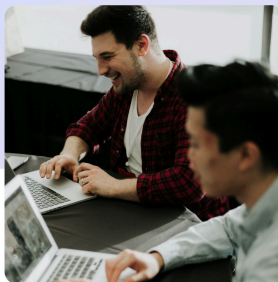


Mental health in the workplace

A study on the impact of modern working on employee mental health & how to improve it

if u
care
share



oak
engage

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Welcome

Welcome to Oak Engage's Mental Health in the Workplace Report.

In this report we delve into the state of mental health in physical and remote workplaces.

Employees battled against the tide of isolation and uncertainty during the pandemic and now we face more challenges in the form of a cost of living crisis.

The past few years have brought very little respite. It's little surprise, then, that 58% of our survey respondents have suffered mental or physical stress as a result of work.

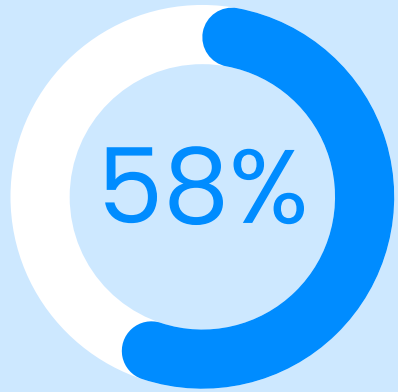
As the research is presented, you'll see some clear trends in the drivers of mental anguish at work, many with different implications across different industries. Some you will resonate with, some you may find surprising.

The data has been collected through employee surveys across 9 industries and paired with knowledge from industry experts. This will help you to gain a better understanding of burnout, moral injury, purpose, remote working and their link to mental wellbeing.

We are delighted to have partnered with If U Care Share for this report.

They provide essential intervention and prevention services, as well as educating organisations on mental health issues. We thank them for the fantastic contribution and insight they have given us.

Percentage of workers who have suffered mental or physical stress as a result of work in the last two years:



Statistics by industry

Non profit & public sector

67%

Utilities

54%

Education

67%

Sales & marketing

60%

Retail & hospitality

64%

IT

55%

Finance

63%

Healthcare

43%

A message from If U Care Share

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of every participant, sharing their perspectives, experiences and emotions. Through a collective voice we can identify key areas for improvement and where further support may be required

The report highlights there are specific disparities within particular industries and that ultimately, the feelings we are left with can be the same. Our experiences can vary greatly and yet the emotional impact can still be significant.

The survey also highlights to employers where there are opportunities to do more, or work differently, to promote honesty and authenticity, creating space and culture for people to reach out when needed.

To those of us who see ourselves as the employee, we might be consoled that it isn't just us, allowing us to understand ourselves, our wider industry and perhaps also to identify different ways of working. Or, we may be challenged that our experience is different to others in the same industry, enabling us to empathise, be more open, offer support, or seek to understand some of those differences.

The important thing for all of us to remember, is that there is always a way, there is support available. There are all kinds of things we can do to look after our mental health, and although work can be a major factor it is not the sole contributor. We need to take time to look at our own experiences, challenges, emotions, and how we may want to deal with them differently. There are some great resources, tips and insights shared by industry experts which will be particularly helpful.

It's also important to recognise sometimes we are our own experts, we can understand ourselves better than anyone else and know what we need to do. Getting to that place takes a lot of time, reflection and support from others. Hopefully this report will promote that conversation in your own experience and within your wider industry.

We were delighted to be involved in this work with Oak Engage and have no doubt this report will continue to elevate the conversation and hopefully lead to meaningful change where necessary.

David Brown

Head of Training & Development,
If U Care Share



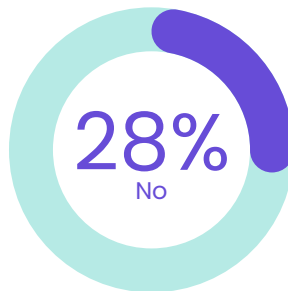
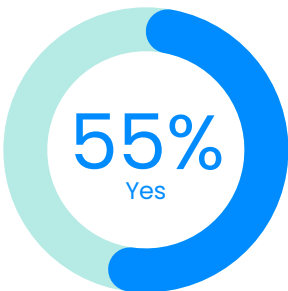
Our purpose at work

Everyone likes to feel needed and wanted. But our individual purpose completely depends on our personal goals and motivations. In order for employees to feel like they have a purpose, there should be an alignment between with the purpose or goals of the company and those of the employee.

