

The Check In

xero

2020 has been a year unlike anything we could have imagined and it's not over yet.

As we head into the final few months of the year, it's important for us all to take stock of our wellbeing.

From our physical and emotional health through to mental and spiritual, wellbeing is a key component of happiness and contentment.

Here at Xero, wellbeing is something we take seriously. Last year, we worked with the Mental Health Foundation to investigate wellbeing across the Kiwi small business sector and created the [Small Business Wellbeing Report](#).

We also launched the [Xero Assistance Programme](#) (XAP) which provides free and confidential wellbeing support to approximately 850,000 Kiwi small business owners, their employees and families.

All workplaces play a central role in building people's resilience and positive wellbeing, so they can better cope with setbacks, take advantage of opportunities and be productive, contributing members of families, communities and workplaces.



“

It makes good business sense too. Every dollar spent on mental health services in New Zealand will repay the nation with \$3.50 in productivity gains and other savings.

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It can be hard to know where to start with wellbeing in the workplace, so we've created a check in for all SMEs to help them support their team to thrive in this final part of the year.

See the following page for a breakdown of The Check In step process.

The Check In consists of four steps, and an optional fifth step extension:

STEP
1

Getting to know
your team

STEP
2

Fostering
connections within
your team

STEP
3

Supporting others
to look after
themselves

STEP
4

Making it okay to
ask for help

STEP
5

Making a longer
term commitment
to wellbeing

STEP 1

Getting to know your team

The first step to improving wellbeing in the workplace is knowing your team. No doubt you're communicating with your team throughout the day – through emails, instant messages, texts and phone calls.

But a key way to help improve wellbeing is to have some genuine face-to-face conversations in person or on video calls. Authentic discussion about who they are and what makes them tick goes a long way to creating an environment of belonging which fosters wellbeing.

This month, spend some time with each of your team members talking to them. It doesn't need to take long, but it is important to do.

We've compiled some tips [here](#) to help you with these catch ups.

STEP 2

Fostering connections within your team

Helping your team build connections with one another helps them maintain a healthy outlook on life and is a crucial part of their overall wellbeing.

We spend so much time at work, why not make the most of it and reinforce a healthy culture of camaraderie between your employees? Investing in fostering a good culture doesn't have to cost a lot of time or money.

This month do an activity to foster connections within your team. [Here](#) are a few ideas that don't require much time or money.

STEP 3

Supporting others to look after themselves

Aside from strong interpersonal relationships, wellbeing is also about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. So often we get caught up in the day-to-day of working, it can be easy to forget about taking care of our physical health.

From exercise to making healthy life choices, there are plenty of habits employers can encourage their employees to pick up in order to make a positive change in their lives.

[Here](#) are some resources to help you and your employees make conscious, healthy lifestyle choices.

STEP 4

Making it okay to ask for help

Seeking professional support doesn't need to be a last resort. Foster an environment that removes the stigma too often associated with low mental wellbeing in the workplace. This can help empower your team to ask for help before they really need it.

We've compiled a list of resources [here](#) to help you guide your team to get support.

STEP 5

Making a longer term commitment to wellbeing

If you're looking to make a long-term commitment to improving wellbeing in your business, you could consider creating a personalised wellbeing plan or establishing wellbeing policies, signalling your dedication to fostering a culture of wellbeing in your business.

Don't forget to take your team on this journey too - there may be someone who has a passion for wellbeing and this could be a dedicated part of their role.

There's a lot of free resources online to use, so we've built a list [here](#) to give you easy access to helpful organisations and advice.

Taking part in The Check In is not only good for your people, it's good for your business.

For more information, visit xero.com/nz/resources/the-check-in

STEP

1

Getting to know your team

Fostering an environment where you and your employees feel comfortable around each other is essential to a wellbeing-focused workplace. Getting to know your team and what makes them tick is crucial to understanding their personalities, motivations and challenges.

For example, what's important to them? What do they value? How have they fared this week? This month?

Establishing this relationship means they will be more open and honest with you about what's going on in their lives, flagging issues or distractions that might be weighing on their mind and impacting their productivity at work.

Conversation starters

Sometimes the hardest part of having a conversation is getting started.

The beauty is these conversations get easier the more you have them and soon you'll be catching up meaningfully with your employees daily without consciously creating the opportunities.

Remember, talking about wellbeing doesn't require any special training. You just need to make the effort and be open to genuinely listening to someone's thoughts. Being willing to share a little about what is going on in your life can help others open up too.



Here are some conversation starters to use:

How are you doing?

What's been going on in your life?

What are your plans this weekend?

Have you seen any good movies lately?

How are you finding work at the moment?

Any news from your family?

While these might seem basic, it's just about opening the dialogue. By doing this you'll develop a genuine understanding and interest of one another to further foster an understanding, supportive workplace.

Guide to one-on-one conversations

There's a huge benefit to sitting down in person or over a video call with people, giving you the chance to have an honest dialogue about how they are doing. It allows for reflection on the role, how things are going and – if necessary – putting in place a plan for the future.

It's important to be present. Nothing stifles open, honest conversation like the sense that you're wasting someone's time. These one-on-ones are exactly that. Leave your laptop at your desk, ignore your phone and give them the time to fully express themselves.

