

# Successful strategies that pro

**A**fter the pandemic, channel organisations enhanced their wellbeing strategies to alleviate the strain on their staffs' physical and mental health.

Many of the proactive players would go on to cite these measures as key for their staff retention and recruitment over the last few years.

However, these measures must evolve once again as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis has made financial uncertainty a top concern for employees. The sector is never slow to adapt and this feature will provide a window into the people-focused measures being successfully adopted to promote wellbeing.

With aid ranging from one off payments, to ongoing financial advice, an empowered workforce expects their employer to take an active role to support them through a tough period.



The post-pandemic return to the office forced a shift in employers' mindsets as many workers began to demand a better work life balance. This new narrative, coupled with the cost of living crisis, has made employers really consider the value of their people and their needs. We have recently introduced Mental Health First Aiders to our business who are trained to recognise and support the needs of our people. We have introduced an Employee Assistance Programme for staff which offers them advice on subjects such as debt management, legal advice and mental health. A free gym membership is now a given for our staff and incentive schemes are open to the whole company, although we are still a work in progress and continue to look for further ways to improve our wellbeing benefits.



Our biggest focus on employee wellbeing is mental health support which evolves based on peoples' needs. Many external issues post-pandemic continue to impact our people, the latest being the cost of living crisis and the uncertainty that comes with the current economic climate. We have a strong team of Mental Health First Aiders who share sources of support, including an internal podcast series. Onecom staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme, resources available through our benefits schemes and free support from our financial advisors. We continually look at ways to support the health of our employees, creating a positive impact on overall wellbeing. Our culture allows staff to talk more openly about their wellbeing, something that has developed over the past few years and shows how important it is to break down the stigma around mental health.



The cost of living crisis has caused an economy-wide nervousness. We recently invited a third-party finance expert in to conduct a financial wellbeing seminar for all employees, which everyone seemed to get a lot from. We officially became a four-day week organisation last year. This has given everyone some time back to spend however they choose, massively improving work/life balance. We have not had to use a third-party recruitment specialist for any of our hires and staff retention has also been extremely high and our wellbeing philosophies play a large part in this. We created a safe space for each employee to provide feedback to the business. Prioritising employee wellbeing and mental health must be on the radar for all organisations in 2023. We must remember that employees are human beings that will be dealing with challenges we may not be aware of and deserves compassion.



The cost of living crisis has emerged as one of the main challenges to employee wellbeing. Alongside a one-off payment made to all our staff, excluding executives, we have facilitated professional financial planning workshops and one-to-ones to help our people navigate this period. We also hold wellbeing days which include bespoke health and nutrition workshops and individual health checks. One of our Survey Managers, Darren Barber, has been vocal about the value of these checks after he was alerted through the scheme that he may have type 2 diabetes. Listening to our employees is an essential element of our wellbeing strategy, allowing us to implement policies that meet the needs of our teams and individuals, such as enhanced maternity and paternity leave alongside improved sick pay. We aim to promote an inclusive culture across our workforce and will continue to focus on wellbeing as a priority through 2023.



The pressures that employees face inside the fast-paced telecoms sector and outside the workplace have been heightened by the pandemic. We adopted hybrid working to encourage a healthier work/life balance and are mindful of the need to support mental health where required. We train and empower our managers to hold regular open conversations with individual employees about any challenges they face at work. Many employees have been with Cellhire long term, as their careers develop, and we have never had an issue with recruitment. Absentee levels are low. We are a supporter of the Mindful Employer plus Charter and a Gold Accredited Investors in People organisation. Our health insurance provider includes a portal allowing employees to manage their health online. We have established a positive and supportive organisational culture responding to the needs of each employee.