With a lack of purpose at or because of work, employees can automatically disengage from their jobs. Given that we spend so much of our waking life at work, this can impact our mental health. Often employees don't feel like they play an important part in their roles and it's often because they don't feel appreciated or recognised. Let's take a look at some of the findings of our survey around purpose and belonging at work.

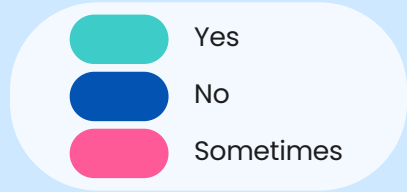
We asked employees:

Do you feel like your role has a significant purpose?

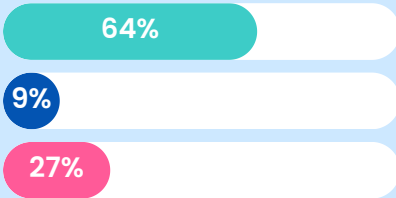


Statistics by industry

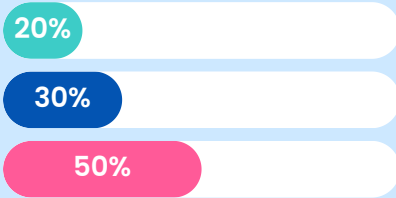
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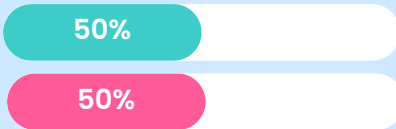
IT



