

Cos reach out to staff on mental fitness

India Inc Promotes Comprehensive Health Campaigns And Breaks For Employees

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Mumbai: "Hello. Over the last couple of days, I've been feeling low on energy, and may be some time off is all I need to get back to a 100%. In my absence, you can reach out to XYZ. Regards." This out-of-office (OOO) email template is part of a campaign WeWork India has launched, prompting employees and others to use it when they feel the need to take a mental health break.

One has often received OOO emails as a response, indicating that the recipient concerned has taken the day off or is on a holiday for a specified duration. No matter what the reason for the leave, OOO emails are usually terse and unemotional.

While WeWork India noticed employees taking time off for vacation or for running other errands, they realised they would seldom address personal matters such as mental health because of the stigma surrounding it. The company decided to open a dialogue for discussion on mental health issues. The WeWork India campaign — 'It's okay to not feel okay' — is being projected as a conversation-starter on mental health with an aim to break the stigma attached to it.

WeWork India brand and marketing head Vineet Singh said, "I am one of those who works on stretched hours. Now I understand the importance of taking a break and I will surely use one of these OOO templates when I do so."

With growing awareness around mental health wellness, companies are taking measures to ensure a stress-free work culture. At Gozoop, which has introduced a mental wellness leave of five working days, a workaholic employee was sent on forced leave to get some quality 'me-time'. The company tracks punch-in/punch-out timings to check whether people are stretched at work.

Gozoop co-founder and director Rohan Bhansali said,

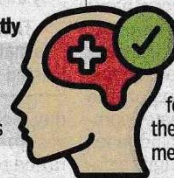
"Everybody is fighting silent battles. When someone takes a day off, we need to look at it with compassion and not skepticism. As I read more about mental health wellness and understand the topic better, we began having these conversations internally. We started speaking about it in town halls. When a few employees came forward and discussed what they were going through, we realised there was an urgent need to implement programmes around mental health."

well-being and overall health of employees," he said.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance recently launched 'ReachOut', a programme designed to help prepare employees handle their professional, personal, family and financial worries in a better way and reduce the stress factor. On this platform, employees can reach out to professional counsellors who will be available through online counselling, telephonic counselling or app 24x7 and even face-to-face sessions by

STARTING A CONVERSATION

- Cos have realised that employees take vacations, but ignore mental health due to the stigma attached to it
- Conversations around the issue were encouraged at the workplace & town halls, which highlighted the need to address the issue urgently
- A mental wellness solution firm saw a 5X surge in those seeking therapy in just 6 months
- Young employees are



particularly more prone to mental stress

- Now some cos give leave specifically for mental health, even forcing workaholics to take a break if their swipe in/out timings show a problem

➤ Cos also organise professional counsellors free of cost — not only for employees but their immediate family members as well

Although people hesitate to seek help on stress and anxiety related issues, Mind.Fit, a mental wellness vertical of Bangalore-headquartered Cure.Fit, saw a 5X increase in the number of users seeking therapy in just six months (January-June this year). Due to work-related demands, youngsters are said to be more susceptible to such ailments. Mental fitness is a growing focus at corporate India.

Mind.Fit lead psychiatrist Dr Shyam Bhat said office work has become a major source of stress due to various factors such as job insecurity and uncertainty, long hours, organisational changes, and balancing work & personal obligations. "Providing therapy, counseling, or coaching services for work-related issues is now being recognised as an important resource for employees as the workplace plays an important role in the

appointment, with an absolute assurance of privacy.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance CHRO Vikramjeet Singh said, "Earlier, employers used to focus on wellness of employees by conducting various health camps. Today, we are seeing a gradual shift from wellness to well-being where an employees' health is looked at comprehensively, not just their physical health but also their emotional, financial, social and spiritual well-being."

At Ingersoll Rand India, if employees are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of balancing work and family, or are experiencing anxiety or depression, or are dealing with loss, they reach out to 'My Guidance Resources'. This is an employee assistance programme (EAP) that offers counseling, legal and financial consultation, and crisis-intervention services to all at the organisation and their family members.