

Why supporting employees' mental wellbeing is important

Opinions

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"It's important for companies to be transparent and open about what they're doing to help their employees' well-being."

Sam Morris

-- Why supporting employees' mental wellbeing is important

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Mental Health Awareness Week is an important time to open the discussion and raise awareness on how companies can create a working environment that supports employees' mental health. On average, an individual spends 40 hours a week dedicated to their job, that's 200 hours a month. It's only natural that when you're investing so many hours at a place of work, the conditions and environment you work in can have a contributing factor in your mental health. We often talk about the importance of communication and supporting your friends and family, however it's important to also acknowledge what employers can also do to help assist their employees' mental health.

At TAB there is an open door policy where employees are encouraged to voice any issues they have both personally and professionally so that the company can do everything to support them. This makes us staff feel that our opinions are appreciated and valued.

As well as having happy employees, there is a tangible benefit also to having positive working conditions. [Research](#) has shown that companies that support employee mental health can lead to an increase in productivity. It shows the value of having happy employees that feel supported and are able to communicate on all concerns and issues they have both personal and professional.

With enough attention and staff feedback, there are many initiatives companies can put in place to help staff feel as supported as possible. I spoke to some of the team to get their views on the initiatives TAB is implementing to help support staff both professionally and personally.

How TAB supports employees

Flexible working and office hours

During the pandemic we saw the rise of remote working at a time when it wasn't safe to enter an office. In a post pandemic world we're still trying to navigate between moving back to full time office work and flexible working. Listening to employee feedback, TAB implemented a flexible working scheme where staff can book working from home days when needed, and now provide a flexible working day. If employees need to come in, for example, after the school run, we can do this, or if we need to leave earlier then provided we make up the time it's ok! This isn't exclusive to those that are suffering with covid symptoms, travel concerns, family issues or even just the flexibility plays a part

and TAB is happy to accommodate.

“Since I've started at TAB I've felt very supported with my mental wellbeing and have always been comfortable voicing any concerns I had both personally and professionally. At times when I've been unable to come into the office, the flexi-work scheme has been hugely helpful for me and TAB have always been very understanding of any circumstances, which has made me feel very valued.”

- Yusuf Malik, Marketing Executive at TAB

Regular social gatherings

For obvious reasons it's important to stay professional at the workplace, however that doesn't mean staff aren't able to build relationships with one another and get along well. Although we work in finance, TAB it isn't always straight faces! We try to promote as many social gatherings as we can.

These may vary from after work activities (congratulations [Jordan Manners](#) on winning mini-golf) to our summer party where family and friends are welcomed. We also have a clubhouse bar that is open from 4.30pm on a Friday. We can enjoy a few drinks and get ready for the weekend.

The aim of having these social events is to create a working culture where employees want to come to work, alongside professional ambitions. Having good relationships with other staff and colleagues is also important to building a positive working atmosphere.

Star of the month

Star of the month is an initiative TAB introduced where all staff vote for the employee they feel has gone above and beyond in the month, and deserves recognition for their achievements. The winner of the star of the month, and there can be multiple in one month, is then awarded with a cash voucher and matching donation towards a charity of their choosing.

Encouragement and positive feedback is clearly important to help all staff feel valued however it's equally as important to give real tangible incentives for hard work. Having 'star of the month' helps build confidence in staff and gives the winner's company wide recognition as well as something tangible they can earn through their hard work.

"I find the social gatherings to be really positive, it gives us time to break away and talk to each other about things away from work and have some fun! As the Star of the month is peer based, it's really supportive to know what you're doing is actually having an impact on your colleagues in a positive way and they're recognising your hard work."

- *Sagar Bharadia, Software Engineer at TAB*

Officevibe weekly survey

Implementing initiatives and activities is redundant without having proper channels for feedback. One way in which TAB encourages feedback is through a weekly survey that goes out to all staff. These questionnaires are completely anonymous and employees can provide feedback on any topic. From working hours, to support from line managers and work loan management, weekly surveys let us staff know that their voices are heard and valued, and TAB will try to make real change based on the feedback they received.

Here's a list of a few changes that were brought out of employee feedback:

- Free healthy food and fruits available in staff kitchen
- Changes to staff canteen, including more vegetarian and fish options for people with different dietary requirements
- Shorted working hours

"As a mental health first aider, I've learnt how important it is to be engaged and happy at work. Being able to feedback openly is beneficial to having important channels of communication between the business and employees. Since TAB introduced flexible working, I've been able to balance my time around the business and my personal life which is an added benefit."

There's always more that can be done, and raising awareness about mental health and the challenges workplaces face is only a good thing. If we can share what we're doing, and other businesses do the same, then there might be clever and interesting ideas we can adopt."

- *Imogen Paradise, Group Accountant at TAB*

As well as the internal support TAB provides employees, we also use a HR management system known as CharlieHR which provides its own benefits for us employees like discounted gym membership and restaurant vouchers.

Employers have a responsibility to support the wellbeing of its employees. TAB champions specific initiatives like star of the month, regular social gatherings and access to an in-house mental health first-aider. Health and wellbeing practices should never stand still and we try to keep creating innovative ways to support our employees such as the introduction of pilates classes this month.”

- *Mathura Paramjorthy, COO and General Counsel at TAB*

To conclude, I think it's important for companies to be transparent and open about what they're doing to help their employees' well-being. Many of the initiatives TAB have introduced may look like small steps but they can have huge benefits to an employee's mental wellbeing. I'm sure there are many more solutions out there that we can learn from other businesses and implement ourselves.

Mental Health Awareness Week is an opportunity for businesses to raise awareness, and inspire other companies to adopt and learn from what others do. During this week I'm excited to read more on other peoples procedures and ideas that they've found to be beneficial on improving employee's mental health to learn and feedback to TAB.

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