



## WEBINAR SUMMARY

# How organisations can empower their people to manage and prioritise their mental health

The Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health's Leadership Pledge consists of six commitments towards making mental health a visible priority in every region in which businesses operate. The Pledge with Us series of webinars aims to support signatories deliver the pledge commitments in their organisations.

The webinar held on 28th September 2023 focused on Commitment 4 of the Leadership Pledge:

**My organisation will empower all our people to manage and prioritise their own mental health, and to support one another.**

Here we provide a summary of the presentations from our invited panellists, and the Q&A session.

---

## THE PANEL

**Tim Ackroyd, Senior Manager – Mental Health, Deloitte Global**

**Iman Gibson, Director – Wellbeing, Visa**

---

## INTRODUCTION

The host, Robyn Vernon Harcourt, Director of the Global Business Collaboration, began by noting that a strong mental health strategy requires a culture that empowers employees to take charge and prioritise their own mental health. It can come as a bit of a surprise to some that empowerment doesn't happen as a natural consequence of providing mental health tools and support. In fact, it requires a proactive and tailored approach.

Robyn handed over to the speakers to share their experiences of building empowerment at two of the Founding Partners: Deloitte and Visa



THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION  
for Better Workplace Mental Health

MindForward  
Alliance

---

## PANEL PRESENTATIONS

**Iman Gibson** introduced Visa's approach to mental wellness being about listening to and understanding where their people are, emotionally, and then working out how Visa can support and empower them to thrive.

Part of the listening work is the inclusion in the staff pulse survey of wellbeing statements that employees score themselves against, such as "I can switch off at the end of the day" and "I feel my manager supports my wellbeing". This is a signal to staff that the organisation prioritises their mental health, and responses can be analysed across regions, functions or individual teams to help identify areas where staff may need more support. This also means that leaders can set themselves wellbeing targets and be measured against them.

Listening to their people also helps Visa to choose inclusive and relevant language and approaches. This is essential to empower groups with seen or unseen challenges to prioritise themselves. All invited wellbeing speakers are briefed on the cultural norms of the region and office, and culturally appropriate language is carefully considered when developing resources. For instance 'self-care' tends to be replaced by 'care' when engaging staff with Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ancestry, who may relate to community care above self care.

A new Employee Resource Group (ERG) for parents and carers recently raised organisational awareness of the challenges faced by this group.



Visa is now creating self-care resources that don't feel overwhelming to these time-poor individuals and focus on relevant issues, such as helping to support self-compassion and reframing the inner critic.

Both speakers agreed that mental health awareness days provide great opportunities to start or develop conversations around the topic, but activities must be simple, outcome-focused and sustainable.

Iman described Visa's first campaign around World Mental Health Day, which introduced signage around their sites simply asking staff to "STOP, PAUSE, BREATHE" – encouraging everyone to find a moment of calm for themselves.

Building on this, as staff began to return to offices after the pandemic, physical and digital prompts encouraged employees to take care of and talk about wellbeing in simple but creative ways. Open-ended affirmations included "[BLANK] would bring me joy today.", "I am grateful for [BLANK].", "I will take care of myself by doing [BLANK] today."

Iman also described how Visa are cascading empowerment through the business, by engaging leaders and wellbeing ambassadors across the organisation. Visa provides a wellbeing guide for people leaders, which begins with encouraging reflection on their own wellbeing and how people can spot signs of distress in themselves, before thinking about this in others. The network of leaders and ambassadors is helping to keep the conversation going, for instance by taking bite-sized wellbeing activities into meetings, whether they have 1 minute or 5 minutes available.

**Tim Ackroyd** believes that having a focus on empowerment is an essential feature for any mental health strategy to have impact. At Deloitte, they strive to build confidence and remove barriers to make it as easy as possible for their people to use and apply the mental health support and training provided.



Working across 160+ countries, Deloitte’s mental health strategy combines a global vision with locally-led delivery. The organisation set a global baseline standard for leadership education and awareness, reduction of stigma, provision of support and information and identification of the causes of poor mental health. Over 18 months the global team worked with leaders in each country to achieve the standard. Within this global approach: local context and tailoring is vital. It can’t be assumed that what works in one country will work in another. Deloitte empowers local leaders to tailor messaging, channels and activities to suit their people.

Tim stressed the importance of the role of leaders in setting the culture. The organization has long focused on leadership capabilities, including on how leaders can create environments that are good for health. Leaders around the world are encouraged to talk about their experiences of mental health, normalising the conversation and empowering others to feel safe in talking about it.

Making support resources readily available in the day-to-day flow of work is also important – this means making sure they are easily accessible. This removes barriers to access and makes it feel more commonplace to use them.

