



**Small business health insurance.
Better for business**

Power the performance of your business

**Make the connection between the
health and wellbeing of your team
and the success of your business.**

Introduction

Today's small businesses are juggling numerous priorities ranging from managing cash flow and operations, to boosting sales and nurturing a positive workplace culture. On top of this, there are also tricky factors to deal with, like unpredictable market forces, the cost-of-living-crisis, supply chain issues and employee absenteeism.

In response to these pressures, many companies are adopting new decision-making approaches. And recognising how each area of your business impacts on the others is vital. Equally important is pinpointing the factors that could hinder or drive the progress of your business.

Forward-thinking business leaders know that making investments in the health and wellbeing of employees will help make their business more resilient – and increase their business advantage.

Nurturing a culture of collaboration and innovation will also help them thrive. By creating a team fully committed to the same growth goals, they can improve recruitment and retention rates as well as improve productivity and business performance.

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The challenges facing today's SMEs

Modern small businesses are overwhelmed with the challenges that face them. These include:

Attracting and retaining talent

When looking for a new job 60% of people consider compensation and benefits as a top priority¹. And what they feel about the nature of those benefits is evolving.

With 70% of SMEs already offering health and wellbeing benefits to employees², this is now becoming expected rather than a 'nice-to-have' in an employment package. The same applies for those joining smaller companies.

In addition to seeking employers with strong, diverse and inclusive cultures, employee needs are evolving. When searching for a new job or deciding whether to stay with a current one, candidates work through a list of most desired benefits, including flexible working, mental health support and a private healthcare plan³.

Meeting changing expectations

While looking inward is key, a truly connected business looks at their service offer through the lens of the customer. Are you fully meeting their expectations? Are there opportunities to improve processes? Do customers need to see themselves reflected more in your workforce?

If so, does this potentially mean bringing in older employees, or individuals with wider-ranging personal needs?

SMEs also continue to face the impact of hybrid working patterns and the desire for flexible working conditions. 39% of workers now seek flexi-time from their employer, allowing them to better balance their home and working life and offer the potential for reducing stress levels or managing mental health⁴.

Whether your team work on site or remotely, and whatever their role, there are basic requirements, values and a sense of belonging that people are looking for today.

By offering employees meaningful, practical benefits that improve quality of life and respond to diverse needs, businesses have an opportunity to stand apart from competitors and attract and retain the best people.

When looking for a new job 60% of people consider compensation and benefits as a top priority¹.



¹2022 global talent trends. LinkedIn.

²Bupa internal research. Bupa.

³What benefits would you most like with your job? Bionic.

⁴Make flexible working requests a day-one right. CIPD.

Addressing absenteeism and presenteeism

In 2022, an estimated 185.6 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury. The percentage of working hours lost also rose to 2.6%. This is the highest it's been since 2004⁵. This has a big impact on businesses, potentially leading to decreased productivity and deadlines missed due to employee absences. Being able to meet and respond quickly to diverse healthcare needs could help reduce the business impact of both short- and long-term employee absence.

There is also the question of presenteeism to consider. This is when employees show up to work despite being unwell, either driven by a desire to push through their sickness or out of fear of potential consequences. Apart from the risk of spreading infections to the team, working when ill can worsen both physical and mental illnesses. But crucially, it can also drive down productivity⁶.

Presenteeism can have a negative influence on organisations and it has been on the rise since the pandemic⁷. This hits small businesses particularly hard as the impact of people not contributing in the workplace will be felt more in a leaner team with fewer resources. Implementing a workplace culture and policies that support people to look after their health and wellbeing is one way to reduce presenteeism.

A business that is openly empathetic and quick to recognise that people perform better when they are fit and healthy is setting itself up for success. Working longer hours or being digitally 'always on' does not actually equate to increased productivity⁸. So seeking other ways to encourage and measure commitment are important.

Increasing market pressures

Staying strong and continuing to grow in the face of market pressures is tough. Most small business owners have concerns about the falling demand for goods and services, followed by inflation of prices and energy bills⁹.

The rising cost of living has equally had a trickle-down effect. 82% of the 1,472 SME leaders who took part in a Lloyds Client 360 survey said it was having a negative impact on their businesses¹⁰.

To combat market pressures, SME teams need to adopt a growth mindset and maintain the ability to innovate and rise above their competitors by being responsive to change. A fully engaged workforce is central to this.

Staying positive in the face of rising costs

As increasing expenses continue to impact the majority of small businesses (89%), with almost two out of five (38%) experiencing cost hikes of over 10%, the Federation of Small Businesses have reported a growing sense of pessimism among owners who anticipate a decline in revenue¹¹.

But optimism is essential and business owners have an opportunity to create a good example for their employees to follow. Boosting resilience, productivity and wellbeing¹² is most effective when it is led from the top. This makes a strong case for supporting the mental health and resilience of business owners and leaders as well as staff.



