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guide

World Mental Health Day

Your Guide to Mental Health in the Workplace

Mental Health Awareness is the perfect reminder for businesses to reassess how they address mental health in the workplace. It could be a good time to consider setting up some new policies, applying some culture changes, and implementing positive initiatives that drive support and inclusivity for mental health.

In this guide, we'll walk you through how you can better support mental health within your own business and build an inclusive and safe workplace for everyone that enters your (virtual) doors and beyond.

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What Is World Mental Health Day?

First celebrated in 1992 as a positive initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health. Today, the WMHD initiative is celebrated by thousands of individuals and businesses across the globe.

World Mental Health Day aims to educate the world on mental health, bring awareness to the topic, and collectively advocate against any mental health discrimination people may be experiencing.

In light of this, we've put together a guide to help companies better support mental health globally. We hope you find this guide helpful, and let us know of any mental health initiatives you are running for this empowering day.

What is employee mental health?

Before we begin, let's explore what employee mental health is.
The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as *"a state of well-being in which an individual realises [their] abilities, can cope with the mental stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to [their] community."*

The WHO also emphasises that mental health is about more than the absence of mental disorders, but rather people's overall state of mental wellbeing. This is what makes supporting mental health in the workplace so important; it applies to everyone. It's your employees' wellbeing.

The progression of Mental Health *awareness*

The conversation around Mental Health has been on the rise in recent years, as people are increasingly encouraged to discuss topics related to mental wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the need and urgency to focus on mental wellbeing, as the situation has, and continues to, impact people all over the world.

According to the WHO, mental health concerns arising from the global pandemic are mainly related to:

- Fear, worry and stress related to health and uncertainty more broadly.
- Significant changes to our daily lives (restricted movement, working from home, new sanitary measures, insecure employment, childcare and limited physical contact).

It goes without saying that people have had to adapt to significant changes to their workplaces. Estimates indicate that:

40%
of full-time workers in the European Union (EU) started working remotely due to the pandemic, compared to around 5.4% beforehand.

2/3
of American employees are working from home due to COVID-19, compared to around 7% beforehand.

over

60%

of employees said their company could do more to support mental health and emotional stress during the pandemic

around

75%

of employees experienced burnout due to the pandemic

nearly

50%

of employees under the age of 30 reported feeling anxious.

Essential workers are mostly excluded from these work-from-home statistics. However, their workplaces have also been turned upside down due to the global pandemic. A Center for Disease Control & Prevention study found that more than half of essential workers struggled with mental concerns in 2020—25% more than the general population.

The importance of *supporting mental health* in the workplace

There are three parts to employee wellbeing:

Physical

Mental

Social

It's any company's responsibility to its employees to support all **three parts of employee wellbeing**—plus there are some fantastic benefits to doing so.

Investing in workplace mental health is a win-win in the short and long term: it improves employee productivity, satisfaction and retention and sets a positive example in your professional community.

Did You Know?

Many employers have trouble determining where their mental health responsibilities begin and end, especially with much of their staff working remotely. However, a recent study by the Robert Walters group showed that **99%** of employers and **97%** of workers agree that businesses are responsible for supporting their employees' mental health.

Employers should also be aware that investing in workplace mental health has been shown to tangibly benefit businesses. Consider the following examples:

1. *Improved* employee performance & productivity

Put simply, employees that are in a good state of mental health work more effectively and produce better results. No one is at their most productive when trying to soldier through a difficult period without adequate support.

Businesses with <u>mental health action plans see benefits</u> such as increased achievement of workplace goals, minimised productivity loss, and higher total hours worked over time. This is largely due to a reduction in presenteeism, absenteeism, and compensation claims, which, for example, <u>a 2014</u> study found cost Australian companies a whopping $11 billion per year.

2. *Reduced* absences

Poor mental health leads to employees needing to take more time off. In fact, <u>evidence suggests</u> that 12.7% of sick days in the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions, making them one of the main causes of workplace absences. Having strong mental health support in the workplace can help prevent this.