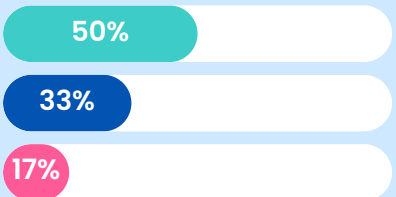
Retail & hospitality



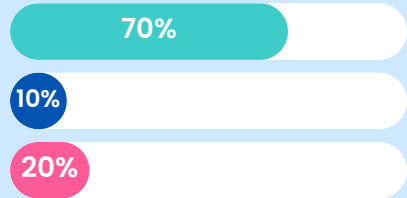
Construction & manufacturing



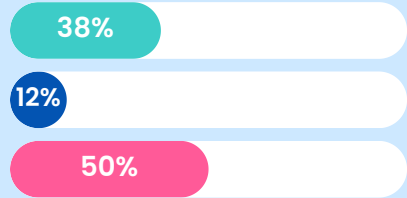
Education



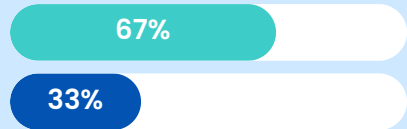
Sales & marketing



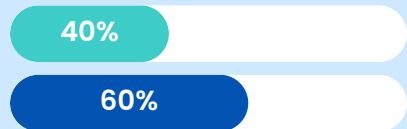
Finance



Healthcare

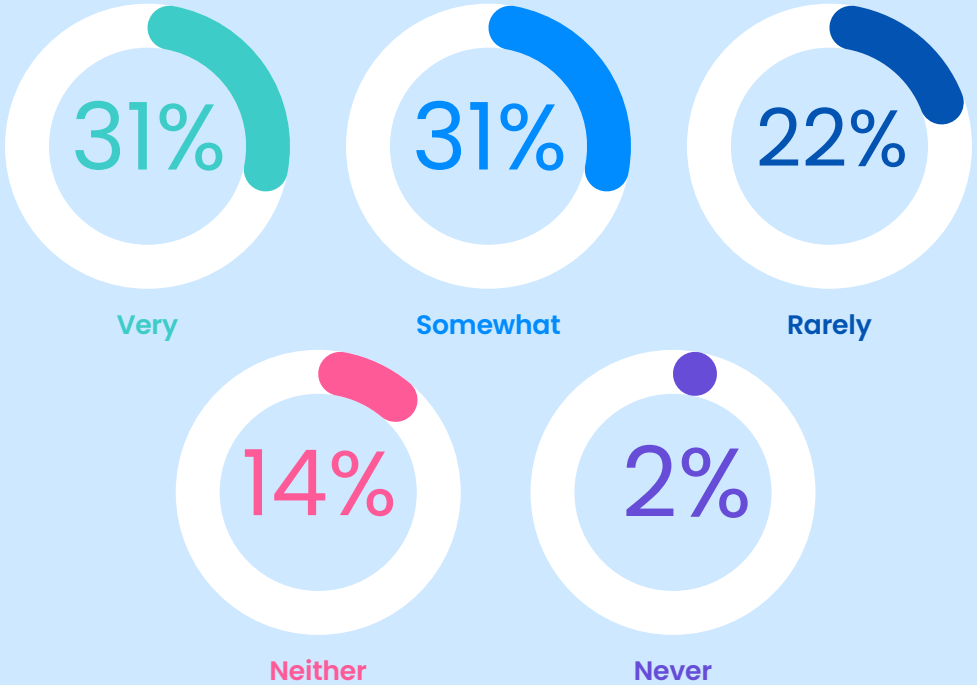


Utilities



How connected do you feel to the organisation you work for?

Over a third of employees **don't feel connected** to their employer...



84% of utilities workers DO NOT feel connected to their organisation

75% of finance workers DO NOT feel connected to their organisation

72% of healthcare workers feel VERY connected to their organisation

72% of IT workers feel at least some connection with their organisation

67% of education workers feel some connection with their organisation

Expert opinion with Matt Heller

Matt founded Performance Optimist in 2011, coaching business leaders to create more purposeful and team oriented work environments. He does this through training workshops, coaching programs and on-going development initiatives. Matt has worked with a host of organisations of all sizes and has published books on employee burnout and supportive leadership

One of our big drivers is purpose and people understanding what their purpose is. They ask themselves this question 'is it worth it?'. 'Is it worth working in this way to spend time away from my family or to disregard my mental and physical health?' Then we start to wonder whether we should be doing this, and start to disengage. This is a natural human process.

Purposes can be different or a combination of things. For example, someone may go to work in order to fulfil their purpose of having a family and doing what's best for them. It is a means to an end. Is their purpose aligned with the organisation? Maybe not, but if this allows them to fulfil other purposes like look after their family the way they want to or get involved in the community, they don't have to 100% align with what the organisation is doing.

I think if the organisation can figure out what their people's purposes are, they can work together regardless of their beliefs. If your purpose does really align to the ethics of a company, you will naturally be much more engaged.

Where we run into issues is where an organisation doesn't make the decision you expect it to make and there's no communication.

Comms in an organisation is the all-important thing. If the reason behind that decision isn't transparent about the bigger picture or how it will impact the business down the line, we start thinking about whether it fits with our purpose. The answer to this will be different for every person.

Managers have to speak to every employee to understand this.

It's also important to talk to your manager, they have to know! It is tough and sometimes you don't know how to approach certain issues. But, you don't want them to be invisible in your solutions just like you don't want to be invisible to the organisation; it's a two way street.



Matt Heller

Consultant & author on purpose,
culture and burnout

Burnout

One of the key consequences of modern working is burnout.

Employees can now be contacted any hour of the day.

Employees can be overworked by the organisation or have trouble switching off from work (this has become a bigger issue when working from home). Either way, it isn't healthy.

Burnout contributes to stress, anxiety, disengagement and overall happiness. It reiterates the need for work-life balance and setting boundaries.

We surveyed employees on being overworked and burnt out, and this is the percentage of workers who said overworking or long hours had contributed to their stress:

Non profit & public sector



Finance



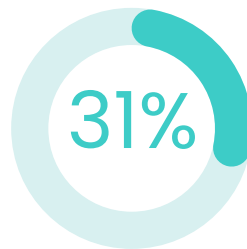
Healthcare



Utilities



Construction & manufacturing



Percentage of workers who said expectations or pressure had contributed to their stress:

Retail & hospitality

55%

IT

36%

Education

33%

Sales & marketing

13%



Expert opinion with Joe Robinson

Joe Robinson is an author, speaker and trainer on work-life balance and stress management. He has helped several businesses find a balance between productivity and employee engagement.

Featuring on CNN, NBC and Wall Street Journal to name a few, Joe has become a respected voice in the field, helping to shape cultures and perception to accommodate work- life balance.

