

Best Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy: SME

Winner

Building a culture of wellbeing at Omexom, Omexom UK and ROI

This award recognises workplaces with fewer than 750 employees that have implemented an exceptional strategy to strengthen mental health

Working in the construction industry, health and safety has always been the number one priority for Omexom. This has historically focused on site-based physical health and safety, but in recent years the company has learnt the importance of employee wellbeing through the experience of its employees and their family members. When reviewing the impact physical and mental health issues have had on employees, the company felt it could go beyond reactive support to proactively promote and support employee and family wellbeing.

In 2020, the senior management team launched a campaign across Omexom to create an open culture of mental health support and wellbeing. Demonstrating senior management commitment to this, the company's main health and safety objective for 2020 was to "create an open and inclusive workplace culture which challenges mental ill-health stigma in the workplace and supports employee wellbeing". It initially focused on communication to ensure Omexom employees were involved in the campaign. Many employees are based on remote sites with poor IT, so the team communicated its objectives at a health and safety stand-down day for all employees on the first working day of 2020. A bespoke mental health awareness training course, initially for senior managers was rolled out to all Omexom

employees by the end of 2020, working around Covid-19 via a mixture of virtual and in-person training sessions.

Omexom's wellbeing strategy focuses on four strands of employee wellbeing. Physical Wellbeing involves a health cash benefit for all employees from start date, which is unusual for the sector.

Mental Wellbeing includes training and communication sessions for all employees to help remove stigma. The company's 24/7 confidential employee assistance service was relaunched. Line managers promoted this directly to employees and it was also featured on posters in company locations and in every company newsletter. On "Fish & Chip Fridays" each month, the company provides lunch for all employees on the condition they stop working and come together to have lunch as a team.

Personal Wellbeing focuses on employee work-life balance. A £100 payment is available to each employee every year towards any activity or learning outside work, and Microsoft Teams was introduced to reduce employee travel time. Flexible working and career break policies have been promoted, and IT was upgraded to support home working opportunities. The company sponsors teams and charity events outside work, and a health benefit was introduced for all



Site team enjoying Omexom's "Fish & Chip Friday" mental health initiative

employees which offers gym membership discounts and relaxation therapies.

Under the Professional strand, the company introduced conversational reviews where managers encourage and support employee development. It set up an internal training institute to provide easier access to job-specific training, and promoted further education policy and professional chartership/accreditation support. It developed a relationship with professional bodies such as the Institution of Engineering and Technology to further promote employee membership and professional development.

Achievements

Several company metrics demonstrate the positive impact of Omexom's strategy. Absence rates and voluntary employee turnover are down, while wellbeing scores, health and safety training hours and senior manager site visits are up. What senior management are most pleased with is the positive feedback from employees who have been helped. Use of the confidential employee counselling service has increased by a factor of eight between 2019 and 2021. A tangible shift in attitude and culture can be felt across the organisation and this has led many employees to recommend Omexom to others as a potential employer. ■

Judges' comments

✦ A good, focused strategy that considered communication across all sites and the best way to reach employees. The external training course for all was an excellent way of starting conversations around mental health.

✦ The value of senior leaders doing site visits help bridge the gap and show compassion top down, well done.

✦ The focus on employee feedback and not just metrics is to be commended – this is how cultural change is really felt.

Shortlisted

- ➔ ACACIA TRAINING
- ➔ Clear Channel UK Mental Health Strategy
CLEAR CHANNEL UK
- ➔ MRL CONSULTING GROUP
- ➔ SPW Mental Health Workplace Strategy
SCHRODERS PERSONAL WEALTH
- ➔ UNICEF UK