3. *Increased* employee morale & retention

Happy employees are better workers, easier to collaborate with and contribute to a more positive professional environment. They're also more likely to <u>stay with your company for longer</u>, allowing you to retain talent and develop an experienced team with minimal turnover.
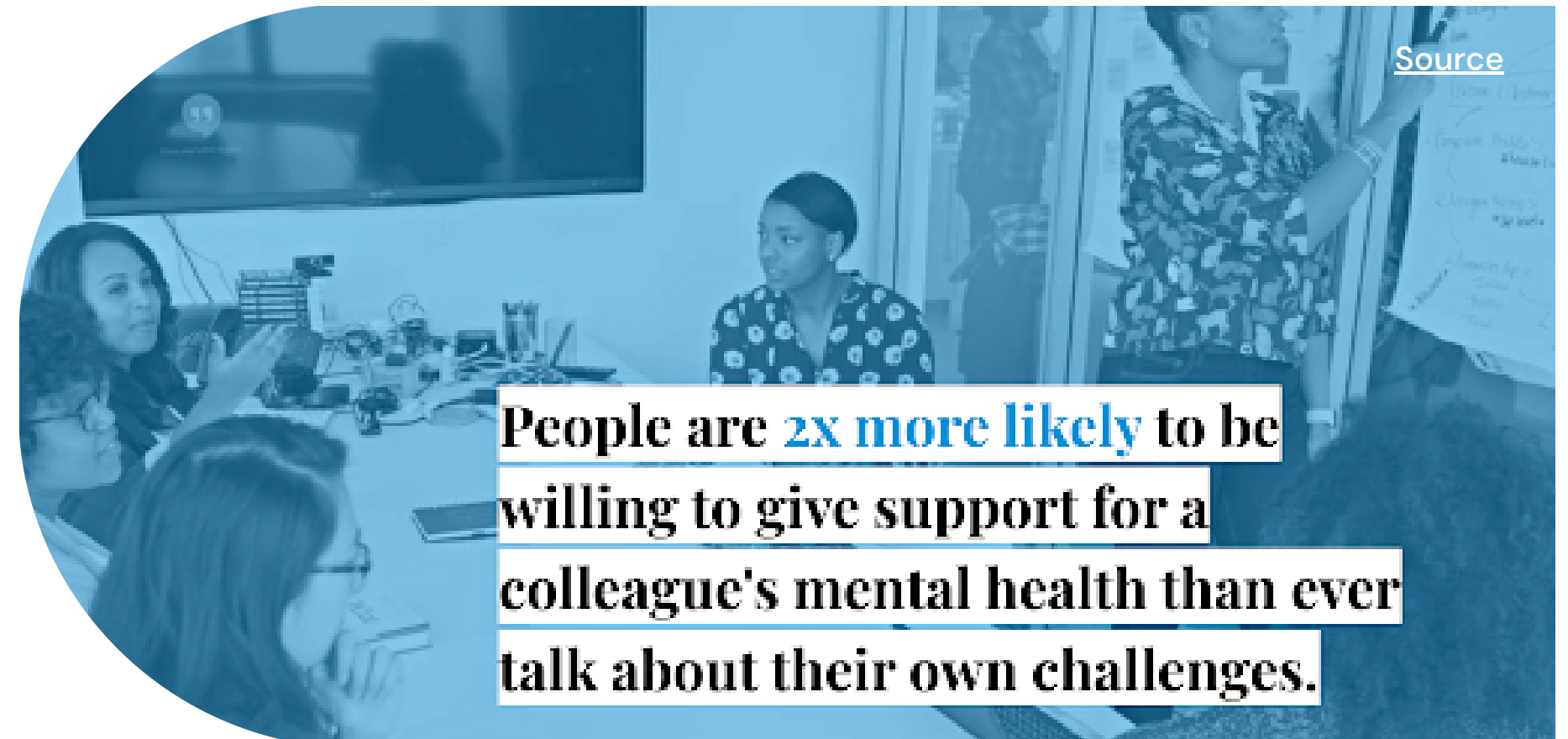
This is especially relevant nowadays as <u>Mind Share Partners' 2019 Mental Health at Work report</u> revealed that 50% of millennials had left jobs for mental health reasons.

4. Financial *savings*

Poor mental health ends up costing companies money, and lots of it. Tellingly, <u>a 2020 Health & Safety Executive study</u> found that better mental health in the workplace
has the ability to save businesses up to £8 billion per year.

