



Organisation - PDSA

Category Winner - Best IC Work

Awards - June 2019

Mental Health Campaign at PDSA

One in four of us will experience some sort of mental health problem this year. When you extrapolate that out across any organisation – it’s a sobering statistic. At PDSA, we’re starting our journey to create a workplace culture which focuses on the wellbeing of our people.

We’ve got around 2,000 colleagues – which rises to nearly 6,000 if we include our amazing volunteers. That’s around 1,500 colleagues who will, according to the statistics, be struggling with some sort of mental health problem this year. Add in to the mix that the veterinary profession are four times more likely than the general population to commit suicide – that’s why we’re creating a culture where it’s ok, not to be ok.

At PDSA, our campaign around mental wellbeing has only just begun.

With the support of our internal comms team, Our Director General, Jan, penned a blog in February where she wrote, for the first time, about her own experiences with mental health as part of #TimeToTalk Day. The response was overwhelming. The conversations started to happen. Colleagues replied to Jan directly and they took to Workplace to share their own experiences.

We wanted to keep the campaign and momentum alive – so in May – as part of Mental Health Awareness Week - each day we emailed out a new personal blog or vlog from a different colleague. We then shared it on Workplace for others to come forward with their own stories – or to simply praise those colleagues who have had the confidence and bravery to share their most vulnerable experiences.

From living with OCD, depression, PTSD, panic attacks – and living with a bi-polar parent – each story was powerful, thought provoking and moving.

Our objective was to start a conversation about mental wellbeing at work – and to encourage our colleagues to talk about how they feel. Following #TimeToTalk Day we measured that our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) website saw more traffic in the week after that blog went live – than it had seen during the whole of February in both 2017 and 2018.

Anecdotally – the response has been overwhelming too – with an outpouring of solidarity and compassion from colleagues across the organisation.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, across all channels, our vlogs were viewed more than 1,300 times and 1,195 people read at least one of our blogs.

One of bloggers responded on Workplace to her experience during the week: “I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to read my blog post last week. I especially want to thank all of those people who took the time to comment, or to email/speak to me directly. The support offered was amazing and I appreciated every word. I hope my story helps other people, even in a small way, and I’m always available for coffee if anyone needs someone to talk to.”

The biggest success though has shown that between February and May, nearly 200 colleagues accessed our EAP (nearly 10% of our employees) – that was a 58% increase on the numbers for the previous four months.

We’re really proud that we’ve started our journey when it comes to wellbeing – and we were proud to be asked by leading Internal Comms influencer Rachel Miller to write a blog sharing our campaign experiences. You can read that blog here:

<https://www.allthingsic.com/paws-for-thought-giving-colleagues-a-voice-on-mental-health/>

But the measurement which really matters (and that is borne out by our EAP statistics) is if just one person was given the confidence to speak up about how they’re feeling – then that, for us, is what success feels like.