In 2022, an estimated 185.6 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury⁵.

⁵Sickness absence in the UK labour market: 2022. GOV.UK.

⁶Mental health conditions, work and the workplace. HSE.

⁷Why presenteeism wins out over productivity. BBC.

⁸How to break the chains of presenteeism. Forbes.

⁹Business insights and impact on the UK economy. GOV.UK.

¹⁰The top challenges for UK SMEs in 2023. Lloyds Banking Group.

¹¹Rising costs and falling revenues causing worst small business pessimism outside lockdowns, new figures reveal. FSB.

¹²Optimism and its impact on mental health. Department of Homeland Security.

The high-performing connected business

Creating a connected business, with a full-circle approach to management, is an excellent way to navigate challenges and unlock value in a small, growing business. By identifying how key elements impact other areas of a company, priorities can be dealt with promptly. Efficiencies and opportunities can also be realised to form a robust, cohesive and innovative business with a healthy advantage.

Performance and productivity

Businesses of all sizes and sectors have the potential to enhance customer and employee satisfaction. The same is true of profitability, by embracing more holistic approaches to their operation.

When every area of your business is aligned, it's easier to meet your business goals. Realising improvements in any area – such as product development or customer service – is easier when your people are engaged and committed to delivering change throughout¹³.

The health and wellbeing of your employees is a key factor in this. With wellness programmes giving them a 'reason to believe', alongside removing or reducing barriers to productivity, such as stress or burnout¹⁴.

Improving employee engagement

Creating meaningful engagement involves establishing a connection on every level.

This begins with a greater focus on approaches that promote a strong and inclusive culture around wellbeing. It also involves creating opportunities across teams to contribute to business success.



There is a direct connection between company culture and business success¹⁶.

¹³Employee engagement. Gallup.

¹⁴20 Impactful workplace wellness statistics in 2023. Workhuman.

Companies are seeing the benefit of focusing on creating a healthy and happy working environment, with significant growth in the number of job titles referencing culture or wellbeing¹⁵.

Why? There is a direct connection between company culture and business success¹⁶. Going beyond simple measures like providing a weekly fruit bowl, more effective actions include fostering openness and recognition, as well as promoting a shared responsibility toward shared objectives.

The recognition of diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) as a factor for success is also growing, with the global spend on DEI-related activities on the rise¹⁷.

Why? Not only are diverse teams typically more resilient, businesses with a 'diversity and inclusion' team are 22% more likely to be seen as 'an industry-leading company with high-calibre talent'¹⁸. An increase in reputation can help companies attract the kind of candidates they really need¹⁹.

More businesses are investing in a person-first approach, creating connections within their teams.

Why? When businesses facilitate collaboration and the deliberate establishment of connections among employees, the likelihood of those employees feeling connected to their colleagues increases twelvefold. Consequently, these teams are five times more likely to be high-performing²⁰.

Teams are five times more likely to be high-performing if employees feel connected to their colleagues²⁰.

¹⁵Why every company needs a Chief Happiness Officer. LinkedIn.

¹⁶Top five ways great company culture drives business success. Forbes.

¹⁷Diversity, equity and inclusion lighthouses 2023. McKinsey and Company.

¹⁸The rise of diversity and inclusion roles. LinkedIn.

¹⁹The most important employer branding statistics to know. Glassdoor.

²⁰9 trends that will shape work in 2023 and beyond. Harvard Business Review.

²¹State of the global workplace: 2023 report. Gallup.

The value of benefits in recruitment and retention

With 51% of the workforce watching for, or actively seeking, a new job²¹ it can be a battle for SMEs to retain the talent they've spent time and money training up and investing in their development. Offering attractive benefits is an important tool in retaining talent and an advantage when candidates are weighing up their options.



Create a connected culture

Looking after the people who underpin every area of your business helps to create the shared values and growth mindsets that support businesses to thrive.

Culture, recruitment and retention

Onboarding staff, and retaining them, can come down to how respected and valued they feel. Equally important is their ability to establish a strong rapport with leadership, resonate with company values and appreciate the benefits provided.

Over half of employees would be willing to take a pay cut to work at a company with better values²². And strong cultures drive better business outcomes, including revenue, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction²³. When it comes to recruitment and retention, benefits like health insurance are almost as important as salary to most employees²⁴.

Good benefits come into their own when times are tough. 88% of employees say that when money is tight, having benefits that cover their fundamental needs are even more important²⁵. Often, it's not lavish bonuses or parties that make people feel valued and motivated. Small investments in improving work environments, modest and relevant perks, or just recognition from shout-outs can build resilience. Benefits such as healthcare, mental health support and practical help show a commitment to employee wellbeing, even when budgets are constrained.

