

Best New Workplace Approach to Mental Wellbeing

Winner

Media Cause



This award is given to a workplace that has recently recognised explicitly the importance of addressing mental wellbeing, and within the past 18 months has taken first steps to change its culture

Media Cause is a full-service digital marketing agency that works solely with non-profits. In three years, it has gone from a 35-person operation based in four offices to a team of 76, most working remotely from more than 10 US states.

The nature of Media Cause's work makes it emotionally taxing, combining as it does highly charged issues such as homelessness and domestic violence with demanding client expectations. Work-life balance had always been a priority for Media Cause, with flexible schedules, unlimited PTO, and a weekly cap on billable hours. In the company's start-up phase it didn't have a formal wellbeing programme. As the agency grew rapidly, while remote working increased during a time of general social upheaval, it quickly became clear such a programme was needed.

Media Cause surveyed its staff and discovered many different sources of stress. The disappearance of boundaries through working from home had left many staff feeling overworked, anxious, disconnected and isolated. The company designed its strategy in response to these insights. They needed to set up a holistic, proactive programme to promote mental, emotional and physical wellbeing and integrate it into the company culture.

The resulting programme is called Wholebeing. It's based on four pillars: mental and emotional health; physical



health; social and community health; and personal and family health. Media Cause talked to its benefits providers to investigate expanded healthcare coverage, redesigned company policies to be more flexible and inclusive, and restructured its budget to provide every member of its team with a \$200 monthly stipend to use toward any class, activity, or service to support their wellbeing.

The company launched Wholebeing in March 2022 through a presentation and handbook, followed by its first mental health workshop and the introduction of its new mental health learning platform. Each month, the team share focused learning topics and hold roundtable discussions for team members. Monthly movement sessions, and quarterly mental health days help maintain a continuous focus, while a newly formed wellness committee helps advise on future efforts. An introduction to Wholebeing is part of Media Cause's onboarding process the company continues to build a culture





where mental health and wellness support is integrated into everything it does.

Achievements

Media Cause sends an all-agency Engagement Survey each August, which it uses to help gauge how well it's supporting its team across 19 focus areas, including mental health and wellness. From 2021 to 2022, several key indicators showed that the Wholebeing programme is moving the team's mental health in the right direction.

Agreement with "After work, I have energy for my leisure activities, friends and family" increased 15 points. Agreement with "It's safe to take a risk on this team" increased seven points, which demonstrates a stronger sense of psychological safety. Agreement with "If I'm struggling, I know who to turn to for help" increased six points. A new question added in 2022, "The agency cares about my mental wellbeing", scored a 97% positive response.

Beyond surveys, 87% of employees have used their monthly Wholebeing stipend for activities to support their overall health. Quarterly mental health days, updated agency communications, and extended personal leave policies have been embraced by everyone. However, the team know they have more work to do and will continue building and evolving Wholebeing to best meet the changing needs of the team for years to come. ■

Judges' comments

- ✦ A holistic programme and a clear action plan towards wellbeing. Strong evidence of results proves its effectiveness and it feels sustainable and that it will become part of the company culture
- ✦ Clear pillars to achieve the overarching goals with a successful implementation
- ✦ What is great about this is they took the time to understand staff FIRST not just chuck a load of resources and clever-sounding programmes at them

Highly Commended

→ Team 17 Digital

Shortlisted

→ EY UK

→ Independent Assessment Services