His book *Work Smarter, Live Better: The Science-Based Work-Life Balance and Stress Management Toolkit*, is available on Amazon.

Based on working individually with burned-out clients and training with teams and organisations, the main triggering events are excessive hours, no boundaries, not enough support, and no recovery strategies. The stress continues to orbit brains in a pattern called rumination. This gives the hare-brained false beliefs and catastrophic thoughts triggered by stress credence the more we think about them—but they're bogus.

Employers need to know that excessive hours and lack of boundaries are relentless demotivating tools.

We are in the knowledge economy, where productivity is a function of an energised, focused brain. Burnout gives you the opposite.

If you want to prevent employees from burning out:

- **Rein in overwork** and chronic 50+ hour work weeks
- **Set boundaries:** check email at designated times, mute notification sounds and alerts and no work email or calls after business hours
- **Get people the support they need:** when leavers aren't replaced, the remaining folks will cope for a while, but after that comes burnout
- **Encourage frequent breaks** to recharge and refuel during the day

The pandemic has underscored the importance of work-life balance and what that does for wellbeing and stress reduction. We are not hard drives with hair. I see more companies taking work-life seriously now.

We now know what happens when all fun, social life, travel, and recreational activities are shut down. It affects mental health and that affects output.

Every company should have a stress management strategy and regular employee training if they want to prevent employees from burning out.

Joe Robinson
Business culture &
work-life balance expert



Moral injury

Our own belief systems can often correlate with how engaged we are at work. Sometimes people can switch off and be focused purely on their outcomes, but many will be impacted by what their employer stands for and how they behave.

Ethics and morals make us the people we are and when we perceive ourselves as working against them, it can lead to us disconnecting and shutting down.

The term 'moral injury' is very fitting, as it can cause damage to our mental health. As well as anxiety, we may question and start to change a perception of ourselves in a negative way.

We asked employees if they suffered anxiety, stress or depression from their employer contradicting their morals or beliefs:

Utilities

80%

Finance

75%

Education

67%

Healthcare

57%

Retail & hospitality

36%

Construction & manufacturing

33%

Sales & marketing

30%

IT

27%

Non profit & public sector

25%

The reasons

We asked:

'If there was a specific event that caused this, please give a short description'

"Management not delivering on promises they made."

"Direct line manager making mistakes and blaming others."

"Poor ethics of the company"

"Dishonest practices and treatment of staff."

"Unable to say anything deemed negative about new initiatives or processes."

"Manager used coercive and controlling techniques to achieve their desired outcome"

We asked:

'How do you feel the values of the organisation you work for match your own?'

Completely aligned



21%

Not really aligned



21%

Somewhat aligned



31%

Completely contradict



10%

Unsure



17%

Expert opinion with Cara de Lange

Cara de Lange is a specialist in the science of burnout. A visionary author, wellbeing consultant and corporate futurist, she founded Softer Success® to provide evidence-backed burnout solutions for businesses.

Working with the world's top universities, researchers and psychologists, she created the ground-breaking, anonymous wellbeing assessment 'A Walk Through the Forest', which can diagnose the risk of workplace burnout and toxicity in 90 seconds.

Moral injury can be the result of a toxic workplace culture with procedures that are not looking after the wellbeing of their employees sufficiently. Through our own research we have found that when someone sits in emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and moral injury for too long, this can contribute to burnout. Here are some suggestions for organisations to avoid moral stress and injury:

- As an organisation, be prepared to **acknowledge and learn from mistakes**. Align external and internal narrative and openly take action to prevent future transgressions occurring.
- Embed **ethical standards** throughout your organisational practices, processes, policies, and communications.
- Clearly articulate standards of behaviour around ethical conduct and take visible, consistent action against transgressions.

- Identify and **acknowledge moral stressors** in the organisation.
- Conduct **internal investigations according to due process**, protecting and supporting the affected employee throughout.
- Provide **tertiary support** to those employees that may be suffering from the outcomes
- Enable a **culture of psychological safety** where employees are free to speak up without fear of recrimination, including:
 - Leaders openly encouraging feedback and clear evidence to all that feedback is acted upon
 - Processes, by having a range of anonymous forums through which employees can give feedback, for instance, a staff survey and through feedback hubs
 - Policies, such as a clearly articulated whistleblowing policy that is well communicated and adhered to



Cara de Lange

Workplace wellbeing, toxicity and burnout expert

Remote working and our mental health

Many of us have got used to remote working since early 2020 and it continues to be a permanent fixture in a lot of businesses, at least to some degree.

