Using Calm To Aid Mental Well-Being and Reduce Stigma in the Workplace
Calm — Using Calm To Aid Mental Well-Being and Reduce Stigma in the Workplace

Colin Jansen, the Manager of International Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (D&I) at The Kraft Heinz Company, had a big task to carry out on top of his main duties: orchestrating the introduction of Calm to a select group of employees as part of a pilot mental well-being program.

The Kraft Heinz Company is one of the largest food and beverage companies in the world, producing some of the world’s best-known household staples and emerging brands. All of this is made possible by their diverse global team and their dedication to sustainability, accountability, and putting people first.
At Kraft Heinz International, the DI&B team are dedicated to actively creating an open, supportive workplace where everyone feels welcome and empowered to do their best.

Caring for employee mental health and well-being is a big part of that.

“Underrepresented groups tend to face more mental well-being challenges than privileged groups,” says Colin. “There’s additional pressure there, and it really has an impact. On the flip side, there’s also stigma around mental health in the working world—which means these underrepresented groups can face twice the difficulty compared to other groups. So, in order to truly be diverse and inclusive, we need to address the stigma, address the bias, and do what we can to make sure people are supported.”

So what does that look like in practice?

At Kraft Heinz International, they take an extended approach to the standard idea of diversity and inclusion by adding “belonging.”

Diversity:
Hiring a diverse workforce

Inclusion:
Making sure everyone has a seat at the table

Belonging:
Making sure everyone feels like they have a place in the company and are free to be their true selves

This addition shapes the way that they approach their employees—and sets the stage for their focus on mental wellness.

“We think it’s important not just to hire diversely, but to make sure that the people we hire are happy, feel like they fit in and are appreciated,” says Colin. “And we’re a stronger company for it.”
The company already had a strong culture that prioritized employee well-being, but they needed an additional way to support employees’ mental health and wellness. This became especially relevant as the pandemic put significant pressure on everyone.

Their People and Performance division and the interest-focused business resource groups were already making strides in this area. But Colin and the DI&B team wanted to be able to offer more.

They wanted a resource that could help employees at all points on the mental wellness spectrum deal with added stress and build their resilience.

That’s where Calm for Business came in.

A bold mission

Calm was initially introduced to Kraft Heinz International as part of a pilot program.

Colin and the DI&B team were already familiar with the benefits of mindfulness and the importance of mental wellness. The Director of Diversity was a long-term Calm user, while Colin himself would regularly meditate to de-stress. They knew that everyone could gain something from the Calm app, which offers mindfulness, relaxing music, sleep aids, and gentle body stretches— they just needed to make the idea more accessible to people.

“Mindfulness comes in all forms. In theory, you can be mindful when going for a walk, or spending time with your kids, or on holiday. It’s a mindset thing,” says Colin. “Everyone has to find a way to make mindfulness relate to them, both in the workplace and in home life—and diverse tools like Calm can help with that.”

A pilot program that took off

The UK office was the first to get the subscription, followed by the Netherlands. They were seeing real results (from the time of launch and beyond) in the employees who were using Calm, and they wanted others to benefit.

They crafted tailored communications for employees, using Calm resources. Then, with the help of the Calm for Business team, they ran a dedicated mindfulness webinar along with a month-long meditation challenge. All the activities encouraged people to build good habits and explore the depth and breadth of what the app had to offer.

Engagement levels soon rose and feedback began to pour in.
Warmly received

Calm was widely embraced by those who took part in the pilot program.

“People have been really excited about it. They use Calm to meditate, to de-stress, things like that,” says Colin. “Even though we’re all working from home, I had people reaching out to tell me how much they enjoy it, how useful they find it. And we’re also getting clear usage numbers from the Calm team, which supports the anecdotal results we’re seeing.”

At last count, 40% of the UK team use Calm—and engagement in the Dutch team is reaching that level too. “The numbers are great,” explains Colin. “Because when you have a population of, let’s say, 400 people… if half of them are using Calm, that’s huge. So, for us, this is a very good result.”

This success has helped to substantiate the team’s stance on the organizational benefits of a wellness tool. Now they have hopes that Calm for Business can be rolled out on a larger scale.

“Doing it this way meant we could show management a clear proof of concept, with results,” adds Colin. “The feedback that we receive from employees has been crucial.”
Colin believes Calm is a great tool to help people ease into meditation and mindfulness—and also build other important coping and resilience skills along the way.

“I do believe Calm—and mindfulness—is having a positive impact on our employees’ mental well-being and resilience. Providing Calm (as an employer) also signals that this is something that we believe in and care about as a company. It helps to set the right culture.”

Calm—and the greater attention to mental health and well-being at Kraft Heinz International—is also helping to open up dialogue, make people more aware, and reduce the stigma around mental health challenges.

“It’s a difficult conversation to have, but we need to talk about it,” Colin says. “Speaking out about mental health and wellness has a real positive impact.”

It’s an ongoing journey and there’s still lots to be done, but Colin is optimistic about the future of mental health awareness in the workplace—and of Calm in Kraft Heinz.

“There are still a lot of managers and employers out there who don’t yet recognize the value of this kind of extended care. But we’re getting there,” says Colin.

“It will require a societal shift. We need to remove the stigma of people taking care of their mental health. But the more conversations we have about this—and the more mainstream that wellness becomes—the faster we’ll progress.”

“Speaking out about mental health and wellness has a real positive impact.”
Calm for Business can help your employees stress less, sleep better, and build their resilience.

Book a demo today

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