

Most Inspiring Leader of the Year

Winner

Grant Pritchard, Spark New Zealand Trading Limited

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

Grant Pritchard is an in-house lawyer at Spark, a leading telecommunications company in Auckland, New Zealand. He joined the company in 2015 and has performed a number of senior legal and commercial roles during his time at Spark. Having had first-hand experience of losing someone – a friend and colleague – to depression and suicide, Grant became an advocate for mental health at work, and a champion for change.

In 2018, Grant took up a voluntary role spearheading Spark’s strategy for mental health in the workplace, creating a grassroots movement that is now known as ‘Mental Health at Spark’. Grant’s plan to help Spark become New Zealand’s most mentally healthy workplace was to raise awareness, reduce stigma, equip and support staff and create a supportive workplace culture. His strategy took a personable approach: seeking out feedback from colleagues, setting up collaborative discussions between volunteers and key stakeholders, and speaking out whenever he felt that an idea was worth supporting.

The management-endorsed initiative



Above: Grant Pritchard has created a safe space for employees
Right: staff are invited to discuss issues



has improved the delivery of mental health outcomes across the company. In Spark’s highly inclusive environment, open both to people and ideas, mental health volunteers and the wider mental health community come from all walks of life, and everyone is welcome regardless of their background. This attitude has helped the company transform its approach to mental health care, finding new ways to support employees and fostering a warm and inclusive working environment.

Highly Commended

- Helen Matthews
Ogilvy UK
- Vanessa Sallows
Legal & General

Shortlisted

- Dr Shaun Davis
Royal Mail Group
- Debbie Mawer
Claims Consortium Group
- Vanessa Sallows
Legal & General

Judges' comments

Achievements

The positive impact Grant has had on colleagues and friends is helping workmates feel better and encouraging them to take stronger action around mental health issues at Spark. Thanks to the initiative, staff are sharing stories, asking for help, and helping each other.

Challenges and problems are solved through collaborative discussions with volunteers and key stakeholder representatives across the company, and the positive ripple effect is being felt beyond the workplace. Team-mates are taking the skills, confidence and knowledge to their homes, as more and more people take positive action thanks to the improved wellbeing at work. Grant is supported by a core team of six volunteers who meet regularly to plan and undertake initiatives, with a further 60 volunteers helping around the country.

Recently, he presented a major proposal for improving staff wellbeing to Spark's leadership team. By creating a more open culture around mental health, Spark's initiative has created a safe space for employees to learn, make mistakes and be creative, ultimately channelling positivity back into the company. Staff feel included, valued, and part of a larger work family.

Grant's efforts have been recognised by everyone from customer service representatives to the CEO and Chair of the Board. His vision is to see similar initiatives in workplaces across New Zealand. ■

Leading on a topic he is clearly passionate about, and which is not his day job, is an inspiration and should serve as a reflection for us all. Grant had a clear strategy supported by multiple approaches to reach colleagues (and their families) across Spark. The impact, particularly on organisational culture, is one many other businesses should take note of. With energy, focus and dedication we can create positive change, even if at times we feel powerless; one individual really can make a transformational difference to the lives of many others.

Grant has led from the ground up. It's clear that from his own initiative he has had an outstanding impact on his organisation. Grant has worked extremely hard and ambitiously, contributing to an improved environment for colleagues and the wider community.