<u>Bell Canada</u> also reported that every dollar invested in mental health programs had a return-on-investment (ROI) of $4.10 in 2018.

Similarly, a <u>2014 Australian study</u> calculated an average ROI of 2.3 for companies that invested in mental health initiatives across various industries and actions.

People are **2x more likely** to be willing to give support for a colleague's mental health than ever talk about their own challenges.

5. Increased *professional development* and engagement

There's a significant link between mental health and sense of purpose in the workplace. When workers feel like their work is truly meaningful, their sense of well-being improves. They're also more likely to feel engaged, prioritise professional development activities, and make useful professional contributions that ultimately benefit everyone involved.

> *"The impact of volunteering & giving on employee wellbeing are so significant that Alan Rozanski, a cardiologist in New York says that purpose is actually the most significant driver of well being. It's more important than exercise. And it's more important than quitting smoking"*

BEA BOCCALANDRO
Author of Do Good At Work
Source

How to *support* mental health in the workplace

Just like there's no quick fix for mental health, there's no quick fix for supporting employee mental health. Nevertheless, there's a limitless amount of ideas, initiatives and techniques out there that can help support and promote mental health in professional environments.

Check out some of our favourite ideas, then do some brainstorming and pilot some initiatives to figure out what will work best for your company.

1. *Connect with nonprofits* & other organisations that focus on mental health.

If you don't know where to start when investing in mental health in your workplace, this is a great option.

Connect with nonprofits and organisations that focus on mental health and ask them if they'd be open to making a presentation to your leadership team to give them ideas and guidance regarding company-wide mental health initiatives.

They might even be willing to make a presentation to your employees about mental health in general. This is also a great option for remote teams as everything can be organized online.

Some examples include:
- Mental Health Europe
- Mind
- European Network for Workplace Health Promotion

This is such an important step to take for better employee wellbeing. Small actions, challenges, and volunteering options enable your employees to do good to feel good. This is critical for building a resilient company culture.

2. Promote *small actions* that improve mental health & wellbeing

This is another ideal initiative for remote or spread out professional teams as employees can participate no matter where they're located: at home, in the office or on the front lines.

Encourage employees to <u>complete tasks or challenges that support mental health</u> every week, or even every day. They can be done as a team or individually. Motivate employees to participate even further by assigning points to these tasks or encouraging them to share their experiences on social media or <u>platforms like Alaya</u>.

Check out these ideas of small actions that support mental health. Provide a variety of choices, as these challenges work best if they align with employees' individual personalities and senses of purpose:

- <u>Volunteering</u> for a charitable cause in your community.
- Disconnecting from electronics for 2 hours before you go to sleep.
- Going for a 15-minute walk during your work day.
- Writing in a gratitude journal every evening for a week.
- Participating in a fun fitness challenge like <u>Alaya's recent cold water swim team activity</u>.

Home-cooked fun

Prepare 5 home-cooked meals and take photos of them for 1 week.

+50 hopeys

35 colleagues participating

30:30 exercise

Do 30 minutes of physical activity every day for 30 days.

+50 hopeys

54 colleagues participating

Hydrate and rejuvenate

Drink at least 4–6 glasses of water every day for 1 week.

+50 hopeys

245 colleagues participating

Stand up and work

Work standing up for at least 1 hour a day for 1 week.

+50 hopeys

87 colleagues participating

3. Set up *policies & resources* for mental health support

Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk. Establish tangible policies and resources in your workplace that provide employees with effective tools to use if they're struggling with mental health. At least some of these tools should provide a degree of anonymity, as mental health issues are not easy for most to talk about.

- Provide flexible working hours or the opportunity to take full or half days off for mental health reasons, no questions asked.
- Establish policies where employees can use a certain amount of working hours for actions mentioned above (like going to the gym, <u>volunteering in their community</u>, making donations, or participating in team-building events).
- Create a list of mental health resources (like nurse hotlines or counsellors) that employees can call if they need support. Make sure employees know where they can find this list.
- Thinking long-term, implement mental health sabbaticals that employees can take after working with your company for a certain amount of time.
- Organise company-wide days off, events and/or retreats periodically.
- Consider putting together employee recreational sports teams or organizing other fun staff events.
- Publicly own the fact that your company cares about employee mental health and talk about it.

