

29 May 2020

The Key Reasons your Business Should be Paying Attention to Mental Health

As Mental Health Awareness Month comes to an end, it is important to reflect deeply on the importance of prioritising mental health and wellbeing for employees.

The National Business Initiative's (NBI's) Social Transformation Unit is responsible for facilitating the Inclusion Working Group – a platform for member companies to engage on the social nuances of inclusion, share knowledge and craft collective responses to transformation. One of the key deliverables of this group is developing the Inclusivity Blueprint, a guide that will aid South African workplaces in working towards transformation.

According to a survey conducted by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group in 2017, only 1 in 6 employees felt comfortable disclosing their mental illness to their employer or manager.^[1] Some of the key factors contributing to a lack of disclosure in the workplace stem from social stigmas around mental illness, a lack of support and access to healthcare services and possible career progression limitations as a result of disclosing. These challenges have implications on the business sector, as employees who are not sufficiently supported are at higher risk of absenteeism, decreased productivity and limited career growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a series of developments, which have exacerbated several social issues impacting employees. These include access to mental healthcare, socio-economic uncertainty, additional domestic and child-rearing responsibilities and increased expectations to contribute to work demands. As a collective, the Inclusion Working Group grapples with these complexities as part of the development of the Inclusivity Blueprint, focusing on how business can respond effectively to ensure employees feel safe to discuss, disclose and receive support on matters regarding mental health and wellbeing.

Key business interventions

Some useful interventions that business needs to consider in providing mental health support include:

- Policies that explicitly recognize the spectrum of neurodiversity and the importance of mental wellbeing

^[1] <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2018-05-17-tackling-mental-health-in-the-workplace>

- Recognition for both western and traditional medicine and healing as forms of treatment towards achieving and maintaining wellness
- Employee benefits which include support for psychological and medical resources
- Ongoing dialogues on the importance of destigmatizing mental illness in the workplace
- Deliberate organizational stance that supports, encourages, and promotes employee wellness through flexible working hours and environments

Companies interested in learning more about the development of the Inclusivity Blueprint are encouraged to contact Khanyisa Nomoyi at KhanyisaN@nbi.org.za

^[1] <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2018-05-17-tackling-mental-health-in-the-workplace>



Copyright © 2020 NBI, All rights reserved.

The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela

NBI Website: www.nbi.org.za

Email: info@nbi.org.za

The National Business Initiative (NBI) respects your right to privacy, if you do not wish to receive any further news updates from the NBI, please click **UNSUBSCRIBE** and your name will be removed from the mailing list.