



A Réncái Guide

How to kick start your wellbeing journey in small-medium sized businesses

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Similar to employee engagement several years ago, employee wellbeing appears to be the new conversation that leadership and HR teams are having, yet limited actions have been taken around the subject as of yet.

But what does employee wellbeing actually mean?

I'm sure that you could go out and find multiple definitions however, for the purpose of this report, employee wellbeing will be referred to as the state of each individual employees "psychological" AND/OR "physical" wellbeing. Other research suggests that the wellbeing agenda also covers social and economic health however, a key thing to consider is that everybody has a state of wellbeing – whether that be positive or negative.

I often hear people talk about "mental" health, which isn't wrong however, from my point of view it sends out the wrong message. If someone is ill and gets branded as being mental, how must that make them feel? I prefer to refer to it as "psychological wellbeing".

Similar to larger, well established companies, SMB's (small-medium businesses) are having to provide more support to employees, but why?



1 in 4 people across the UK struggle from psychological health problems every year

[Mind.org](https://www.mind.org.uk)

6 in 100 attempt suicide

[Mind.org](https://www.mind.org.uk)

15 million (more than 30% of the UK population) live with long-term physical health conditions

Everybody has a state of wellbeing - whether that be positive or negative.

What I found...

Having had people in my life who have suffered from psychological and physical health challenges in the past, I was keen to conduct my own research and learn more about people's opinions.

As part of the research, I conducted a short survey and asked employees, business leaders and owners who work in SMB's across the UK to participate.

When results were published, the majority of participants worked in businesses sized between 1-250 employees and sectors ranging from Retail to Housing Associations and Recruitment.

74% of participants felt as though Employee wellbeing was the responsibility of the business, the manager and the individual

Only 2% suggested that it was solely the individual employees responsibility.

Therefore, the statistics mentioned earlier are not surprising, if you consider that not many SMB's across the UK have an employee wellbeing strategy in place.



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54% of participants said they were not aware of their employers wellbeing strategy and the same amount felt as though their manager was not equipped to proactively deal with an individual's wellbeing.

My research unlocked an unsurprising but worrying discovery when half of participants feedback that they have taken a day off or even left a previous role due to concerns around their wellbeing.

Through working with our clients and measuring basic metrics such as attrition and absence we're aware of the cost that somebody leaving or taking a day off brings.



Secondary research

Other research suggests that modern technology is having a positive impact on wellbeing within the workplace, predominantly as it is enabling processes such as flexible working.



1 in 5 people now report psychological health challenges as the reason for taking days off work.

CIPD report

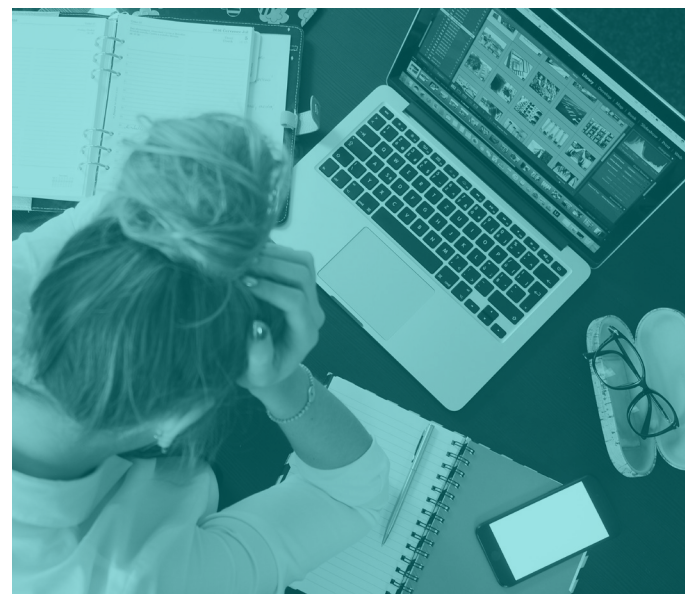
Despite “minor” illness still being the primary reason for absence, 1 in 5 people are now reporting psychological health challenges as the reason for taking days off work, according to a CIPD report. The same report goes on to say that 37% of respondents feedback that their personal stress level has increased within the last 12 months.

Some of our clients have had over **£140,000 costs in attrition** and around **£80 per day, per employee** for absence.

When was the last time you measured the financial impact of your people metrics?

37% of respondents feedback that their personal stress level has increased within the last 12 months.

CIPD report



Why should you invest in an Employee wellbeing Strategy?

A challenge with implementing employee wellbeing strategies is the fact that they are most effective when an SMB takes a proactive approach.

However, such strategies require both a financial and time investment and businesses often struggle to build a businesses case that makes this a priority and also link that to a tangible ROI (return on investment).

So what are the potential benefits of investing into an Employee wellbeing Strategy?

