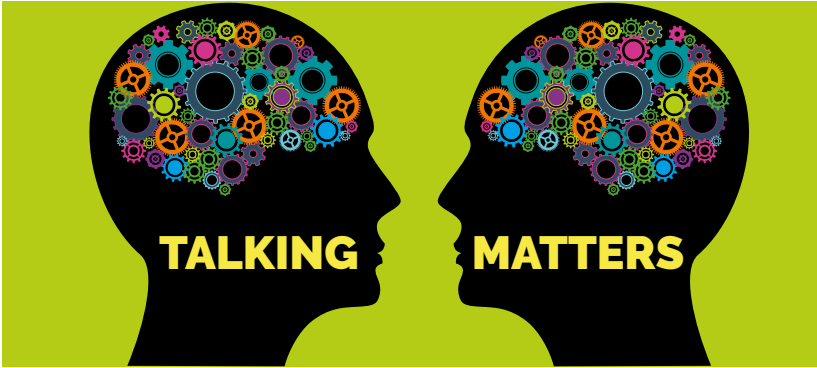


All we need to do is make



Our front-page story and special feature on pages 24 and 25 highlighting the issue of Mental Health in the ICT industry aligns with World Mental Health Day on October 10th, organised by the World Federation for Mental Health.

In advance, President Dr Ingrid Daniels has relayed some shocking statistics compiled by the World Health Organisation: "About 450 million people live with mental disorders that are among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. In 2018, The World Economic Forum noted that mental health disorders are on the rise in every country in the world and could cost the global economy up to \$16 trillion between 2010 and 2030 if a collective failure to respond is not addressed.

"Every 40 seconds someone dies by suicide. Annually, this represents over 800 000 people, which is more than people dying by war and homicide put together. For every suicide, there are many more people who attempt suicide every year. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15 to 29-year-olds while 79% of global suicides occur in low and middle-income countries."

Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities and entire countries. Read the heart-breaking words from Nick Dutfield's wife (page 25) and you'll get a picture of the long-lasting and devastating effects on the people left behind.

As the heartbeat of the ICT Industry, it's why Comms Dealer is giving new charity Mental Health Associates as much support as possible to help prevent further unnecessary tragedies. It aims to give people the opportunity to talk to trained counsellors that know our sector and the pressure they may be under.

As we move into the colder months with, potentially, a more virulent spike in Covid-19 cases and further restrictions on our normal business life, we hope ICT industry leaders will rally to this cause by not only being more aware of their own people's issues but by also supporting MHA with what it needs most,: the cash to fund more counsellor training. If you can help in any way email peter.orr@mentalhealthassociates.co.uk



IAIN SINNOTT
VANILLA IP

"The mental health of our teams is a real challenge, Covid-19 or not, because the sufferer often hides their suffering, especially from their closest friends and loved ones. To meet this challenge, I have always tried to incorporate some key elements into my management plan as follows: the role of a manager is to help each team member reach their full potential; the business must create a safe environment in which each person can flourish; 1-2-1 meetings should be regular, consistent and about the individual; we should enquire about their work and personal state every time and pay attention to the consistency of their response; we should invite people to share concerns about colleagues, safe in the knowledge that we will respond with subtlety and care; we need to recognize that mental health issues don't always have logical triggers, but common pressures and perceived failings can contribute."



PAM WILLIAMS
GAMMA

"As we hit the six-month mark since lockdown the stresses of our new normal have become more than apparent. Prior to the onset of Covid-19, Gamma offered the Employee Assistance Programme with mental health first aiders across all offices trained to support employees. As we went into lockdown, both the physical and mental wellbeing of our staff was a key business concern. With employees isolated at home, symptoms and changes in behaviour could go unnoticed. Reacting quickly, we launched a Wellbeing Channel, with areas focused on mental health support, working from home best practice and virtual social events ensuring connections between colleagues can be made. Managers played a critical role in checking in daily with their people. One of Gamma's core values is Stronger Together and we're incredibly proud of our employees who have rallied together during this crisis to support those in need."



TERESA O'CONNELL
DWS

"At DWS, we are increasingly aware of social isolation and the effects it can have on our mental health. To coincide with National Suicide Awareness Month in September, we launched our 'Reaching Out' campaign to all our staff, designed to keep us all talking and supporting one another. This included an online workshop covering the effects of social isolation and suicide awareness, produced by Zero Suicide Alliance, which has helped us to build on the conversation about mental health across the business. We also have teamed up with Solent Mind to deliver some online training on 'Managing Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace' to our managers. This is designed to equip managers with the tools they need to identify the signs of anyone struggling with their mental health and how to have these difficult, but extremely important, conversations."