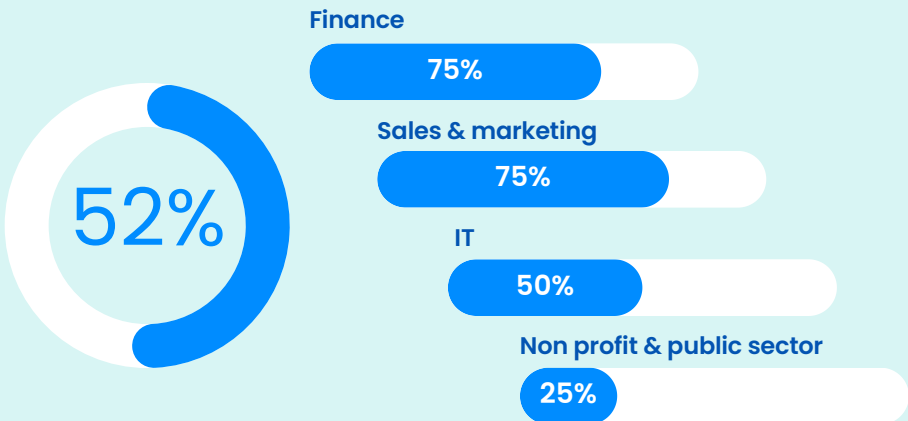
Working from home (WFH) has brought many benefits, such as higher productivity for businesses whilst employees enjoy a better work-life balance.

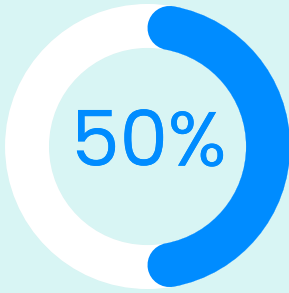
However, in the same vein, many have felt isolated during remote working periods. Not to mention the increasing possibility of higher costs of WFH due to soaring energy costs.

There are a lot of different opinions on remote working, with many CEOs who have urged workers back to the office met with backlash to similar ferocity. In some instances, the repercussions have meant that employees are quitting for more flexible working arrangements.

In this section, we take a look at how employees feel about working from home.

% of workers who said they had not suffered mental health or stress issues and have benefitted from remote or hybrid working.





of remote workers feel more isolated and lonely working from home

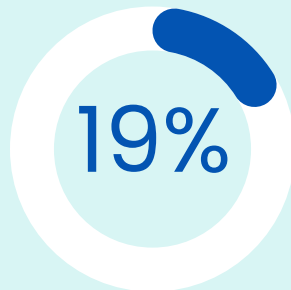
Top challenges of remote working for employees



work-life balance



increase in virtual meetings



lack of communication

What the experts say on remote working

Prior to the pandemic, we had clear boundary lines which helped us to psychologically separate work from home, including a commute and work uniform, for example. But, whilst the concept of spending a day in our slippers and dressing gown at the desk in our front room might have sounded quite cushy prior to 2020, actually it's been harder for people to say, 'ok, it's 18:00, time to turn off the PC, turn off my phone - it's family time'.

As a result, many people continue working when they should have switched off to rest, or they're working/faffing and work-life balance is a confusing mess. They're not getting the benefits of being productive and feeling productive, nor are they getting the benefits from completely switching off.



Andrew Pain
TEDx speaker & coach on
leadership and wellbeing

Improving mental health in the workplace

Whether you can resonate with the findings of this report or are quite surprised by them, we will take you through some actionable ideas that you can apply to your business in order to improve the wellbeing of your employees.

Creating a sense of purpose

The report found that over a third of employees don't feel connected to their organisation.

'As long as the work gets done, that's fine, right?' Wrong.

A lack of connection or sense of purpose in our work leads to disengagement. This can result in poor productivity and negative opinions toward the employer and company culture. Here are some ways you can help build a sense of purpose within the workforce.

Feedback loops

The straightforward way to understand disengagement and a lack of purpose amongst employees is to ask them.

It sounds simple, but often the bigger an organisation is, the more difficult it is to apply feedback to improving the employee experience.

