your challenges and celebrate your wins. Show your people that you care about their physical, emotional and mental experience. Ask them at least once a week. While we know that we should exercise, sleep and eat veggies while not smoking, drinking or taking drugs, our research sheds light on different factors.

Looking at the most successful people in our annual samples of 10,000 or more people:

Top performers prioritise these strengths consistently (2020/21 data):

1. Presence
2. Fulfilment
3. Focus
4. Bounce
5. Optimism

Top performers consistently overcome the following risks:

1. Worry
2. Fatigue
3. Self-critical
4. Rumination
5. Anxiety

For more on our research see:
<https://resiliencei.com/resilience-research/>

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Further reading, support and advice:

The Resilience Institute delivers research-based resilience solutions that help organisations secure a safe, resilient and productive workplace. Run by Dr Sven Hansen, business coach at The Icehouse and The Resilience Institute founder.

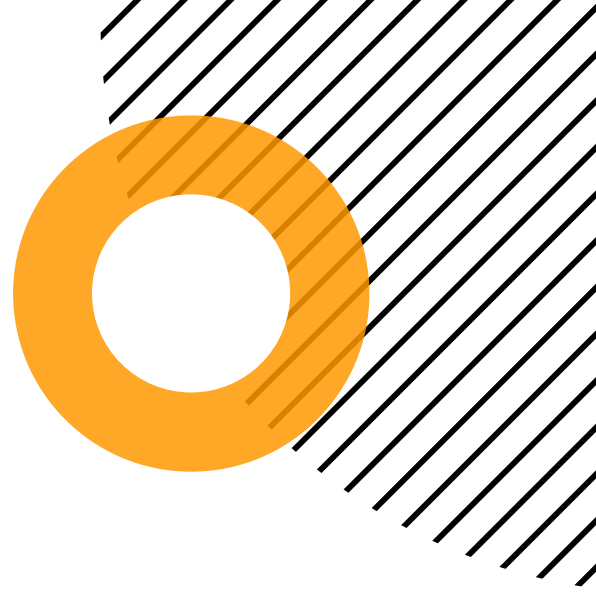
resiliencei.com/

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand – working towards creating a society free from discrimination, where all people enjoy positive mental health. Improving individuals, whānau, organisations and communities.

mentalhealth.org.nz

The Check-In – Downloadable templates and tools from Xero for small business leaders to introduce wellbeing into the workplace.

www.xero.com/nz/resources/the-check-in/



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