Being genuinely interested in what your employee is saying will go a long way to maximising the benefit of these catch ups, and giving them a platform to talk can foster an open, honest environment.

The benefit of this is it will spread to their daily interactions with their colleagues, making sure wellbeing is a central tenet of your business.

Now you've got some tools, start booking in those one-on-one catch-ups with your team.

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STEP 2

Fostering connections within your team

Encouraging your employees to build their own connections and become a unified workforce has a major impact on wellbeing. Improving an individual's sense of belonging to an organisation reinforces a culture of wellbeing.

We spend so much time at work, why not invest in camaraderie between your employees? It doesn't need to cost a lot of money either.



Create a culture of celebration

Acknowledging achievements and hard work is one way to help encourage this. If you generate a culture of celebration in your workplace where employee efforts are displayed and recognised, you create a positive feedback circuit - something that everyone benefits from.

Something as simple as a monthly award, emails sent to the whole team, talking about achievements in all staff meetings or a pinboard to stick up notes of praise are just some ideas to help get you started.

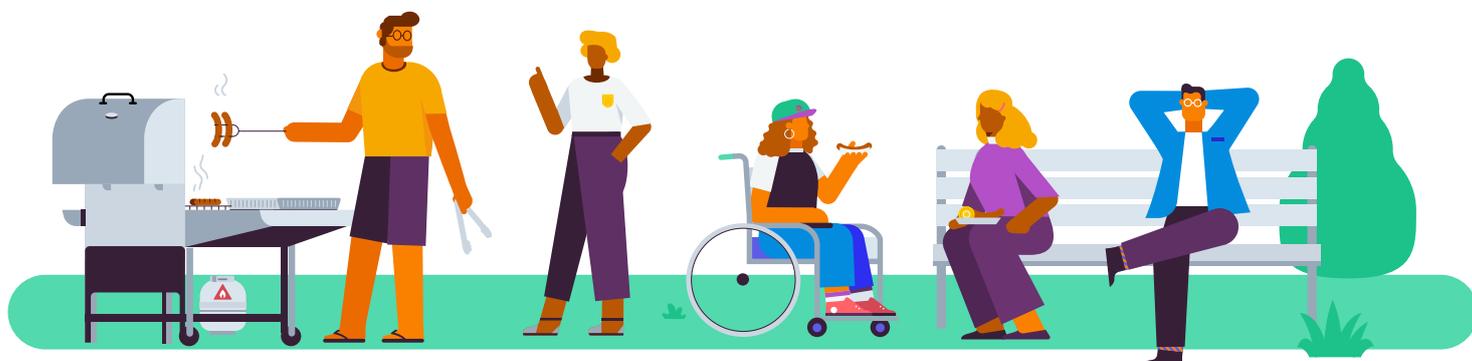
Remember too though, not everyone loves receiving public praise, so don't overlook the benefit of simply letting people know the things they are doing well in a casual private conversation.

Hosting social events

Getting together outside of work is another useful way of fostering connections within your team. Consider the make-up of your team and then make an effort to create situations where your employees can relax and enjoy each other's company in a less formal environment.

Look further than just Friday drinks and offer events such as shared lunches during the week, work barbeques in summer, social catch-ups over video calls, get togethers at the park with other employees who have children - in fact, extending events to include family members is an excellent way to get to know a whole person.

Developing an open, collaborative and friendly culture in the workplace helps reduce stress, improve happiness and increase productivity in the long term.



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STEP 3

Supporting others to look after themselves

A healthy body helps to create a healthy mind. So often we get caught up in the day-to-day of working, it can be easy to forget about taking care of our physical health. Employers can support their employees to make a positive change in their daily habits.

Encourage moving more

Getting the blood pumping and encouraging employees to be mindful of their own physical health is a key part of improving their wellbeing overall. There are some simple ways to encourage this.

For example, start doing walking meetings where possible. Rather than sitting in a meeting room, a quick 15 minute walk around the block while chatting gets you and your employees out and about during the day to get some fresh air, Vitamin D and a change of scene from the office interior.

You could also create fun team challenges, such as step challenges, enter work teams into local sports competitions, start a lunchtime walking or jogging group, or provide bike storage to encourage cycling to work.

Conscious healthy eating habits

A healthy diet is a cornerstone of health and wellbeing, and food-mood connections are now well established.

Create an environment in your workplace that promotes healthy eating. Some ways to do this include:

- Providing areas for food storage and preparation to encourage people to bring in lunch or prepare a nutritious meal at work.
- Creating a culture of eating away from your desk. Eating mindlessly can lead to poorer food choices and unconscious overeating, plus an opportunity for important social connections within your team is missed.
- Providing healthy options when catering work events or training days; and for those that don't already, consider a regular fruit delivery for the staffroom.
- Encouraging your staff to aim for 5+ helpings of fruit and vegetables a day and cut down on the empty calories of sugary snacks and drinks.



The importance of a good night's sleep

Regular quality and restorative sleep plays an essential role in good physical and mental health.