This is where Pulse Surveys come in. More focused than traditional surveys, they can help you make sense of a particular topic.

Oak Engage's [pulse surveys and polls](#) allow you to target feedback requests to specific people or departments. The user-friendly [analytics dashboard](#) helps visualise the data and make well-informed changes.

Targeted, engaging content

An antidote to a lack of engagement and purpose can be targeted, individualised comms. Oak Engage's curated content system creates an immersive experience for all, no matter their location or role.

With an intuitive content management system which enables content to be targeted at selected audience segments, users will see updates in their intranet based on what is relevant to them. Oak also creates bespoke curated newsletters based on user behaviours and algorithms to ensure no key information gets lost or missed.

Cutting through the noise to deliver news or comms that are relevant to each individual encourages interaction, engagement and a drive to stay up to date with updates that impact them and their work.

Recognise achievements

Employees are likely to feel more of a purpose if they feel recognised and appreciated for their efforts. Our [employee recognition and awards](#) tools help you to show appreciation for employees and peers, bringing this to the forefront of your business culture.

Encourage colleagues to celebrate the good work and support of their colleagues with quick notes of thanks, or create a more structured employee awards programme that reflects your company values.

Either way, celebrating your people and allowing them to celebrate one another will make them feel seen, valued and respected for their input into the bigger picture every day.

Avoiding burnout

Nearly 1 in 5 of us have endured work-related stress through overworking and a third through expectations and pressure at work.

Our expert, Joe Robinson, told us that a lack of set boundaries are 'demotivation tools' and a lack of 'recovery strategies' are some of the main drivers of burnout.

To tackle burnout, you need to create boundaries and encourage employees to switch off from their work from time to time, no matter how counterintuitive that may be, especially in hectic times for business. You also need to have the proper process and policy in place that helps employees recharge their batteries. Here are some steps you can take to do just that.

Create social spaces

One way to create space for employees to switch off from work is to nurture spaces for employees to socialise. Digital spaces can help to connect people across branches, offices, countries and more.

Community hubs and social features, like the ability to share posts and engage with colleagues' updates, can replicate social aspects of the workplace and mirror the familiarity that comes from social media.

The social aspect can bring people together even if they don't work at the same time or the same location. Creating places for like-minded people to connect through their hobbies can help create safe spaces for them to enjoy relaxed communication, whether it's about the book they're reading, the vegetables they grew this summer or discussing how to juggle parenthood and work with other parents.

Easy access to wellbeing policy and programmes

HR teams can utilise Oak's platform as a one-stop-shop for wellbeing policies and information with our intuitive content management tools.

For third party systems such as reward platforms, mental health support other health schemes, enable easy access through your intranet with integrations. This means your people can find everything they might need in one place, reducing frustrations when searching for information and resources.

Make this information even more accessible on-the-go by making it available via a mobile app like ours which mirrors your intranet for employees to access whenever they need it.

Treating and avoiding moral injury

39% of employees said that they had suffered anxiety, stress or mental health issues as a result of their employer contradicting their morals or beliefs.

We spend a large proportion of our lives at work, so it's no surprise that we want our working life and our beliefs to be somewhat aligned.

Often acting as a buffer between senior leaders and colleagues, finding a suitable way to frame information is a key factor. While not always easy or possible, offering routes for people to reach out for support or voice their thoughts on certain initiatives or company updates can ensure your people know they are listened to, respected and considered in business decisions.

Here are our tips to help avoid moral injury in the workplace.

Ensure your brand vision and values are present

Remind your people of your values and vision by making sure they are reflected internally as much as they are externally. When decisions are made, or large change occurs, consider how it helps to better align with or achieve your company vision while living out your brand values and be sure to communicate this. Foreseeing what questions might be asked and preparing answers will demonstrate that true thought and consideration has gone into these kinds of things.

With Oak Engage, your intranet is designed to your specifications to re-enforce your branding. Through intuitive and targeted content feeds, your company vision, values and those important company updates can be communicated effectively, digitally.

With a branded mobile employee app, deskless workers and those on the go also get the authentic experience. Push notifications can keep employees up-to-date with news and urgent updates in the moment.

Create a culture of transparency with leadership at the forefront

Every business will make mistakes at some point, but it's how you react that counts. Organisations need to be transparent and upfront with employees. This includes helping to quash any issues before they snowball, whether something has been seen in the media or if internal news has spread before a formal announcement.

