SOCIETY 4.0 FORUM
MENTAL WELLBEING AT WORK IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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Mental wellbeing at work in the digital economy

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“What small thing that your employer or manager has implemented or changed that has made the experience of work easier/better/less of an exhausting nightmare slog?”

US Journalist Anne Helen Peterson - Twitter
One day out of the blue, my employer announced we could work from home whenever we wanted and that there’d be no dress code in the office. It’s made things so nice. They’re also implementing “day off on your birthday”.

I work from home day a week and a 2-hour flexible arrival time 7am-9am for the other 4 days. Never feeling rushed in traffic has saved my soul.

No emails on weekends or evenings past 8pm.

Our daily stand up includes an emotional check-in - how are you feeling? How would you like to feel by the end of the day? What’s your safety plan to get there? Who can help or encourage you? Knowing when people are having a bad day completely changes office interactions.

Basically, they treat me like a grown-up who can be trusted to get stuff done even when I have other things going on in my life. It's great.

Being told I didn't need to text or call if I was running anything less than 30 minutes late. They didn't need to micromanage my attendance and knew I would always get my work done. The stress that took out of my morning was huge!
Megatrends

‘A megatrend is a deep-set trajectory of change that occurs at the intersection of numerous trends with tighter and more specific temporal, spatial and typological definitions.’
Megatrends

1. The extending reach of automated systems and robotics
2. Rising issue of workplace stress and mental health issues
3. The gig economy
What is mental health?

“A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

World Health Organization
It is not a static state

Positive, healthy functioning

Severe impact on everyday functioning
Anxiety, depression and suicide

Around 2 million people in Australia live with anxiety.

On average, more than 8 people in Australia take their own lives every day, 6 of whom are men.

Around 1 million people in Australia live with depression.
Megatrend

The extending reach of automated systems and robotics

‘The costs of advanced automated technologies are likely to continue falling and the capabilities and widespread deployment are likely to continue rising.’

Impact

• Physical and psychological injury may fall by 11% by 2030
• ‘Dull, dirty and dangerous’ jobs replaced
• Remaining roles involve more human-oriented traits
• 62% more satisfied in their jobs
• BUT increase in higher functioning tasks, surveillance, time management may impact mental health
Impact

• World Health Organization (WHO) says burnout is an occupational phenomenon
• 6% of all workers’ compensation claims are for psychological injury
• Technology use/implementation can impact mental health
• BUT technology also presents opportunities to assist with mental health

Megatrend

Rising issue of workplace stress and mental health issues

‘Australia’s workforce is registering increasing levels of stress and mental health issues. New and intensifying uses of digital technologies in the workplace may exacerbate problems with mental health and stress.’
**Megatrend**

**The gig economy**

‘The gig economy refers to freelance task-based work organised through online platforms or ‘apps’. It changes the way we work away from traditional employment models.’

**Different approach to work**

- Flexible work benefits life satisfaction and happiness
- BUT also increased risks from:
  - Financial instability from unpredictable/unreliable shift work
  - Social isolation
  - Precarious employment relationships
  - No fixed environment
  - Lack of protective factors like work culture
Megatrend

The gig economy

‘The gig economy refers to freelance task-based work organised through online platforms or ‘apps’. It changes the way we work away from traditional employment models.’

Over representation of vulnerable groups

• High representation of young workers
• May be unemployed for a while
• Some may have a disability
• A proportion are temporary migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse community members
Megatrend

The gig economy

‘The gig economy refers to freelance task-based work organised through online platforms or ‘apps’. It changes the way we work away from traditional employment models.’

Other matters

Employment status:

• Sole trader – highest distress
• Cannot typically access employment ‘protections’

Consumer feedback

• Can impact employment
• May damage self-esteem

• BUT: platform providers could help
Poor mental health is likely to affect 1 in 5 employees.

71% say a mentally healthy workplace is a priority when looking for a job.

Businesses achieve an average $4.20 return on investment for every $1 invested in effective mental health initiatives.

Beyond Blue: Heads Up.org.au

Workplace resources for

Employers  Employees  Managers  Small business
WorkSafe Victoria: WorkWell

WorkWell Toolkit
Helping you to create positive, mentally healthy workplaces

Practical resources together in one spot
The WorkWell Toolkit is a voluntary online tool. It uses a step by step approach to help employers promote mental health and prevent mental injury in the workplace through access to tailored tools and information.
Arts Wellbeing Collective

Tour Well for Tour Managers
tips and techniques for designing tours to promote positive mental health and wellbeing

YOUR POCKET GUIDE TO DE-ROLE
tips for getting out of character and back to your wonderful self

We work hard to prioritise physical safety. Let’s do the same for our mental health and wellbeing.

TALK
Add mental health discussions to existing processes - think:
- Site inductions
- Tool box talks
- Production briefings
- OHS briefings.

REPORT
Add a ‘wellbeing’ check to show reports:
- Try a score out of five with a brief explanation
- Helps identify issues early and spot trends.

WALK
Look after your mental and physical health:
- Sleep, eat and exercise
- Spend time with family and friends
- Ask for support - don’t go it alone.

SUPPORT
Offer support - check in on the mental health and wellbeing of those around you regularly and genuinely.
Share what has a positive impact on your mental health.

artswellbeingcollective.com.au

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Supporting small business owners to improve their mental health and wellbeing at work

A guide for work contacts, friends and family

Speaking with someone you’re concerned about

If you notice that a business contact, friend or family member seems to be going through a difficult time or are not their usual self, it’s advisable to speak with them to see if you can help.

Knowing what boundaries to set for your involvement depends a lot on your relationship with the person, especially if you feel obligated to be a psychological first aid. There are some simple steps you can take to help them find a way forward, if they need assistance.

People are sometimes concerned about speaking with a colleague or friend about mental health issues. The evidence tells us that speaking to someone can help. Further, adult-owned or small employer-owned organisations are often the first to identify and support their employees, and may even have proactive mental health support programs in place.

How to start?

- Consider what’s comfortable for you.
- If you feel you can offer a listening ear.
- Reassure the person you care about.

Planning the conversation

- Consider whether you are the best person to deal with them, or another person is more suitable?
- Understand what support services are available.
- Find a private place to talk where the person will feel comfortable.

Helpful tips

- There’s no one right way of expressing things - it’s the main thing to be thoughtful and considerate.
- Say what feels comfortable for you. "You don’t seem yourself. Everything OK?"
- Don’t force them to explore deeper issues. There’s nothing wrong with having the conversation and then letting it go.
- Be empathetic and positive. Don’t be defensive of their situation and say things like, "But you’ve got so much going for you.
- If you say something that sounds quite right, stop and try again.
- Use a common-sense approach.

Handy resources and links

Sometimes it’s important to take immediate action to address urgent concerns you have for a person’s wellbeing.

Other times, there’s a chance to take a more considered approach.

As well as addressing mental health, you can assist small business owners to implement mental health policies and plans in place now.

By doing this, they can better protect and support their wellbeing, and it can make them healthier, more productive at work.

To assist in this process, we have developed two valuable resources:

- A workplace wellbeing plan
- A workplace risk assessment

 Handy resources and links

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“A supportive workplace culture is like giving everyone in the organisation a mental health inoculation.”

The Hon. Julia Gillard
THANK YOU

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