- Encourage employees to stay active by providing stipends for gym memberships, negotiating a discounted rate with a gym in your community or investing in shower facilities (in the case of offices) so that employees can bike or jog to work or take an active lunch break.
- Help employees align themselves with their professional purpose by investing in professional and personal development activities.
- <u>Send employees periodic, anonymous mental health and general well-being surveys</u> and take their feedback seriously.
- Implement policies regarding working hours (as well as breaks throughout the day), and help employees stick to a reasonable schedule.
- Acknowledge and celebrate employee successes like promotions and anniversaries.

Remember, supporting mental health in the workplace should maximise your employees' overall sense of well-being. It can help them feel connected with themselves, their peers and their community and encourage them to find a sense of deeper purpose in their day-to-day lives.
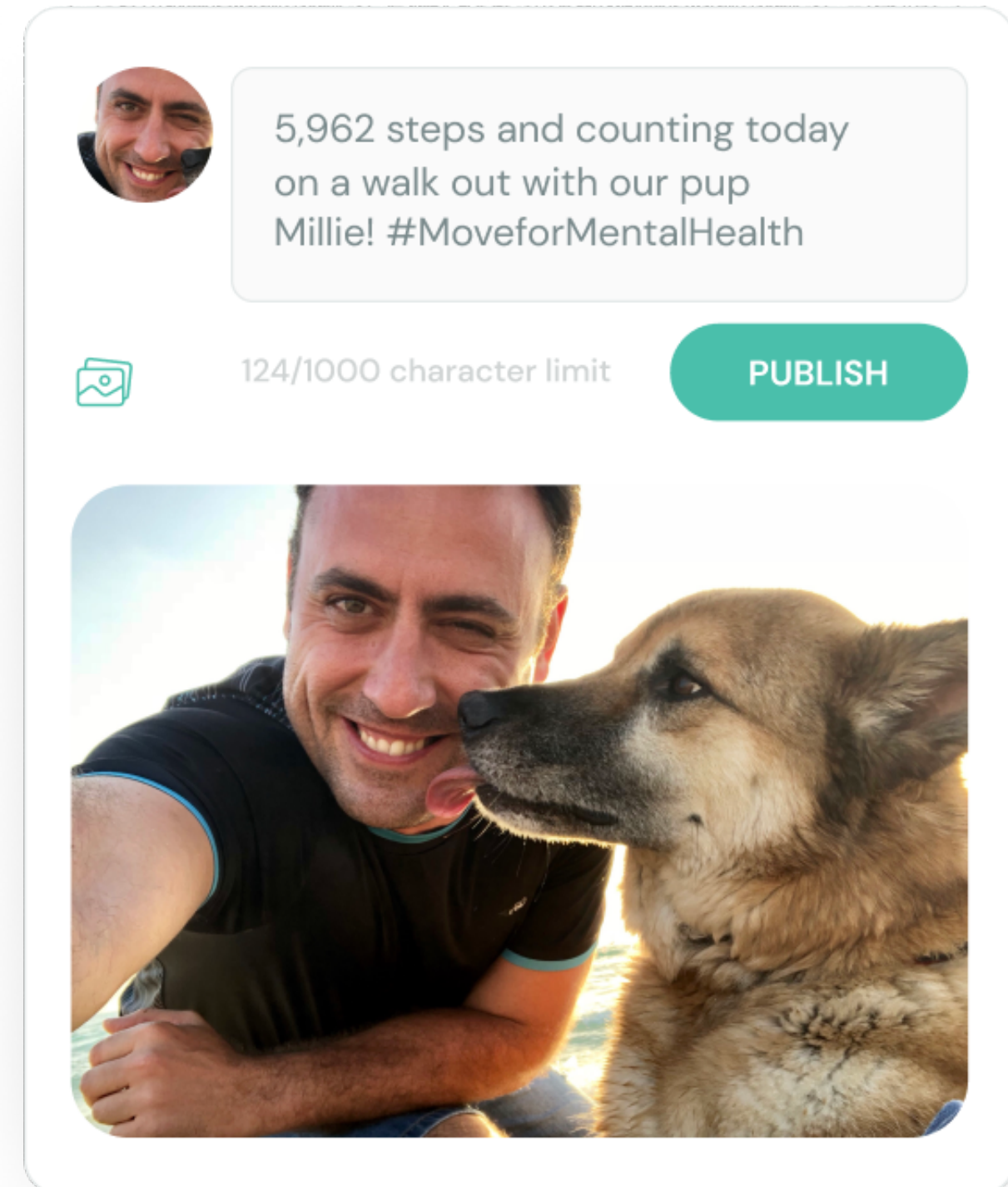
For more information on how investing in employee purpose is beneficial for your business, <u>click here.</u>

