

Lion

Work Life Balance

After winning last year's Work Life Balance Award, one of New Zealand's best-known brands is improving its support for the mental and emotional wellbeing of its staff with new initiatives.

Lion, New Zealand's largest alcoholic beverage company, employs around 1,000 staff. In early 2016 it updated its Wellbeing Model to cover all aspects of personal, work and social wellbeing for Lion staff. This happened in response to increased levels of mental or emotional wellbeing issues, and an anonymous survey which indicated that six per cent of people disclosed they were suffering with anxiety and four per cent with depression.



In May 2017 Lion launched Best M.E across the organisation, which aims specifically to remove the stigma around mental health at Lion and support the wellbeing of its staff. Best M.E involves resources for people who are suffering from mental and emotional health issues, and has since been updated with:

- A partnership with Lifeline Aotearoa. Lifeline is now part of Lion's Workplace Giving programme, where the organisation matches the contributions of its staff. Lion's People and Culture team frequently contact Lifeline for advice about supporting staff with mental wellbeing challenge, and the company is piloting a suicide awareness programme for staff.
- Mental Health Awareness Week: During Mental Health Awareness Week Lion offered free coffees at the cafes at its five main sites for people who wanted to talk about Best M.E.
- Family and domestic abuse policy: Lion introduced specific support for staff members experiencing family or domestic abuse and has trained some of its People and Culture team to be case-workers in this situation.
- LionFlex: A flexible working policy that can be used by all staff members also benefits those dealing with mental or emotional wellbeing issues.
- Speakers such as Mike King, Sir John Kirwan and Hugh van Cullenburg from the Resilience Project have presented on positive wellness and mindfulness to staff.

This initiative has seen support from the top of the organisation. CEO Stuart Irvine has shared personal stories on how he has been impacted by suicide, and many senior leaders have shared stories of how they or their family or friends have been affected by anxiety or depression. Many of the leadership team also took part in a seven-week mindfulness programme in 2017, and the team has introduced gratitude, empathy and mindfulness into a number of its sessions.

Since the introduction of Best M.E, Lion has seen a number of benefits in its organisation. In its 2017 People Engagement survey, 91 per cent of staff said they really enjoy working at Lion, and 86 per cent said they are energised to go the extra mile at work. Best M.E has also had a positive impact on the organisation's safety focus. Between May and December 2017, the Total Reported Injury Frequency Rate reduced from 12.05 to 8.7.

The number of calls made by Lion staff or their family to EAP, Lion's free independent external counselling service, has increased by 40 per cent in the 12 months since Best M.E launched.

People and Culture Director Robin Davies says, “We are starting to shift the culture around the stigma surrounding mental and emotional health.” This is evidenced by many more people coming forward proactively to have conversations with their leaders or the People and Culture team.

“Best M.E. has started to become part of the Lion language. For example, ‘I’m leaving work early today to go to the gym/pick up my daughter from school as part of my Best Me.’”

“Some people who told their stories at our launch events have shared that many others have approached them for a confidential conversation.

“This is just the start of our journey into supporting mental and emotional wellbeing. Best M.E will be a focus area at Lion for many years to come.”

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