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# Promote and improve wellbeing



SOHINI RAITHATHA  
REDSQUID

Mental well-being plays a big part in hiring and retaining the team and therefore remains at the forefront of our people strategy. We offer private health insurance, where the individuals get rewarded for leading an active lifestyle with Apple watches, cinema tickets and travel discounts which have proven to be successful. We are building a creative community and hosting yearly Redsquid Family Days where we can meet family members to get that deeper connection that fosters trust and cohesion. We match that with activities spread out over the year including providing massages, personal trainers and an office football tournament. We try to create an environment that is health-promoting throughout and then focus on the individual with development programmes that allow staff to grow and learn new skills that will help them succeed in their roles.



BERNIE MCPHILLIPS  
PANGEA

There's been a toll on our collective mental and physical wellbeing in our attempt to adjust to a post-pandemic world. The cost of living crisis, NHS' growing waiting lists, and strikes across various public sectors, have made it an unprecedented few years. We supported our team professionally and personally by working with a business that specialises in physical and emotional wellbeing. Group access to shared learning and unlimited, unscripted 1-2-1s for confidential private matters has helped us tackle the uncertainty and instability of the world around us. We keep things relevant to company objectives by incorporating Pangea themes and topics into group sessions. Plus, we've run physically and mentally challenging off-site retreats to exercise the body and mind while connecting with nature. The support we give is available to everyone within Pangea.



TABITHA LOGAN  
FOCUS GROUP

Dealing with the cost of living crisis and maintaining good mental health are the biggest challenges faced by many people in a post-Covid world. We provide free financial advice, travel loans and a hybrid working policy to help cut transport costs. Our teams were also provided with a cost of living payment to help alleviate some of their rising costs over the winter months. To support the mental health of our people, we offer an Employees Assistance Programme (EAP), access to mental health first aiders, mindfulness and yoga sessions. Our employee-led community group meet regularly to discuss health and wellbeing, creating a positive impact because it is looked after 'by the people, for the people'. We get honest feedback from employees across the business and ideas generated in peer-to-peer conversations. An annual wellbeing survey also gathers feedback which shapes our wellbeing strategy.



RACHEL WETHERILL  
TALKTALK

We understand the importance of continually supporting colleague wellbeing and recognise that, particularly in our current climate, this support should extend from mental wellbeing to physical and financial too. For 2023 we have a plan of activities that support our 'steps to wellbeing' mission, giving an added focus to financial wellbeing. These include Lunch and Learn sessions where colleagues can share money saving hacks and guest speakers will address topics like managing stress and home finances; a Veganuary cooking workshop in our staff restaurant; regular coffee mornings; and our year-round £1 breakfast, giving people the opportunity to connect. A refresh of our Wellbeing intranet pages promotes our ongoing support which includes access to our 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme, employee discounts, affordable loans and Employee Networks.



SARAH HOWARD-  
ILLSTON  
ZEN

We want to make sure that our wellbeing strategy supports mental and physical health, financial wellbeing, as well as our rich and varied individual backgrounds and needs. We continuously review the strategy we have in place to support this. We engage with our networks of employees closely in the events and programmes that we implement and take feedback on board. This is a key part of our 'People First' approach - to build a culture where employees feel supported, valued and comfortable bringing their full selves to work. Our new starters frequently mention our People First culture and wellbeing strategy as a factor in them joining us, with exit interviews also often revealing it's a key factor in employee retention. Zen was identified as one of the Best Workplaces for Wellbeing in 2022.



CHRISTINA PENDLETON  
INTERCITY

Our wellbeing strategy is built around our colleagues' health, both physical and mental. This means providing good work, focusing on our colleagues' personal growth, building positive relationships, and ensuring our managers are trained and equipped to support individuals within their teams. To support our colleagues financially we've put together a support package including pay rises (weighted to ensure our lower paid earners are secure), interest-free loans, a company-wide £250 cost of living support bonus, energy management and financial wellbeing workshops. Training and development are key drivers of engagement amongst our workforce, and we provide opportunities to refine their skills and advance within their careers. We also regularly participate in team building challenges to boost morale. We achieved a three-star Best Companies result in 2022.

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