

Most Inspiring Senior Leader of the Year

Winner

**Andy McAleese,
Pacific Life Re**

This category recognises a leader who has led from the front to banish the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and who has campaigned to ensure colleagues are appropriately supported by their employers

Andy is Head of Longevity at PL Re, a global life reinsurance company. He established the company's longevity reinsurance business line in 2007, and it has grown under his leadership. He is a member of the Europe Management Team and global Senior Leadership Team. Andy's passion for employee mental wellbeing stems from his own experiences. In 2019, he broke down in tears at a management team offsite. A diagnosis of depression and anxiety kickstarted his journey to recovery.

Andy took some time off, before returning to the business with a new sense of purpose. Andy has always been a caring and thoughtful leader, and he resolved to be open about his experiences and use them to help others. His aim is to foster a safe, accepting culture within the business, to ensure all employees know it is okay not to be okay, and that they are supported by PL Re. Andy is a trained Mental Health First Aider and a member of the Stability Network, with a mission to inspire people experiencing mental health challenges to thrive.

Andy has pursued several approaches to this goal. He regularly shares his mental health experience: at in-person events, in writing and through creating his own videos (including a music video which



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lifted spirits at a difficult time) to share internally and externally. This has pushed Andy far outside his comfort zone, but it has had an amazingly positive response.

Upon returning to work, Andy joined the Wellness Champions, an employee-led group that promotes well-being within the company. As an active participant, Andy also generates support and represents the committee within the senior teams he is part of. The Wellness Champions have

Shortlisted

been central to the support provided to staff throughout the pandemic.

Andy is very approachable and makes time for one-to-one conversations with colleagues at all levels. He checks in with people and encourages them to share any challenges. In 2020, Andy trained as a Mental Health First Aider to further support his colleagues. His strategy is based on being a role model for openness and showing vulnerability while demonstrating ways of working that promote well-being. He has shown bravery in discussing his mental health, helping others to feel safe to do the same.

Achievements

Although he is responsible for one of the company's largest business lines, Andy resolved to devote a significant part of his time to people and wellbeing, in response to the difficulties caused by the pandemic. He has brought real energy and enthusiasm to wellbeing at PL Re and has worked with the wellness committee to organise events to support colleagues (such as tea & talks, discussion forums, mental health training and Coffee with a Colleague) and championed the cause with senior colleagues.

Andy has contributed to a tangible feeling of acceptance and safety at PL Re. People have shared their mental health challenges for the first time because of Andy's work. Employees have felt highly supported during the lockdown, with Andy playing a key role in this. Wellbeing scored strongly in the company's 2020 employee survey, significantly above industry benchmarks. Mental health is now much more prominent on the management agenda, with greater focus and plans for the future, and Andy's actions and words have strongly contributed to this. ■

Judges' comments



I love the fact that Andy is so open, honest and injects humour into the subject through his parody. Humanising and normalising mental health is so important. He hits the right note with both.



Strong, authentic leadership. It is a brave action to share personal experience but this sets the tone for the culture and encourages openness.



The openness that Andy brings to this topic is inspiring and the effort that he puts into his videos even more so. The testimonials were very moving.

→ Audrey Boyd
Direct Line Group
Green Flag

→ Ted Moynihan
Oliver Wyman

→ Toni Dines
Boxtree Recruitment