

Mental Health Awareness Week: Make Time to Talk

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With a potential mental health pandemic in the pipeline, talent advisory expert warns of need to get staff talking

As the UK joins together for Mental Health Awareness Week still in the grips of a pandemic, AMS (formerly Alexander Mann Solutions), a global provider of talent outsourcing and advisory services, has urged employers to make time to talk to their people.

While the country is beginning to see restrictions ease as the vaccine rollout picks up pace, AMS has warned that we are facing a mental health pandemic that could have a lasting impact on workforces unless action is taken now. With staff working remotely for the last 18 months and most set to do so in some form for the foreseeable future, employees are facing digital exhaustion, a lack of boundaries between work and home life and a reduction in engagement and well-being that is being masked by increased productivity.

According to the talent expert, businesses will experience a long-lasting, detrimental impact on growth prospects unless they seriously consider taking steps to better the people's mental well-being, including:

- Make time to talk: Don't be afraid to have difficult and courageous conversations across the business – in fact, make time to discuss the pressures peers and teams are facing. People need to be listened to, no matter how hard it can be to hear it
- Focus on humility: Use good role models in senior positions who are able to talk about mental well-being with a sense of vulnerability and humility. Opening up a conversation that encourages people to talk – including sharing personal experiences from managers – will be crucial in helping staff cope in the modern world
- Get your people involved: Empower staff to take action themselves. AMS champions Mental Health Ambassadors across the company who are accessible to anyone looking to talk about their struggles in and out of work
- Train your managers to have empowering conversations: Managers are facing a new challenge themselves. Providing training to help them have impactful discussions delivered with confidence and compassion can help tackle the mental health pandemic. Have trained mental wellness ambassadors work with managers regularly to develop this skill
- Take a global viewpoint with a regional approach: Be considerate about the fact that there are regional differences in terms of pandemic restrictions, so the mental health support needed will vary across

geographies. Approaches to how mental health is talked about and normalised needs to be adapted across demographics and cultures as well, so avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach

As Ruth Smyth, Managing Director, People and Culture at AMS explained, it's never been so important to make time to talk to staff:

“Our employees' mental health has never faced such pressure and strain as it has in the last year. While there's been some really encouraging and inspirational moves from employers to support the mental well-being of their staff during the pandemic, we're now facing longer-term stresses that businesses need to prepare for – in particular, the effects of long-Covid and a possible mental health pandemic that could impact our people for a number of years unless we prepare and take action quickly. While every business will have its own talent engagement and mental health well-being programme in place, impactful, courageous and difficult conversations need to be embraced if we're to support our talent in the new world of work. Making time to talk now could safe-guard the well-being of our people in the future.”

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About AMS

We are AMS. AMS is a global total workforce solutions firm founded in 1996. We enable organisations to

thrive in an age of constant change by building, reshaping, and optimising workforces. We do this through talent acquisition and contingent workforce management, internal mobility and skills development, and talent and technology advisory services.

Our solutions are delivered by our 5000+ experts who live our passionate, bold and authentic values. Last year we placed 180,000 permanent hires and managed 26,000 contingent workers for our 180 outsourcing clients. And we advised many more organisations as trusted partners to help meet their talent objectives. The ultimate aim is to help our clients around the world, in over 90 countries, create workforces that are fluid, resilient, diverse and differentiated.

We call this True Workforce Dexterity—and we're here to help you achieve it.