How to *support* Mental Health Day 2021

Support a mental health charity by volunteering or fundraising. There are lots of mental health awareness groups and nonprofits out there that are always happy to receive support. Whether that's via a donation, volunteering time, or an exposure-orientated partnership, find a charity that's close to the hearts of your employees and explore 'outside-of-the-box' ways you can help them.

There are lots of creative fundraising ideas for teams your company can do, such as:

- Encourage creativity with a spoken word or art competition—the winner can then select a nonprofit of their choice to receive the funds.

- "Move it for Mental Health"—a step count challenge for employees to walk as many steps as possible, each step equals a donation for their favourite cause. In the Alaya platform, users can log their steps for their company—or their team within their company—and earn money for their mental health charity of choice.

- Fundraising auction—have office material that's still in great shape but needs to be renewed? Support a circular economy and hold an auction with your teams, all money earned is donation to their favourite cause.

5,962 steps and counting today on a walk out with our pup Millie! #MoveforMentalHealth

124/1000 character limit

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Six *micro-activities* to encourage employees to *learn* about mental health this World Mental Health Day

1 Write 3 things you're grateful for in your journal at the end of the day

2 Meditate for 10 minutes a day

3 Practice box breathing every day for 10 minutes

4 Implement a supportive mental health policy

5 Invite a speaker or host a virtual lunch & learn

6 Team activities to encourage interaction

How to launch a *workplace* mental health campaign

If you're looking to take things a step further and launch an entire campaign, then read on. We're about to dive into the specifics on what you need to do to launch a workplace mental health campaign in 2021.

1. Define your campaign concept and scope

A great first step is to first define what you want your campaign to be, set your goals, and how you can achieve them. Start with some research on the topic, get involved, look for ways to bring it to your company.

Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different campaigns and align them with your business mission.

2. Involve stakeholders & get buy-in

It is important to get everyone involved in the discussion. Prepare a campaign overview including a timeline, teams involved (e.g. Comms, leadership, etc), the technology required, deliverables and other resources required.

Ideally, you'll want your campaign to launch in line with World Mental Health Day so you can ride the wave and ensure your campaign gets maximum exposure.

3. Prepare *internal* communications

Think about the communication strategies you'll use to make sure your campaign gets into your employees' hands.

- Emails
- Intranet posts
- Posters
- Flyers
- Videos
- Discussion guides for people managers

Remember to consider any non-desk workers and how you'll reach them.

4. Prepare *external* communications

It's important to share, not just with your employees, but with all your community what you are doing, how you are engaging around the cause, and your commitment. It can be a powerful source of pride to your employees and future candidates to know that your company cares about WMHD and their employees' wellbeing.

