

Best Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy:

SME

Winner Wave

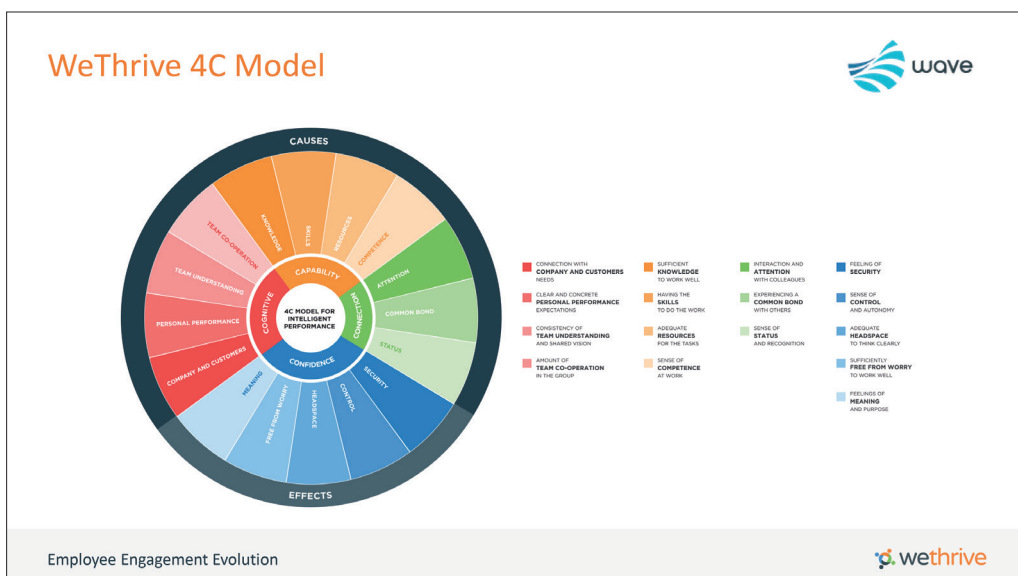
This award recognises a workplace with fewer than 750 employees that has implemented an exceptional mental health strategy, demonstrating how a small organisation can use outside resources to foster wellbeing

National water retailer Wave was the result of a merger between Anglian Water Business and NWG Business, two companies which had very different working cultures. The Board was concerned that employee turnover – and absence – would increase during the integration, so a strategy was set up to target attendance levels of 97% attendance and less than 10% turnover. The strategy aimed to create a culture where employees felt they could share worries and be supported by the company.

self-help resources, and resilience training to help prepare people for the upcoming integration. On a limited budget, Wave introduced employee benefits including a group income policy paying up to 50% of a salary for up to two years in case of long-term absence, and private healthcare for employees. Employees were enabled to bring dogs into work, have birthdays off, buy holidays and claim two weeks' paid bereavement leave. One-to-one meetings were initiated so all employees could stay in touch with line managers.

The project included workshops aimed at breaking down the stigma of mental health,

The strategy presented updates to the Board on a monthly basis, combining



Presented by:



the elements that Wave wanted to offer alongside feedback from employees. Currently, wellbeing is on the agenda at the monthly employee business briefing and Q&A sessions and this has enabled employees to generate more suggestions and add new elements, such as running clubs and slimming sessions, menopause awareness briefings and talks by a MIND counsellor on breaking down mental health stigma. Wellbeing and mental health toolkits were introduced as an online resource and an early intervention scheme offered to anyone struggling with mental health.

Achievements

The early intervention scheme has given employees access to a mental health assessment by a qualified psychiatric nurse within 48 hours of a problem arising. Some employees have had extensive counselling, with one funded to have specialist therapy that normally had a 15-month NHS waiting list. Employees have been able to stay in work, or return to work against all odds, and attendance levels have remained between 96-97.5%.

Mental health & wellbeing toolkits are commonly in use, as is the employee benefits portal, Perkbox. The success of the 'Breaking the Stigma' sessions is apparent, with more people using the kitchen areas at work as a place to eat and chat. One senior male sales manager sought counselling after the sessions, and went on to put on his own 'lunch & learn' sessions. ■

Judges' comments

■ Nice focus on creating a balanced culture and strategy which looks not only at process and procedure but changing culture. Some good results achieved in a very short space of time

■ For an SME they've really pushed the boat out to incorporate many benefits that you would typically see only in bigger organisations; the survey and engagement of the board is outstanding and I loved the personal gestures like birthday holidays, dogs at work etc

■ Strategy has a clear purpose, goal and works within constraints. Links purpose with deliverables and outputs. Has some large-scale plans but also smaller, more personal touches such as bringing your dog to work

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AIG Life Limited

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