

HR/D&I/Wellbeing Team of the Year

Winner

Wave Utilities

This category recognises a team in the workplace that has had a positive impact across their staff. Large or small, the team should demonstrate that they have been crucial in driving mental health initiatives

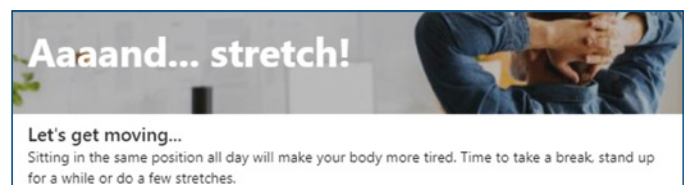
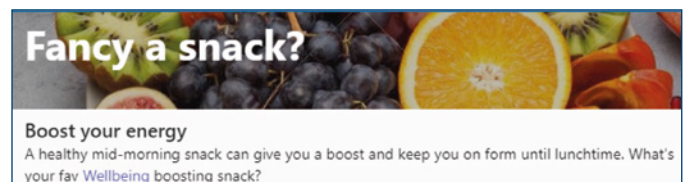
Wave is a national water retailer that helps businesses drive down their water use and save money on their bills. In April 2017 the company opened its doors with 70 employees, small budgets and an HR team of two people. From the beginning, the CEO's and HR Director's ambition was to create a culture where people enjoyed going to work and could be themselves.

In the first 18 months, the HR Director noticed that new hires who had been through redundancy elsewhere in the industry were joining Wave with mental health conditions and in some cases, big financial worries. There was so much potential in these employees yet they needed support to reach that potential and make Wave a successful company. The wellbeing strategy was created to support the business goals and lay the foundations of Wave's culture. Since then, employee feedback and HR research have driven the development of the mental health approach. The HR team has secured award-winning employee benefits, many of which can help employees' families too.

The wellbeing and mental health strategy has been driven by the HR Director and five-person HR team, supported by the CEO and the whole leadership team. The wellbeing strategy is part of the people strategy, which in turn feeds into the



Wave's twice-daily wellbeing pop-ups and social media posts remind people to look after their mental health



overall business objectives, KPI and focus areas of Wave. It is this link that ensures the HR strategy contributes to business performance and reputation. Happy, productive employees make for positive customer interactions, helping achieve Wave's goal of Trustpilot scores of at least 4/5. The HR team works to make sure employees feel they can learn or make mistakes without fear for their job or reputation.

Highly Commended

People Team
Ogilvy UK

Shortlisted

→ People Team
Northumbrian Water

→ D&I
Reward Gateway

→ Team collaboration
reponses
Swiss Re

Achievements

Ensuring the positive mental health and wellbeing of employees should deliver measurable business results, so Wave's targets include a 97% attendance rate and employee turnover of less than 10%. Attendance was at 97% pre-Covid and averaged at 96% during Covid. Retention of key people has remained exceptionally high. The focus on employees has had a positive effect on Wave's Trustpilot scores, which have soared to 4.6/5. In August 2019 the HR team introduced the WeThrive employee survey, based on a psychological model of motivation. This was repeated in December 2020. Wave's continued focus on wellbeing has seen the response rate go up to 95% and the employee engagement score rise by 5%. Eighty-five per cent of Wave's people rated the company's support to them during Covid-19 as excellent.

The team sent out daily communications during working from home and now issues wellbeing pop-ups twice a day. Members of the HR team run a Health, Safety and Wellbeing forum, set up a virtual book club, encouraged involvement of pets and children in Teams meetings, and initiated virtual walks round the UK coastline, across the equator and Route 66, resulting in people taking exercise and feeling connected with their colleagues.

The HR team in Wave may be small but it delivers mental health initiatives that would rival most large corporate companies. The offering never stands still and the feedback loop is always active. As an example, a senior female manager was about to resign. Her lack of confidence turned out to be as a result of menopause-related mental health issues – and so the menopause education programme was born. ■

Judges' comments



Very compelling – link between wellbeing, performance and client impact. Accountability to employee engagement survey and measurable targets. Focus on psychological safety.



The team are achieving a great deal with small-scale resources and budgets. They are utilising what they have very wisely.



Good to see the wellbeing strategy weaved into all the other important business strategies. Good to see targets set for attendance, turnover and survey responses.