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ALAN SHRAGA
FIDELITY GROUP

"As managing director, my role is to help guide our employees and colleagues to an outcome I feel is best for all. We have two video calls every day, so everyone gets to see each other and get some encouragement for the day ahead. I think it is vital that we all keep connected. We also had 'Back2Work' kit bags made for all our staff which we then rolled out to customers with their own coffee travel mug, water bottle, mask, hand sanitizer and a bag to put it all in. Last, but not least, we have hosted team quiz nights via video which have been themed to ensure all our team members have had a fun night of entertainment. I believe this has helped team members feel comfortable to discuss their feelings with colleagues on how home working and lockdown has affected them."



CHERIE HOWLETT
JOLA.

"We were devastated to hear about the loss of Nick Dufield from Fusion Voice & Data and we salute Peter Orr for setting up the Mental Health Associates charity. We are committed to do what we can to support those who may be suffering. The biggest challenge we face is not knowing what to look out for or how best to help. The Office for National Statistics ran a survey between October 2019 and April 2020, reporting a 21% increase in adults suffering from high levels of anxiety. We check in on all employees with regular video calls and online social events. We also communicated help available via our benefits programme which includes a 24/7 confidential helpline, online doctors' appointments, as well as online fitness and healthy eating programmes. It is a start, but we could do more to reassure people that it is ok 'not be ok'."



VICKI COWPERTHWAITTE
NINE GROUP

"We never shy away from the subject of mental health. The current circumstances have taken their toll. Communication and clear signposts to professional support create a safe and positive culture which encourages openness, however there will always be those individuals who suffer in silence. Home working may lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, so 9 provides access to professional counselling services, which can be accessed discreetly and anonymously. In addition, we have also introduced a weekly staff newsletter. The content is purely driven by our staff, who are encouraged to share their stories, and to provide advice around how to battle some of the common problems we are facing. Managers are also equipped to handle conversations about mental health and technology plays a vital role in keeping teams connected. This includes regular check in calls, finding ways to stay social, and being able to identify signs for concern."



AYSHEA ROBERTSON
ZEN INTERNET

"Mental health is an area that rightfully gets a lot of airtime and is a key focus of our health and wellbeing strategy. That has proved crucial in navigating a remote working environment. Factors such as financial wellbeing, work-life balance, caring responsibilities, and relationships can all have an impact on a person's mental wellbeing and the pandemic has further compounded challenges in these areas. We always had several initiatives in place to support mental wellbeing and we have now put added emphasis on those activities that can be executed remotely such as virtual mental health awareness sessions. Also, mental health first aiders are always on hand to deliver virtual sessions throughout the pandemic. Having a positive and empathetic company culture with supportive colleagues and managers is a good start. It leads to engaged people and high performance, but let's not forget the significant positive impact it also has on mental wellbeing."



KATE BRUNNING
VIRTUAL1

"When it comes to our employee's mental health, we're committed to supporting our people in any way we can. We have 16 mental health first aiders all trained to spot the signs of someone suffering in silence. Our people are consistently reminded about our support mechanisms, such as our EAP and Vitality self-referral. Our recent training sessions, calling on external experts, focus on building a positive mindset to enhance mental resilience during difficult times. Additional workshops, in partnership with Mind in Harringay, will launch around World Mental Health Day. Throughout the pandemic, we've been as flexible as possible regarding home working and have opened the office for people that feel that this would improve their mental wellbeing (in accordance with government guidelines). Finally, our people can now also expense their gym memberships, as exercise can be crucial to maintaining positive mental health."



GAVIN JONES
BT WHOLESALE

"At BT, health and wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do. Our internal online service such as 'Your Wellbeing' provides tailored information for everyone in the company, that make the difference in a socially distanced world. We also understand the challenges our customers are facing during the pandemic, SMEs being the hardest hit. In July, we launched our Small Business Support Scheme, with ten initiatives in place to help businesses navigate through the uncertainty. We're soon launching a wellbeing and mental health toolkit which aims to help businesses look after their own and their staff's wellbeing. The disruption from the pandemic has left many businesses and employees struggling emotionally, as well as financially. Our research with Small Business Britain highlighted 20% of small businesses felt they needed mental health support so we're bringing our own expertise around maintaining wellbeing and mental health direct to our customers."



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