

The title "Mental health matters" in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered on a background of a blue ocean with a rocky shore in the foreground.

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I've been fortunate enough to be part of this great network for approaching 10 years in local, regional and now global leadership roles. The last six months have been the most challenging of my career – and I'm sure many people feel the same way

Taking our work home, transforming our home sanctuaries and dealing with the stress of economies on pause has led to an explosion of mental health issues. No one is immune to these pressures and in a world where we are all potentially available 24/7, it has become even harder than ever to draw the line between work and personal time, which further compounds the problem.

Every single one of us has mental health, just as we have physical health. It exists on a continuum – from good mental health to mental illness – and at various points in our lives, we'll all scale up and down. Sadly, too many organisations, industries and leaders place little or no importance on mental health.

Wellbeing and mental health should be a priority. Better mental health and resilience is essential to help us deal with the demands of our personal and professional lives. And anyone who thinks otherwise risks falling behind as the world moves forward.

My commitment as MediaCom's new Global COO is to be open about these challenges on a worldwide scale. We've had success across EMEA in establishing better support for colleagues who need it. Now is the time to drive this across our entire network.

What we've learnt is that success relies on two key elements:

Firstly, destigmatising the conversation around mental health. Leaders have a responsibility here. We have to admit to our own vulnerabilities. You can be professional while letting people know that you're not perfect or untouched by what's happening around you. If you're having a rough day and are struggling, say so. It will not only show your team that you're human, but it will also encourage them to be honest with you.

Secondly, it is important to provide a structured programme of support with mental health for all employees that allows them to feel comfortable and able to seek the help that they might need without fear of retribution. One initiative that I'm incredibly proud of is the Mental Health Ally Programme that we launched at MediaCom UK. This scheme, which enables people to ask trained colleagues outside their team for time to talk through their issues, is an initiative that would work in any business.

Creating an environment that is supportive of mental health is not a top-down programme, but one where everyone buys into the value it brings to the business and how it makes the organisation a better place to work.

Having previously led MediaCom in the UK, I was lucky enough to spend time talking to clients and partners about our approach and many of them followed up by asking for me to talk to their teams and help them establish their own internal programmes. Spreading the message of better mental wellbeing is something I am proud of and hope to support many of our global clients and partners in this field.

We have long prided ourselves on our *People First* approach and making mental health a priority is culturally right for our network, as I'm sure it is in many of our partners' organisations.

To be credible, it requires leaders at a Global, Regional and Local level to take this challenge on; our role, after all, is to look after our people and make sure they can perform to the best of their ability. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to mental health – each market is culturally different. Some initiatives translate well everywhere whereas some don't. But I believe that Global leaders can provide frameworks, resources and tools, and Local leaders and their teams should determine how best to implement programmes depending on local nuances.

The mental health of our people is intrinsically linked to the health of our businesses. And the health of our agency directly impacts the work we do for you, our clients. So, it's a key priority for us and we're excited to drive it forward.