5. *Kick off* your campaign

Launch your campaign with a bang! Hit publish, send out the invites, videos, and event registration information to your employees and other stakeholders. Remember to keep the momentum with reminders.
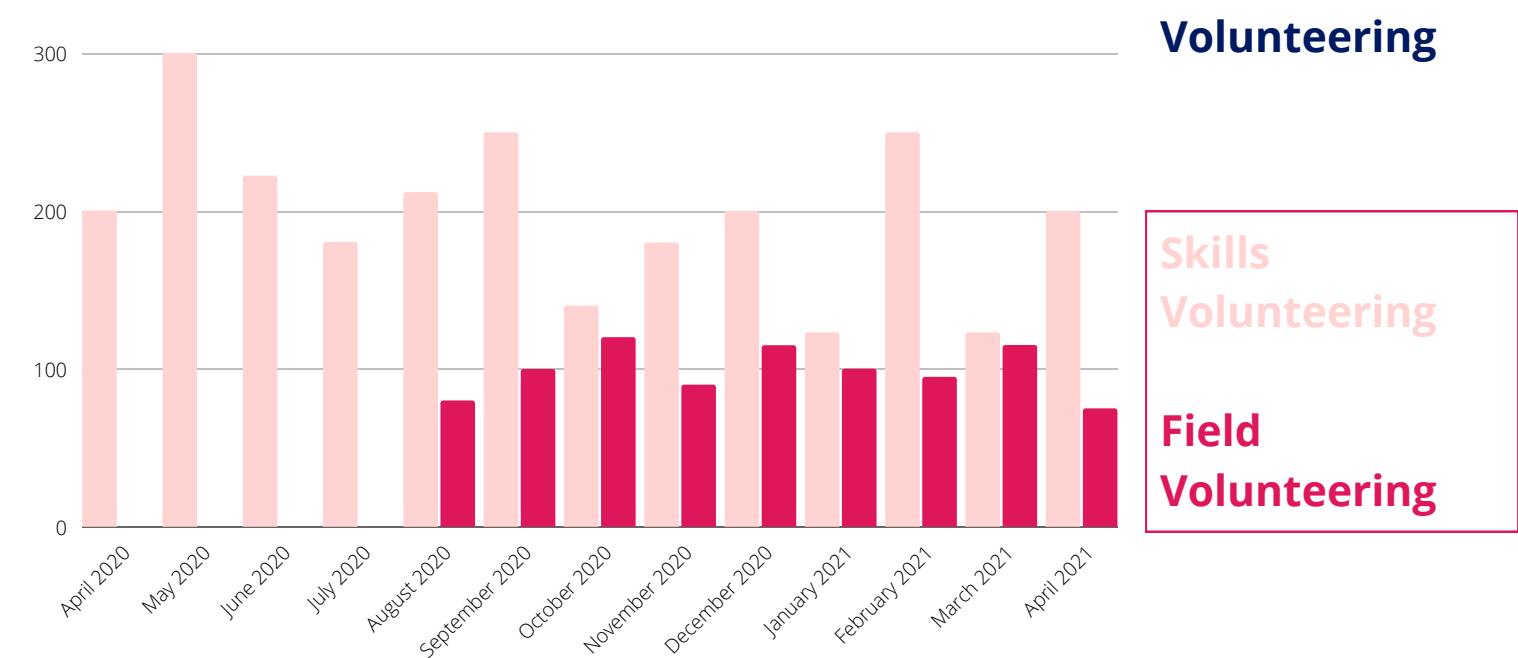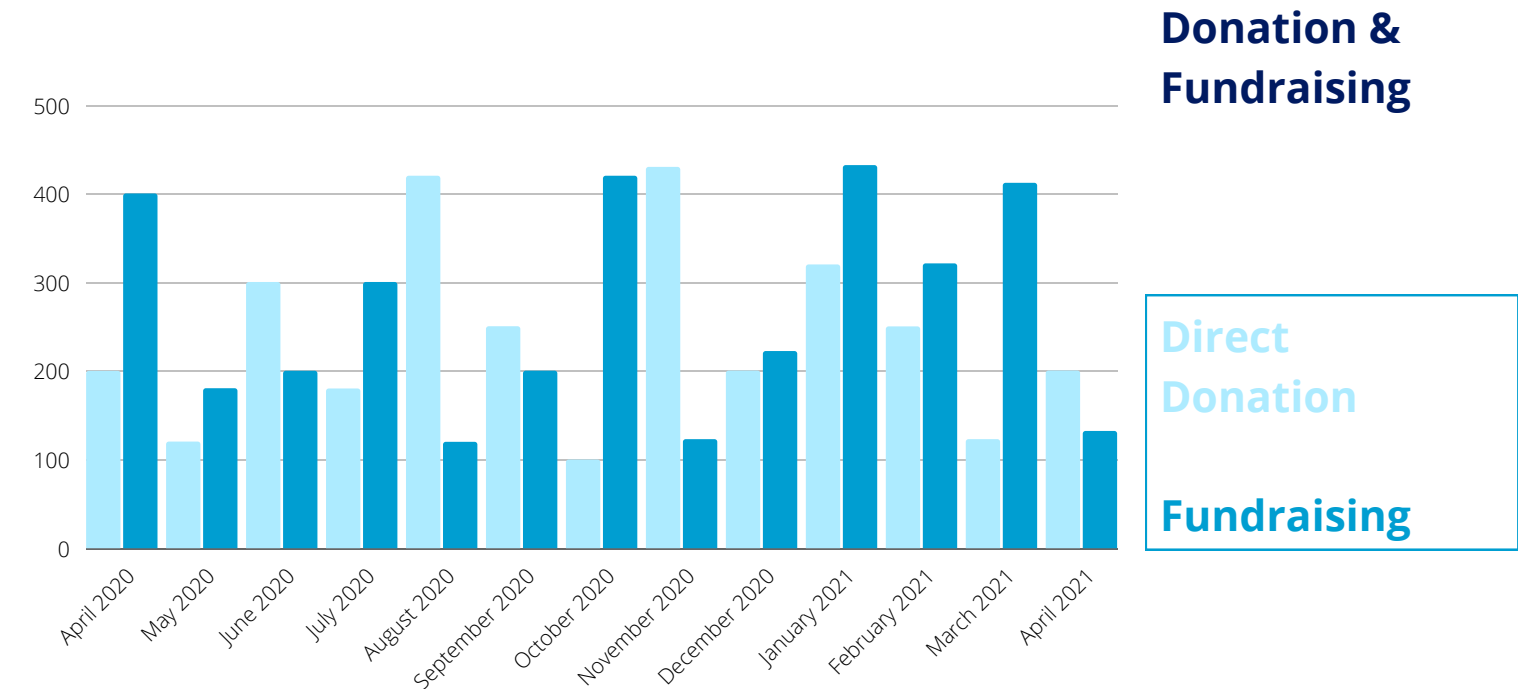
6. *Track* your impact