Increased productivity, both individually and as teams

This is how wellbeing begins to impact your bottom line and has a direct impact on daily performance.

Higher retention and reduced absence

As you make clear savings in these areas, you can then re-invest in initiatives that benefit ALL employees.

Improved ability to attract employees

Businesses with a good employee experience typically attract staff a lot quicker, along with retaining existing teams – you become an employer of choice.

Direct impact on other strategies

Many SMB's across the UK are investing into their people more and more. But without a robust wellbeing support model, many of the projects risk becoming a “plaster over a wound” and not achieving the sustainable impact on the employee experience that they are aiming for.



But... be careful! Don't use it as a marketing or tick box exercise:

A personal concern from recent years has been that many businesses across the UK are only talking about employee wellbeing on its designated week in the business world. They may post on LinkedIn, run a specific week on wellbeing and other bits and bobs, but then for the rest of the year, wellbeing is not considered. What is the point? This is where it turns into a marketing exercise and away from being an ongoing continuous improvement strategy that can add value.

Here's a couple of things to watch out for...

- ✗ Putting a fruit bowl in the office, without any meaning or purpose behind it.
- ✗ Creating “relaxation” or “collaboration” zones for employees with beanbags, without any meaning or purpose behind it.
- ✗ Running a wellbeing week and then not having a strategy that continues and builds momentum.

As this paper will go on to explain, fruit bowls and collaboration areas are fine and in some businesses work really well but they cannot be the only initiatives that you run – that is simply ticking a box.

As mentioned at the start, this paper is focused on psychological and physical wellbeing support for employees.

As this will be a new strategy for many SMB's, we suggest breaking your new initiatives down into small actions. Here are some of the initiatives that we have seen have a positive impact with our clients over the last couple of years...



First - assess your current state

This should be the starting point for every business looking to develop a new wellbeing model. If you don't know what needs to be the priority then you may run the risk of investing time into areas that are not as important.

The first steps that you need to take to design your wellbeing model will be completely different from that of another business. It is more than likely that the wellbeing needs of your company, will be completely different to that of another.



Start to create an open culture

It is crucial to make employees feel safe and as though they can talk about their physical and psychological challenges. This can be done through employee surveys, during regular 1-1's with managers and even anonymous suggestion boxes – all of which are purposely low financial and time investment initiatives.



Appoint Employee Listening Champions

However you brand these individuals does not really matter. What is important is the role that they play in supporting their colleagues. These individuals should:

- Provide each employee with a voice
- Communicate ongoing business updates
- Be mental health first trained (optional)
- Take accountability to plan wellbeing initiatives based on feedback from colleagues (workshops, events etc)



Educate yourselves and your employees

This is an area that many businesses who have employee wellbeing strategies tend to focus their attention. Whether it be running workshops around: stress, mindfulness, dietary advice, physical activity or sleep and nutrition – education is crucial to change perceptions and drive behaviours.



Create and use an action plan

Following on from the three month pilot, most SMB's are now confident that this is a strategy they wish to invest into. Therefore, creating a 12 month roadmap with monthly wellbeing initiatives can embed this into your business. Equally, this can be designed and managed by the employee champions.



Have an employee assistance programme

Building on from the open culture, some businesses then like to implement an employee assistance programme (EAP). This provides employees with information, support and access to counselling – often over the phone or internet, but many EAP's offer face to face as well.



Consider health assessments

Once a wellbeing strategy is embedded, some businesses consider investing into products such as health assessments. This enables individuals to understand how they can improve their physical health and provides measurement.



Offer flexible and / or remote working

The stresses of modern life can often be caused by a lack of work life balance. In certain industries working remotely is not an option however, that does not mean you cannot offer them the chance to work flexibly.



Run physical activity sessions

Begin to open and run sessions funded by work such as: cycling, football, netball, tennis and any other physical activity – based on feedback from your staff. Also providing discounted gym memberships can be handy.



Educate even further

Workshop surrounding the risks of drinking alcohol, taking drugs and smoking – education is key, these could be run by your employee champions to reduce costs.



Improve facilities

Offer employees access to tools and equipment that can improve wellbeing such as standing desks.



In summary SMB's who begin to invest into their employees wellbeing will see a range of benefits however, most importantly they will have an improved culture whereby employees collaborate better, are present more often and are engaged.

As with most strategies, it is an ongoing continuous improvement but the above recommendations are purposely simple and quick to implement. wellbeing shouldn't be for one week, it should be forever.



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Harry works as an Employee Engagement and People Strategy consultant for Rencai. Working with businesses across the UK he spends the majority of the time with business leaders in SMB's. Helping them review and update their People Plans and launch Employee Engagement strategies with a continuous improvement mindset.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how employee wellbeing strategies can have a highly positive impact on your employees and customers, reach out to a member of the Rencai team as we'd be very happy to help.

Speak to the Rencai team in the office today
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