According to Harvard University in the short term, a lack of adequate sleep can affect judgement, mood, ability to learn and retain information, and may increase the risk of serious accidents and injury. In the long term, chronic sleep deprivation has been shown to contribute to many health concerns such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

One key thing interrupting our modern sleeping patterns is technology.

The stimulation (both from the content and the blue light emissions) that we get from smartphones, tablets, laptops, LED lights and even televisions can be a nightmare for anyone trying to nod off.

Start the conversation with your team about ways to improve their sleep quality by implementing one of these tips:

- Abstain from using technology prior to bedtime.
- Use blue light blocking glasses when accessing technology in the evenings.
- Activate the 'wind-down' or 'night time' settings on their devices.

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STEP 4

Making it okay to ask for help

Fostering an environment where you and your employees feel comfortable to be open about their wellbeing is a great step in the right direction.

Having an open environment where you and your employees feel safe and empowered to make the right call around mental wellbeing is an incredibly powerful position to be in, and something all Kiwi businesses should aspire to.

Changing the narrative around mental health

One thing to consider is how you and your employees talk about sick leave, and whether there's a benefit in examining what this entails.

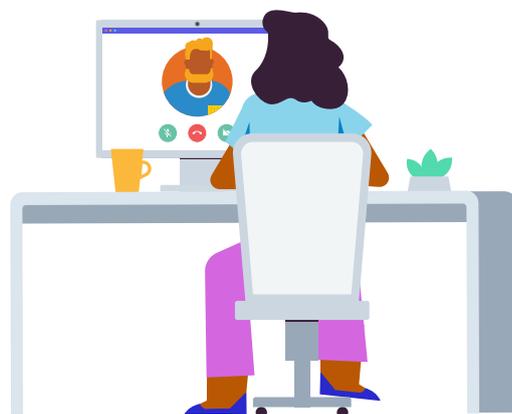
A shift happening in organisations across the world at the moment is reframing this as "wellbeing leave" to encompass everything people might feel compelled to take leave for.

Something as simple as changing how we refer to leave can open up how people use this, allowing them to take leave for things that are important to them - or simply take a break for their own mental wellbeing.

Encouraging people to get the help they need

Sometimes you may be managing an employee experiencing a mental illness, mental distress or low mental wellbeing. It's important during these times to ensure the safety of the individual.

There are a range of helplines and organisations that specialise in helping Kiwis navigate mental wellbeing and come out on top. Have this information available and ensure your employees know where to turn to get the help they need.



Xero Assistance Programme

Xero customers have access to free and 100% confidential wellbeing support through the [Xero Assistance Programme](#), which gives employees and their families access to free face-to-face, telephone, live chat and online counselling. If you are a Xero customer, make sure your staff and their families know how to access the programme.

Other useful resources include:

[Need to talk?](#)

Free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor.

[Healthline](#)

Call 0800 611 116 to speak with a registered nurse 24/7.

[Just a Thought](#)

Free online therapy to improve your mental health.

[Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand](#)

Learn how to stay well and get the support you need

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 111.

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STEP 5

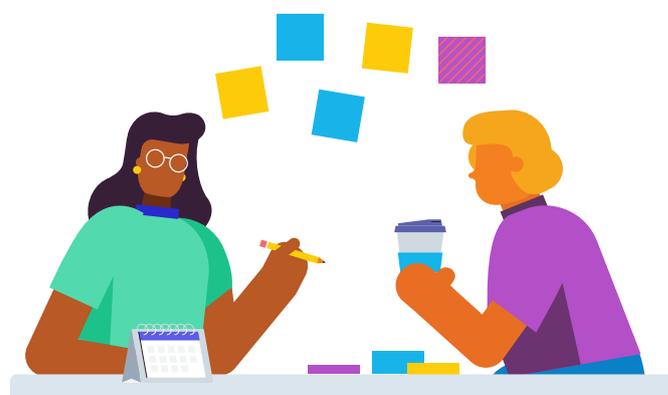
Making a longer term commitment to wellbeing

Making a long term commitment to wellbeing in your business is a great step towards supporting your team and yourself.

If you want to make long term change in your business, you should consider creating a personalised wellbeing plan and implementing wellbeing policies.

You can create a long term wellbeing plan for your business with [Good4Work](#), or develop a wellbeing policy on this [Government website](#) to implement in your business.

Working in a supportive space plays a central role in building people's resilience and positive wellbeing, so they can better cope with setbacks, take advantage of opportunities and be productive, contributing members of families, communities and workplaces.



Some additional resources for specific advice include:

[Wellplace](#)

A website providing practical tools, ideas and resources to build wellbeing in your workplace, developed by the Health Promotion Agency.

[Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand](#)

Provides access to a wealth of information about workplace wellbeing and general mental health.

[WorkWell](#)

Provides free resources, mentoring, networking opportunities and accreditation to support workplaces to 'work better through wellbeing'.

[WorkSafe](#)

New Zealand's work health and safety regulator provides a wide range of information and guidance about health and safety in the workplace.

[Employer Advice Line](#)

Free advice for employers and managers about how to support team members with a disability or health condition, including mental health.
Phone 0800 805 405 (8am – 6pm weekdays).

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