

Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health in the Workplace: A Panel Discussion

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I. Introduction.

After a year in which suicide and drug overdoses were at an all-time high, we will discuss how to identify potential mental health issues in the workplace, and provide advice on how to encourage discussions about mental health amongst employees, along with where to find resources to offer your workforce.

II. Speakers:

- A. Daniel Finerty, Lindner & Marsack, S.C.
- B. Bruce Morton, CHST, Marsh McLennan Agency
- C. Angela Zausch, CCWS, Wisconsin Construction Wellness Council
- D. Carrie Ripp, APSW, Empathia

III. Statistics for validation of the problem.

A. *Prevalence:*

- 1. In any year, 1 in 5 Americans experience mental health issues
- 2. 50% of Americans experience mental health issues during lifetime
- 3. The average person waits 8 to 10 years after the onset of initial symptoms before seeking treatment

B. *Suicide:*

- 1. 10th leading cause of death in the US
- 2. For every suicide there are 25 attempts
- 3. Suicide rate in construction **5 times higher** than other industries.
- 4. Men between ages 45 and 54 have the highest suicide rate in the U.S. - *3 fatal incidents/day.*

C. *Workplace Impact:*

- 1. 63% percent of employees reported that workplace stress had significant impact on their mental and behavioral health (Mental Health America study).
- 2. Employees experiencing stress in the workplace are much more likely be distracted at work, miss days, compromise safety or quit their jobs.

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III. Statistics for validation of the problem (continued):

D. *Stigma:*

1. 80% of workers with a mental health condition attribute their non-treatment to shame and stigma (National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMH)).
2. 31% of employees would be afraid of being labeled as “weak.”
3. 22% fear it would impact their promotion opportunities.
4. *Despite overall safety culture improvements, the construction industry still has a macho “don’t ask for help” culture.*

IV. Questions for the panel:

A. Identify the size and scope of the problem. What are the greatest downsides caused by the mental health stigma that you have seen in the workplace for individuals and, alternatively, for companies?

B. Identify the factors that keep stigma reduction efforts from moving the dial. Other than the typical social barrier, what other barriers have you seen that stopped employees from seeking help?

C. Having identified the problems, identify the best practice solutions and pitfalls for employers. What are your go-to best practices for helping clients ensure that they reduce the stigma and encourage employees to get help?

D. Identify the “coming attractions” best practices. What are the areas that are being developed in terms of systems or processes for employers or clients to use to encourage employees to use the FMLA and ADA processes?

E. Identify take-away message for audience. What sort of message should our audience be taking from this session and delivering to their C-suite executives and HR staff to drive these messages home?

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V. Helpful Resources:

A. *Mental Health Resources – Industry*

1. American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP): www.assp.org
2. Associated General Contractors of America, Missouri: www.agcmo.org/
3. Prevent Suicide Construction: www.preventconstructionsuicide.com
4. Working Minds: www.constructionworkingminds.org
5. Man Therapy: www.mantherapy.org
6. Construction Financial Management Association (CFMA):
www.cfma.org/suicideprevention#suicidepreventioncfma

B. *Training/Awareness*

1. QPR Institute: qprinstitute.com
2. MHFA Training: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org
3. ICU Program: workplacementalhealth.org/employer-resources/icu
4. Mental Health America (Wisconsin): <http://www.mhawisconsin.org>
5. National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org

C. *Support*

1. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
2. Hopeline: Text HOPELINE to 741741
3. Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
4. Your organization's Employee Assistance Program

VI. Conclusions and Questions.