

# Promoting Positive Workplaces

When we look at increasing the performance of a team, we often look over the practical things that could be improved, like workflows, goals and individual responsibilities. But, it turns out, we should be focusing on mental health too.

Toxic work cultures are one of the driving forces behind this huge number, where unprofessional or dishonest behaviour, punitive practices or policies, or strained relationships between employees and office leadership begin to negatively impact the mental health of the workforce.

Regardless of the severity, a toxic workplace can have a major mental health impact on the people that work within it. Indeed, chronic stress, anxiety and depression are common in a toxic workplace.

According to management consulting company McKinsey & Company:

- \$17 billion is lost by Australian workplaces every year due to absenteeism and lost productivity from mental health conditions,
- 10-12 workdays are missed per year per employee experiencing a mental health condition and
- 14-18 additional days of reduced productivity are suffered by individuals experiencing mental illnesses.

There are numerous ways you can reduce toxicity in a workplace and promote a mentally fit work culture, but perhaps one of the most effective techniques is to create a **supportive and positive environment**.

## HOW TO PROMOTE A SUPPORTIVE AND POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT?

A survey conducted by Deloitte has identified a good place to start. 76% of employees believed that a “clearly defined business strategy” helped create a positive and supportive culture. That strategy focuses on **3 key aspects**:

### 1. A clear ethos and values for the organisation

- Having a clear and concise set of core values that is readily discussed with employees can automatically promote a more inclusive atmosphere
- Actions like “going green” or “social change” are good positive examples that employees are likely to get onboard with
- It is crucial that demonstrable actions are taken regularly so that employees feel an individual and personal responsibility to adhere to them
- Positive attitudes and positive actions make for a positive and supportive workplace culture.



### 2. Promoting collaboration and communication

- This requires managerial cooperation and leadership to be successful
- Managers need to encourage teamwork, open and honest communication and regularly conduct audits that ensure core values are being adhered to
- Feedback is welcomed in a non-judgemental way, as this promotes opportunities for more social interactions and for more ideas to be shared without fear of blame or condemnation
- The inclusions of social events outside the usual work environment can help foster connections outside of the office
- Employees should be given the opportunity to participate in webinars, courses and sessions to address their unconscious and implicit biases that can impact their interactions with co-workers
- A strict open-door policy should be implemented along with confidential, straight forward and transparent workplace bullying and harassment procedures.

### 3. Creating inclusive work environments

- All employees should have equal opportunities to progress and equal access to all the perks and rewards on offer
- Employees should feel that their values and individual differences are both welcome and accepted
- For organisations, language is a key tool in this. Language has the potential to confuse, offend and isolate - so it must reflect a gender-conscious and inclusive ethos.



FIND OUT MORE

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## PROMOTING POSITIVE WORKPLACES

### THE BENEFITS OF A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

A supportive environment can take time, effort and resources to build and it's often difficult to see the financial reward in promoting it. **So, is it worth it?**

Well, international research conducted by McKinsey & Company suggests that for every dollar spent on mental health policies, companies can expect a four-fold return on their investment (ROI). When we delve into the effects of a supportive work culture on employees, we can see why:

when someone works in an inclusive environment, they are more likely to have a higher wellbeing compared to someone who doesn't. This means they are more likely to:

1. Perform at a high level
2. Propose more ideas (and pursue them)
3. Take less sick days
4. Remain at the company longer

This proves advantageous for the organisation as they reap the benefits of a higher-performing workforce and less staff turnover.

### OUR CASE STUDY

A supportive workplace culture also gives employees the courage they need to come forward and seek help if they are suffering from a mental health illness. At Converge, one of our EAP customers reported the following benefits after implementing a series of our programs designed to increase supportiveness:

1. Higher reports of managers dealing with employees expressing suicidal thoughts
2. Lower levels of suicide and attempted suicide
3. Increased calls by employees to Converge for assistance with mental health issues
4. Increased calls from managers to Converge for assistance managing employees impacted by poor mental health

These results may appear negative on the surface. Why would you want an organisation with more mental health problems? But these initiatives simply unearthed issues that were already there. Furthermore, they gave employees and managers the confidence and know-how to manage their mental health issues.

When organisations correct their management of mental health issues report improved work performance. One study noted that

**86% of employees treated for depression reported better productivity and reduced overall absenteeism by up to 60%.**



To learn more about how our programs can help your organisation promote a supportive workplace culture, or to get in touch with a mental health professional, talk to our friendly team today on: **1300 687 327.**

## FIND OUT MORE

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