

Prioritise your people for the well-being of your business

By [Colin Timmis](#)

15 Sep 2022

The fifth annual [State of South Africa Small Business report 2022](#) by Xero found that 95% of business owners have experienced stress in running their businesses. Undoubtedly every late payment, supply chain issue, and government decision over the past two years has placed additional stress on the owners of small businesses.



Image source: Dmitry Shironosov – [123RF.com](#)

These challenges have left a tremendous negative impact on their mental health, with 96% of respondents citing a direct correlation between work stress and their overall mental health. Fortunately, most small businesses recognise its importance. In the survey, nearly all (94%) said the mental health and well-being of their employees is a top priority and of that group, 74% have actively worked to destigmatise discussion of mental health.

It's also very encouraging to see that despite the impact of stress on mental health, 87% of small businesses are still feeling optimistic about their outlook for 2022, and 34% are planning to grow into new markets in the year ahead.

Usually when we think about running a successful business, we think about profit, efficiencies, choosing the right digital tools, marketing – the list goes on. These are all important, but an essential part of building a successful business is the people and culture. Now, more than ever we need to create a more connected and supportive environment for small businesses to keep this entrepreneurial wave and optimism going.

As an example, several of Xero's integration partners stepped up their support to small businesses by offering financial assistance and cash flow management to help reduce the stresses and mental health consequences brought on by the pandemic. This is a great example of how we as a business community have a responsibility to play our part in supporting small businesses, their teams and families.

Furthermore, for employing small businesses, their staff want to know that they are making a difference and working for a business that cares about its people more than its profits.



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You can't perform well at work if you're not in good health, so it's essential to take care of your physical and mental health. Here are some tips to help you and your employees to take care of your health:

Dedicate time to your well-being

Create space and focus on replenishing your emotional reservoirs. Consider setting a dedicated block of time aside every day to focus on doing something that makes you happy.

Reset and reboot

Everyone, including business owners, needs to take a break from work occasionally. Be sure not to let allotted holiday time go to waste, even if you spend it on individual days of much needed "me time" throughout the year.

Maintain the human touch

Human beings are social creatures, and it's important to surround yourself with 'real human' support and engagement. Consider setting up opportunities to meet and socialise with co-workers outside of the workplace. This is especially vital for people working remotely.

Heavy Chef's recent [report](#), supported by Xero, delves into the stresses that impact the well-being of entrepreneurs and offers some tried-and-tested techniques for entrepreneurs to help balance their work and life. One of these techniques is to role model (in an authentic way) the behaviours you find important. This may also take the form of mentorships by fostering a quality network of peers to help them cultivate a healthy approach to stress.

Be a mental health leader

Creating a healthy and supportive workplace is good for everyone. While small business owners have a lot on their plate already, it's important to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable discussing and caring for their well-being.

Set a positive tone through simple actions such as encouraging full lunch breaks and enforcing defined business hours to avoid overworking. Employees often look to your behaviour as an example, so it's important you adhere to these too. For sole traders, treat yourself as you would want to be treated as an employee.

Speak regularly with team members to see how they're doing and to reflect on how the job might be causing them stress.

We spend much of our time at work, so we need to prioritise mental well-being to ensure we're making the most of our day. Looking after our mental health, combined with having a strong sense of purpose at work are key drivers of business success.

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