It's rewarding for your business and your employees to see the impact your efforts have had on the community. There are many ways to analyze this. Here are a few KPIs to report on:

- How many employees engaged with the initiative?
- How much money/goods did you raise?
- Which departments were most engaged?
- What aspects were most successful?

It's also a good idea to invite feedback from employees surrounding the mental health engagement. By doing so, you'll be able to optimize your mental health program for the future and qualitatively report on your success with employee stories.

This feedback is also great information to share with your online community. Presenting the facts surrounding your organisation's impact shows your commitment to genuinely support your employees. It's not enough for a company to say they want to help—they need to put the work in to make it happen and report on it after.

Donation & Fundraising

Direct Donation

Fundraising

Volunteering

Skills Volunteering

Field Volunteering

Use World Mental Health Day as an opportunity to invest in your *workplace wellbeing*

The pandemic has presented challenges for many, but let's take it as a golden opportunity to prioritise mental health in the workplace and set a high standard for the years to come.

Strong employee well-being and mental health leads to tangible benefits for businesses, improves overall employee attitudes, morale, <u>purpose</u> and retention and sets a great example for your professional community. Really, everyone wins when mental health is prioritised in the workplace.

Hopefully, you found this guide useful and can implement some solid actions this world mental health day. Latch on to the opportunity you have and use it as a driving force to create a more inclusive, safe, and supportive workplace for mental health.

Have questions?
We're here to help

Get a Demo

Benevity, a certified B Corporation, is the leader in global corporate purpose software, providing the only integrated suite of community investment and employee, customer and nonprofit engagement solutions. Recognized as one of Fortune's Impact 20, Benevity offers cloud solutions that power purpose for many iconic brands in ways that better attract, retain and engage today's diverse workforce, embed social action into their customer experiences and positively impact their communities. With software that is available in 22 languages, Benevity has processed more than $10 billion in donations and 46 million hours of volunteering time to support 326,000 nonprofits worldwide. The company's solutions have also facilitated 770,000 positive actions and awarded 1.2 million grants worth $12 billion. For more information, visit benevity.com.