Using a smart feed that presents all information in one view and targeted messaging to ensure the right people see the right news at the right time, your intranet becomes the central source for updates. This means you can shape the narrative before someone else does.

Multimedia posts on your content feed can help leadership to become a face of the business and inject their own personality into internal communications. This can help to shake off the often-perceived ideas that management are out of touch or only interested in business success at the expense of their people.

In turn, leadership comms will be more relatable and employees are more likely to give them their attention and engage with their content. With communication that connects leadership to the workforce, you help to build more of a community spirit within the organisation.

An open door policy with a direct link to everyone in the business is one way to achieve this. A [people directory](#) gives everyone access to contact details of the entire business.

How to maintain wellbeing and connectivity

Half of remote workers feel more isolated and lonely working from home. Despite all the benefits of WFH, replicating the social aspect of office work has been difficult, which is why the hybrid approach now seems to work for the majority of staff in a post-pandemic work environment.

Remote working can also impact team collaboration, with it often being easier to strike up a chat with a colleague sitting nearby than messaging or emailing them. This may have led to increased stress through employees' uncertainty of their own convictions without the proverbial sounding board to bounce ideas off.

Here are some ways in which businesses can alleviate isolation and improve collaboration with remote, hybrid and deskless workforces.

Allow time for interests outside of work

One thing employees bond over and a significant aspect of workplace socialising is talking about mutual interests. Especially if you were onboarded remotely, the chance of you reaching out to someone to talk about your favourite Netflix show is pretty slim.

Through Community Hubs you can create these spaces for employees to chat about their interests and even organise events around. From fantasy football to pets, you can create a hub for anything, such as:

- LGBTQ+ community
- BAME colleagues
- Gamers
- Book club
- Sports and social events

Create virtual collaboration spaces

There's no denying that collaboration and the innovation that comes with it has been a barrier for many businesses during remote working periods. This dilemma is prevalent with many businesses the world over, who are now encouraging or mandating their staff return to the office in some capacity.

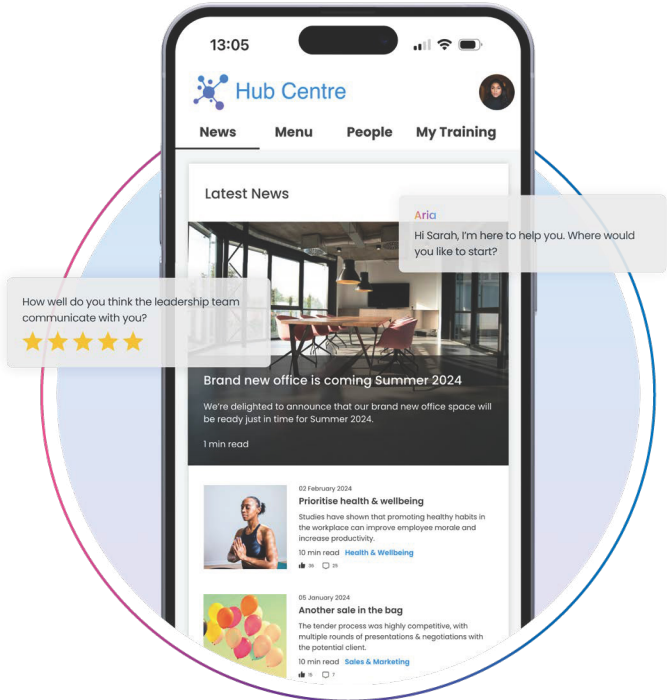
For remote, hybrid or dispersed workforces, collaboration can be recreated using Oak's platform. Through department hubs and pages, project teams can gather to participate in discussions. With social and community features, employees can connect as individuals or in groups to share ideas.

An award-winning employee app and intranet solution

Oak Engage empowers your teams to get the right message, to the right people, at the right time.

We're here to make communication simple. We believe there is a better way to use technology to engage employees, cut through the noise, and inspire action that puts people at the heart of organisations.

The customer is at the heart of Oak Engage, with an attentive support team on hand to help with any customer queries.



Trusted by the **world's biggest brands**



Ready to get started?

We offer a free and personalised demo service,
showcasing our intuitive and easy-to-use platform.
Tailored to meet your specific needs.

[Book a demo](#)

