

Employers Showcase – Case Studies

Demonstrating senior level buy-in



At Pearson we create educational tools, content, products and services – essentially, the things people need to help them make progress in their lives through better learning. We're the world's learning company, with 35,000 employees across 70 countries worldwide. Our unique insight and world-class expertise comes from our long history of working closely with teachers, learners, researchers, authors, and thought leaders. Our products and services are used by millions of teachers and learners around the world every day. We have a clear and simple set of values — in everything we do, we aspire to be brave, imaginative, decent and accountable. These values describe what is important to all of us, and guide us to do what is right for the world around us.

In the UK, we are focused on putting the Wellbeing of our staff high on the agenda. Our Schools Division in particular has lead on much of this work, and it is now being rolled out across the rest of our UK business.

It started in March 2015 with a blog post by our Senior Vice President (SVP) Jill Duffy, on the importance of work/life balance and has grown from there, with a business case being designed by a small group of advocates to secure funding for MHFA training and line manager training as a starting point. We asked our SVP if she would be willing to sign the Time to Change Employer Pledge as a fundamental part of this work, in order to support our Workplace Champions and to help bring our action plan to life.

We now have a significant, and growing amount of senior level buy in across our UK business:

- Our Schools SVP Jill Duffy blogs regularly about workplace wellbeing and mental health, drawing attention to the work of the Champions, MHFAs and often hosting events on work life balance;
- We now have a fully trained Mindfulness Teacher colleague currently on secondment 2 days a week to roll out Mindfulness courses across the UK (secondment agreed and supported by our SVP);
- SVPs from our other 3 main business divisions now also blogging and hosting events around wellbeing within the UK;
- Our President across our UK Business now has the promotion of Wellbeing at Work as one of his core goals;
- We have HR involvement at a UK Level, with a HR Wellbeing Manager now in place who is very proactive in promoting this issue and is working on formalising our processes in the area of wellbeing and mental health.

Some other stats on progress made over the last year:

We ran the TTC workplace survey at the beginning of our journey, and again 14 months later to gauge progress. A summary of the results are as follows:

- We have seen a 369% increase in people feeling that our culture is one in which people are encouraged to talk openly about their mental health
- Awareness of support that Pearson offers for staff in this area (Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health, MHFAs, Mindfulness, etc.) has increased by 230% since February 2016
- We've seen a 181% rise in positive opinion about how Pearson supports employees with poor mental health
- We've seen a 94% increase in confidence amongst line managers in supporting people they line manage with their mental wellbeing at work, and 163% increase in guidance for line managers on the support available for staff

What went well

- Senior level buy in from the start (and ongoing) – this is crucial
- Engagement from colleagues at all levels (SLT, Champions, MHFAs, line managers and employees) – wellbeing is therefore seen as something genuinely important rather than a tick-box exercise
- A thorough business case at point of launch – to demonstrate the business rationale for promoting parity of esteem of mental health at work and highlighting the actual and potential loss of revenue, morale, productivity etc. if it is not taken seriously
- Regular communication at all levels – via senior level blogs, wellbeing awareness events, Champion newsletters, MHFA visibility as examples
- Colleagues willing to tell their stories and speak out (a small number but hopefully will grow!)
- Networking with other companies via the TTC Employers Team

What to do differently

- Work more closely with HR from the beginning so the organisation isn't playing catch up regarding policies and governance (safeguarding for MHFAs, for example);
- Have a dedicated lead person who does this as their full-time job (preferably within HR – we didn't have this at first and much of the work has been done in addition to employees' core jobs. Now we have it, it's much easier to roll this out at scale across the company);
- Secure ongoing budget for line manager training and MHFA support so after the initial push it doesn't get forgotten.

Further Reading

[Mental wellbeing in the workplace – Original In-House Proposal](#)

time to change

let's end mental health discrimination