

A VIEW FROM JOSH KRICHEFSKI

It's time to talk about mental health

INCLUSION OPINION PEOPLE FIRST

JOSH KRICHEFSKI 01 FEB 2018

Mental health issues are very common which deserve to be talked about openly and honestly – especially in business. On Time To Talk day, MediaCom CEO Josh Krichefski outlines why mental health needs to be top of the boardroom agenda.

Almost every single business exists in a competitive and challenging market. We live in a globalised world of tech innovation, shifting consumer behaviour and heightened competition, where the opportunity for success is huge – and so is the pressure, internally, to meet that potential.

But the work we create is just as important as the environment in which we work. Events

such as 1 February's [Time to Talk Day](#) draw attention to this need, encouraging everyone to be more open about mental health. Organisations need to embrace such openness, creativity and (importantly) wellbeing. These are pillars of a successful business, and are interdependent.

Even away from helping to achieve success, as human beings we should want to create a happy working culture where people feel motivated and supported. In order to do the very best work, your team needs to be happy and healthy.

This is rightly becoming more of a focus. At MediaCom, we recently heard from [Jonny Benjamin and Neil Laybourn](#), whose incredible story was made familiar to the media years ago when Jonny attempted to take his own life. If it hadn't been for Neil, who talked him down from Waterloo Bridge, this story would have a very different ending. The room was brought to tears on the day. It was a very real, important story that expressed the seriousness of mental health.

Honest conversations

People should feel empowered to talk openly about their challenges within a work environment. But that is a big, intimidating step for many.

Last year, during mental health week, five people at MediaCom were brave enough to share their own personal stories with the entire business. For us, this helped to create a step change in how open people felt they could be and led to amazingly honest conversations that helped collaboration and fundamentally, success.

We're driving this culture further. As an organisation, we want to be more aware of mental health issues and more able to listen and support. To this end, we have trained 40 people in MediaCom to become mental health allies. They will be a group of people who can be reached out to in confidence if anyone in the business needs to chat to someone completely impartial and be listened to.

All of this is about being there for each other and helping to keep our colleagues safe.

The [Centre for Mental Health](#) found that mental health problems in the UK workforce cost the UK economy almost £35bn last year. [Two-thirds of British adults](#) have experienced mental health issues at some point in their lives. This is not a taboo subject or a rarity. Sadly, it's a very common issue which deserves to be talked about openly and honestly – especially in business.

I would love to see 2018 be the year things really improve and more businesses put mental health at the top of their boardroom and business agenda. Mental health is something which needs to be constantly discussed and promoted.

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