Another key to getting empowerment right, Tim believes, is not trying to do everything at once.

Employees are bombarded by messages, so cutting through requires clarity and simplicity – otherwise, he said, it’s like “drinking from a fire hose”.

At Deloitte they focus each campaign on one specific challenge or barrier at a time. Their campaign ‘What’s really on your mind?’ sought to challenge the norm that—almost every day—people are asked how they are doing, but give a standard response: ‘I’m fine’ – even if they are not.

The campaign aimed to illustrate the ways in which we can all express how we are really doing, and to encourage people to discuss mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Deloitte created resources centred around playful illustrations of the issue, which encouraged leaders to ask the question and be ready to listen; empowering employees to answer honestly without fear of judgement.

Launched on World Mental Health Day, the campaign continued throughout the year; the impact of this campaign and other targeted actions was seen in a significant uplift in the score in Deloitte’s global talent experience survey when it comes to people’s confidence in talking to their team leader.

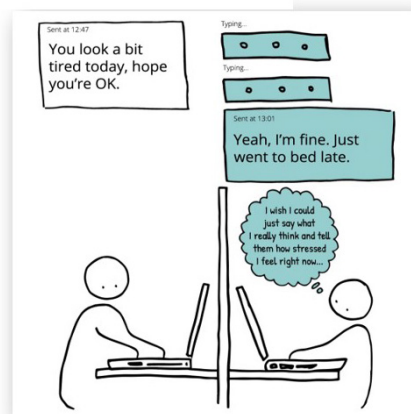


**What’s really on your mind?**



**The world isn’t perfect. You don’t have to be.**

[Deloitte.com/wmhd](https://deloitte.com/wmhd)



THE GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION  
for Better Workplace Mental Health

MindForward  
Alliance




---

## Q&A SESSION

### Q: HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS EMPOWER WORK LIFE BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH WITHOUT COMPROMISING PRODUCTIVITY

**Tim Ackroyd** – At Deloitte, flexibility is respected and encouraged while remaining focused on what needs to get done. New teams are set up for client engagements all the time and team leaders are encouraged to understand their team’s working preferences, needs for flexibility and to discuss ways of working from the outset, so this can be built into the work plan. Role-modelling and creation of new ‘norms’ by leaders is key to empowering people to work in this way.

**Iman Gibson** – Taking a one-size-fits-all approach to flexibility doesn’t always work. Visa empowers employees to work when they work best and rest when it makes sense for them. For instance, some people may find they focus better early in the morning and late at night, so – if their schedule and clients allow – they can work at the times that are best for them, as long as that’s aligned with their manager. Visa have ‘wellbeing hours’: part of the year when employees have Friday afternoons off or – at other times of the year – don’t have



meetings. But this has to be flexible too, because not everyone works on a Friday, or taking that time off doesn’t work for them, so people are empowered to choose when to take that rest time.

### Q: HOW CAN FLEXIBILITY BE BUILT IN WHEN AN ORGANISATION IS UNDER-RESOURCED, AND INDIVIDUALS’ WORKLOADS ARE VERY HEAVY.

**Iman Gibson** – Allowing employees to think about the times of the day in which they work best can enable them to create more space within their day, work more effectively and to be a lot more balanced.

**Tim Ackroyd** – It starts with enabling an open culture where team members and team leaders can have honest conversations about the pressures. While workload can be a stressor, other drivers for wellbeing include how much autonomy you have over your work, how work gets done, your relationships with your manager / colleagues, as well as feeling a sense of purpose for your work.



It is a complex topic but these are all key things for managers and employers to look at from a holistic perspective.

### Q: WHAT ROLE DOES A FOUNDER'S MENTAL HEALTH PLAY IN THE SUCCESS OF A START-UP

**Iman Gibson** – Founders and leaders really set the tone for culture. When you work in teams where the leader is visibly very stressed, vocalising their stress or reacting to stress by constantly calling or messaging employees, it impacts the team. Leaders must make sure to care for themselves and consider how they behave and whether they are projecting their stress onto their team – do employees feel safe and have peace and calm in their working environment? Leaders should ask for feedback on this.

### Q: HOW DID DELOITTE DECIDE ON THE BASELINE FOR THEIR GLOBAL STANDARD?

**Tim Ackroyd** – The elements for the mental health baseline were developed through consultation with Deloitte firms and informed by various workplace mental health frameworks and a literature review of published research. This ensured they were built on evidence while being contextually relevant to Deloitte. Each element comprised specific, measurable objectives that Deloitte firms were required to demonstrate they had met. Two questions were incorporated into the global talent experience survey to establish a baseline measure and ongoing monitoring of stigma and confidence in the organisation's ability to support professionals experiencing poor mental health.

