

Lessons from “the 40”

What They Have to Teach Us



How do we actually implement the Standard?

The 40 participating organizations have a lot to teach us.

Here are nine “promising practices” that the research uncovered.

MAKE YOUR CASE

You’ll want to make a solid business case. Because to really have an impact, you’ll need dedicated time and money. And you’ll want to justify these costs.

Remember that your primary motivations may be a mix of direct financial outcomes and ethics. For “the 40”, it was primarily “the right thing to do” (91%). A close second was protecting the health of employees (84%). Interestingly, “reducing liability” came in at only 41%, and “managing costs” at 47%.

OWN IT

Make sure you have broad buy-in. Having everyone on board at every level – from top to bottom – will help ensure success. One way the 40 organizations did this was through a policy expressing the commitment of the organization.

For it to work, employees must believe you are committed. And they must be engaged.

COMMUNICATE IT

Don’t keep your plans to yourself. Create a communications strategy to get the word out internally. Make sure you’re including staff along the way and give them lots of opportunities for feedback. Take every chance to communicate, say, through the intranet or at staff meetings. Hold forums, and webcast presentations. And share the results!

EMBED IT

You need to shift the culture and build psychological health and safety into the very fabric of the workplace. That means it becomes an integrated part of planning, and that policies and practices reflect it. You could introduce – or enhance – a code of conduct and strong harassment, anti-bullying and discrimination policies. You might launch programs that promote work-life balance. You might incorporate your organization’s commitment into standard training and orientation for new staff. Let it be just how you operate.

RESOURCE IT

Psychological health and safety isn't something someone does off the side of their desk. It's not a 5-minute item at a monthly meeting. If it's going to work, you have to dedicate the necessary human and financial resources. You might create a new position or engage external expertise.

IT'S NOT A RIGID RECIPE

Your workplace is unique, and there isn't one right way to get "up to standard." You'll want to tailor your activities, policies and practices to your specific context. Ask yourself: what are the particulars of your workplace? What are your specific needs and your actual risks?

BE READY FOR CHANGE

Changes in structure and demands are inevitable. Don't let shakeups in your workplace lead to upset and distress. Get out in front of any changes that might create stress, or otherwise impact the psychological safety of your employees.

Substantive growth, a merger or amalgamation, or even a new IT system can impact mental health. These changes might affect job roles and team mandates, workloads and the need for training. In turn these might put pressure on your workforce, by adding stress and disrupting work-life balance. Periods of change call on you to take mental health into account.

Things change. So be ready.

HOW'S IT GOING

You'll want to check in on impact and results, which means collecting data, and using metrics. Put together an evaluation strategy before you launch your new initiatives. You could focus on the use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)/ Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), short-term disability rates and the frequency of complaints or critical events. Ensure you institute a feedback loop: use surveys and feedback forms.

Check out the Quick Reference Resource Guide for some suggestions.

CARE AND FEEDING: SUSTAIN FOCUS

Don't just put your plan in place and hope for the best. You'll need to sustain organizational focus on the Standard. You don't finally "get there" – it is a continuous process.

Here's how some of ways "the 40" made the changes stick:

- 1 They wove it into the structures by dedicating permanent positions, and setting up committees or task forces;
- 2 They developed ongoing policies;
- 3 They made sure to pass the torch from champion to champion, so when one moves on, their commitment doesn't leave with them;
- 4 They established "communities of practice" with partners both inside and outside the organization, and made sure key stakeholders were informed.