



# Five Tips to Support Employee Mental Health as a Small or Medium-Sized Business



## Globally, small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) account for 90% of all companies and are responsible for almost 70% of jobs.<sup>1</sup>

However, due to their smaller size, SMBs face unique challenges, including increased vulnerability in an unstable economy, more extensive workloads for HR leaders and employees, and difficulties in talent acquisition and retention.

Given these challenges, prioritizing employee mental health can be a game-changer, allowing SMBs to have a greater impact on employee well-being and, in turn, their level of engagement and productivity. By supporting a wide-range of mental health needs, organizations can also foster a more positive, supportive, and resilient workplace, giving leaders a leg up in attracting and retaining talent over the long-term.

In this guide, we share five research-based tips on how SMBs can support employee mental health to create healthier organizations where the work culture allows teams to thrive, both professionally and personally.

### TIP 1

## Increase flexibility for a healthier work culture

According to our Fifth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health report, half of employees say their manager has positively impacted their mental health by letting them be flexible with their schedules or projects to accommodate personal issues. In contrast, the top three drivers of managers having a negative impact are 1) a lack of respect for working hours, 2) a lack of understanding of life outside of work, and 3) creating an unsustainable workload.<sup>2</sup>

#### FOR A HEALTHIER WORK CULTURE, MANAGERS CAN

- Make it clear when employees are expected to be available and where there is flexibility
- Invite open communication so employees feel comfortable speaking up, clarifying roles, and collaborating

Offering flexibility can give a competitive edge over larger companies in attracting and retaining the best people, because the workforce feels seen, heard, and respected.

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum, 2022. "Future Readiness of SMEs and Mid-Sized Companies: A Year On."

<sup>2</sup> Headspace, 2023. "Fifth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health."

**TIP 2****Provide one destination for mental health support**

With fewer financial resources, SMBs do not always have the capacity or expertise to identify and address the varying mental health needs in their organization. SMBs can lean on a mental health benefit partner that provides meditation and mindfulness tools to employees alongside coaching and clinical care for those who need more support.

Many offerings treat mental health like an isolated episode of care (focused on diagnosing, treating, and discharging). In contrast, Headspace's stepped-care approach covers the entire journey, from prevention to management, with access and outcomes at the core of its broad spectrum of mental health support. That support includes guided meditations, guidance from coaches, and sessions with clinical care professionals. With such a collaborative, multidisciplinary care model, we're able to offer holistic support and expertise that meets the needs of each member – no matter what they are going through, or where they are on their mental health journey.

At SMBs, individuals tend to take on more roles within smaller, leaner organizations – and managers often wear many hats. We help leaders direct their people to effective care when team members are struggling or looking for support. Our evidence-based care has proven outcomes across the mental health spectrum, from mental well-being to clinical outcomes:

**32%**

less stress in 30 days  
using Headspace  
meditations

**14%**

more focus within  
4 weeks of using  
Headspace meditations

**83%**

see improvements in  
anxiety symptoms  
after 6-16 weeks\*

**85%**

see improvements in  
depression symptoms  
after 6-16 weeks\*

\* Members engaged with both coaching and clinical services between intake and follow up (min 3 sessions)

**TIP 3****Reduce stigma with mental health advocacy at the top**

In our Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health Report, 87% of CEOs report they have talked to their staff or employees about their own mental health. That's positive news, as 76% of employees say they appreciate it when their leaders discuss emotional and mental health.

SMBs should encourage leadership to demonstrate how to make mental wellness a daily practice so that it reduces stigma and becomes a part of their broader company culture.

**CONSIDER:**

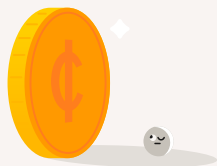
- Setting an example by bringing meditation or other skill-building resources into discussions or meeting practices
- Setting boundaries with work to model a healthy work-life balance
- Start 1:1s by helping employees reflect and focus on their needs. E.g. "What's a moment of pride, learning or joy from the last week?"

CEOs and HR leaders can inspire a top-down effect where caring for one's mental health is the norm.

**TIP 4****Select a partner that provides a clear business case**

Mental health costs are often complex and have direct and indirect costs for a company. Direct costs include medical and prescription costs associated with mental health services. **Indirect costs**, though less obvious, include things like medical and prescription costs associated with comorbidities, lost productivity in the workplace, and increased future spending due to a lack of early intervention.

Headspace's care model offsets unnecessary and excessive mental health spending by delivering the right care at the right time, all from a single platform.



**Every \$1 invested in mental health services yields \$4 in savings.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte, 2017. "Mental health and employers: the case for investment."

**TIP 5****Find a partner that helps you drive engagement**

For SMBs, one common challenge is that they have fewer resources to lead the rollout and implementation of mental health benefits. Partnering with one solution that offers a focused rollout and a full spectrum of care for employees is key to driving engagement, and makes benefit management easier for HR leaders.

Headspace Culture offers a best-in-class suite of services providing organizations and their people the support they need to normalize mental health, destigmatize seeking help, and drive cultural change. Through Headspace Culture, we operate as a strategic partner to help boost engagement rates, increase utilization, and ultimately help you and your teams get the most impact out of your investment.

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**Conclusion**

For SMBs, supporting the mental health of employees is key to creating a more engaged and healthier organization – one that can endure challenging times, as well as grow, scale, and thrive. By providing mental healthcare benefits, SMBs can help prevent or mitigate the impact of mental health concerns before they escalate, reducing the likelihood of prolonged absences, decreased productivity, and higher healthcare cost associated with untreated mental health conditions. Ultimately, happier, healthier employees drive better business outcomes.

Interested in learning how Headspace can support your business and its employees' mental health?

**Contact us here.**

