

Best New Workplace Approach to Mental Health

Winner

Mindful Business Charter, Pinsent Masons LLP

This award is given to a workplace that has recognised the importance of resolving mental health at work, and taken steps in the last 12 months to improve the mental health and wellbeing of its employees

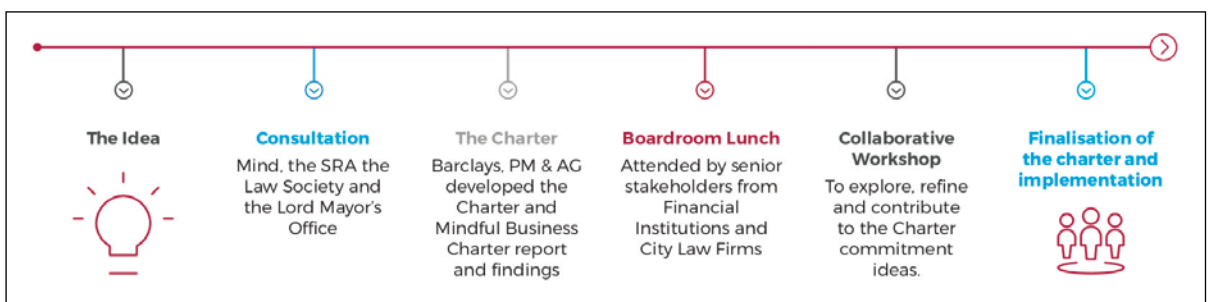
Multinational law firm Pinsent Masons knows that working within the legal sector can be stressful. Advances in technology and increasingly high expectations of a faster turnaround time mean that stress is on the rise amongst staff. There is also the demand for 24/7 availability, so workplace worries are often taken home.

The purpose of the mental health strategy developed by Pinsent Masons was to build a company-wide strategy to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health-related issues in the workplace. Developed in collaboration with Barclays and Addleshaw Goddard, the resulting Mindful Business Charter (MBC) was constructed from a series of commonsense principles aimed at changing the way staff thought about – and carried out – work. By identifying and tackling the root causes of stress, the

charter could promote wellbeing, aiming to re-establish some of the boundaries between personal and professional lives.

Building the charter's initial strategy involved engaging external stakeholders and developing shared thinking. A Code of Conduct was introduced, centering on openness and respect, with a high regard for employee welfare. Examples included being mindful about not disturbing staff with work calls on days off, avoiding instances of overwhelm during busy times, and having a general respect for rest periods.

There is now an established culture of wellbeing within the company. Changes to the issues surrounding mental health don't happen overnight, but the charter has sent a clear message that there is no taboo against talking about it.



The charter was developed in a collaborative way, in order to make it flexible enough to be deployed across a wide range of professional and financial services, not just commercial banks and legal advisers

Achievements

Since launching in January 2019, the MBC has seen colleagues working hard to keep communicating with teams, and a panel event in July 2019 saw the launch of the code of conduct. This has included a quarterly feedback survey, less-formal channels of feedback, and a series of Speak Your Mind sessions.

Feedback comments have cited many positive changes that have taken place since the launch of the MBC. Respondents suggest that staff remain very responsive to client needs, but senior employees now seem more willing to find out whether deadlines are really necessary. In the first year, the number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of being able to work flexibly had increased. Along with this, they noted annual leave days being respected, and being mindful of people's time when setting up meetings and calls.

Discussions around the MBC have given rise to constructive conversations about team culture. It is now understood that the purpose of the charter is to address the feeling of lack of control that can challenge staff wellbeing, in addition to encouraging open conversations about stressful issues such as deadlines and targets.

That said, the charter also recognises that people should feel free to work long hours should the need arise. The charter has also launched in Hong Kong and Singapore and more roll-outs are planned. ■

Judges' comments

There has been an important acknowledgement and focus on the mental health as a result of work in this sector. The code of conduct developed with junior lawyers makes this entry a worthy winner, with its targeted approach in a very high-pressure environment. Well done!

The charter shows an outstanding approach towards listening to junior lawyers and then acting upon it, leading to outstanding results. Among the many great outcomes, what is particularly impressive is the percentage increase in employees feeling they can take time off when they are actually away from work.

This charter is simple and impactful. It shows clearly what people in the organisation need to do to develop a workplace culture that supports good mental wellbeing.

→ CET's #Let's Talk Campaign
CET

→ Growing mental health awareness at SGN
SGN

→ It was our time to change...

The General Dental Council

→ Southeastern Railway
Southeastern Railway

→ Wellbeing Programme
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP