

Ecoserv Group CEO discusses Mental Health Awareness Week 2022

3 years ago



The following statement is from Jean-Henri Beukes, CEO of Ecoserv Group.

We never could have predicted how much our lives would be changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Followed in quick succession by social movements to address systemic racism; wildfires; political unrest; and other major stressors, compounding the damage to our collective mental health. One outcome of all the disruption was the normalisation of mental health challenges at work. In 2022 we now have a greater awareness of mental health in the workplace and how to mitigate contributing negative factors.

When I took over as CEO I embedded my values of transparency and openness in the business operations and processes. Employees need and expect sustainable and mentally healthy workplaces, which requires taking on the real work of culture change. I have always shared my own personal experiences with my team to foster an inclusive work environment. Promoting autonomy, establishing boundaries, and creating norms around communications, responsiveness, and urgency can go a long way toward building a mentally healthy culture.

I actively seek out feedback and ensure that my leadership team do the same. If we are connecting with our teams we can support them where they need it and take action. In this way, I would encourage all leaders to treat mental health as an organisational priority with accountability mechanisms such as regular surveys and clear ownership. Our collective goal to perform and thrive as a business is built on the bedrock of connection, openness, and happiness.

[The Mental Health Foundation](#) started Mental Health Awareness Week 21 years ago in 2001. The theme for 2022 is loneliness. The pandemic has had a lot to do with the effect loneliness has had on our physical and mental health. By isolating and trying to take the necessary precautions for our physical health, we lost connection to people, we lost conversations and due to the lack of human interaction our mental health has ultimately taken a toll.

The overall number of people reporting mental health problems has increased yearly. Work, and working, are good for your mental health, but a negative working environment can lead to physical and mental health problems. It is our duty, as employers, to ensure that we provide, ensure, and maintain a safe workplace and instil supportive managerial and organisational practices for our employees. Employers and employees need to, collectively, contribute to the working environment by promoting and protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all employees.

At the Ecoserv Group, we try to do just that. With various aids and compassion, we aim to make the Ecoserv environment a safe, and compassionate working place. Our banking partners offer a Financial Wellbeing programme to all employees, all employees have access to Health Assured – which is an online tool to assist any employee with personal wellbeing and upliftment through virtual and confidential consultations with qualified personnel, and we are also proud partners of the [Living Wage Foundation](#) – ensuring a fair wage is paid to all our staff.

That culture of connection is key, some individuals will do this more naturally than others, we encourage it by recommending that we call and meet over emailing colleagues. We also ensure we have regular huddles which provide organisation-wide opportunities for connection. We learned through our remote working during the pandemic that deeper one-on-one conversations between managers and direct reports as well as between colleagues were something to be encouraged and built into schedules and this has continued.

The importance of empathy and authenticity cannot be overstated in creating a healthy culture for everyone and anyone who experiences mental health challenges. The livelihood of our staff is of great importance to us. Taking care of our employees has always been our top priority.

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