²²For employees, shared values matter more than policy positions. Qualtrics.

²³Organisational culture: it's time to take action. PWC

²⁴12 employee benefits and perks for your hiring and retention plan. Roberthalf.

²⁵Remote's global benefits report 2022. Remote.

²⁶How to build a high-trust workplace. MIT sloan.

²⁷Are your company values more than just words? Gallup.

Building connections, loyalty and shared values

SMEs that share the good times as well as the bad will build trust, improving employee loyalty and motivation²⁶. From bonuses and other rewards in growth periods, to support during personal health or wellbeing crises, how a business behaves has a direct effect on how staff feel.

When SMEs have strong values and a company mission that makes people feel their job is contributing to something bigger, employees can see tangible benefits. And crucially, this is backed up by actions. Gallup found that only four in 10 employees felt aligned with their company's values.

But if that ratio was increased to eight in 10, they could achieve 41% lower absenteeism, 50% fewer safety incidents and a 33% improvement in quality of outputs²⁷.

Fostering a growth mindset, creating opportunities for teams to collaborate or contribute to business innovation and overall success will also go a long way.

Boost team connection

Smart hacks for a connected strategy on a budget

Start implementing a connected strategy by focusing on shared values, benefits and goals across your business. You don't need to have large budgets to show your people they're valued.

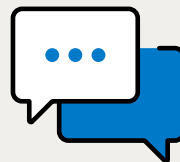
Here's a checklist of practical hacks that will benefit your team, and your business:



1. Build a great culture

A positive culture always pays off when it comes to productivity and retention. Social events and away days are great, but so are involving your staff in establishing the building blocks to your business's strategy. Culture should be collaborative, and not come from the top down.

What you can do now: Start by defining your business's shared purpose and values. Create a Culture Team to work on this together.



2. Be transparent

Create an inclusive environment, and establish positive ways of working with new and existing staff, so your people can see clearly where their efforts go, and buy-in to your common goals.

What you can do now: Create and share an employee handbook that communicates your policies, codes of conduct and shared purpose and company values.



3. Seek accreditations

Alongside your professional endorsements, showcasing accreditations such as Living Wage, BCorp or Disability Confident status demonstrates to potential talent that your commitment to people is substantial.

What you can do now: Investigate which accreditations you think might be achievable and which would add the most value to your business.



4. Let the team lead

Strong leadership is key, but creating an environment for contribution and letting the team run with it is more important – culture and business innovation can, and should, be owned by everyone. Bringing your team together to share ideas, and to have fun together will see the business feel it too.

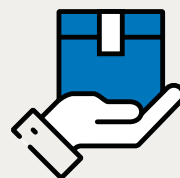
What you can do now: Plan a team-building session, schedule in things like Learning Lunches where people talk about a personal passion, or Blue Sky Strategy Sessions to unlock a challenge the business is facing. Delegate other people to lead and take charge of these sessions.



5. Introduce rewards and recognition

Showing your employees that you appreciate them can boost morale, increase engagement and foster loyalty.

What you can do now: Introduce an Employee of the Month programme. Offer bonuses or days off for high-performance and outstanding work. Birthdays or anniversaries can also be highlighted.



6. Offer employee benefits

'Soft' benefits can sometimes make as big an impact as the paying of a competitive salary and additional bonuses.

What you can do now: Consider things such as subsidised gym memberships, yoga classes or bringing in a snack box scheme.



7. Support wellbeing and health

Provide your team with health insurance to keep them at their best, mentally and physically. Not only will you cut absenteeism, but your employees will be happier, more loyal and more productive.

What you can do now: Investigate the **Bupa Academy** for small businesses where you can keep up to date on innovative ways to look after yourself and your team.



8. Put your own oxygen mask on first

The wellbeing of a business's founder can directly impact the company's overall health. A leader struggling with mental health issues may find it difficult to make effective decisions, communicate clearly and lead with resilience²⁸.

What you can do now: Explore **Bupa Growth+** and the Business Owner Wellbeing Service, a dedicated initiative designed to offer small business leaders convenient access to healthcare professionals with just one phone number.



9. Strengthen HR policies

Make sure your team knows what's expected of them, with up-to-date, clear and well-defined HR policies.

What you can do now: Begin by drafting the most important HR policies such as Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination, Code of Conduct and Ethics, Workplace Health and Safety, Termination and Resignation. This can be supported by **Bupa Growth+**, and our partnership with Worknest, where you get access to resources and help you to establish a strong foundation for your business's HR needs.



10. Offer flexibility

If it aligns with your business model, consider providing and clearly communicating flexible and hybrid work options. This empowers your staff and allows them to choose what works best for them.

What you can do now: Speak to your team and see what works for them. Then use the fantastic resources that **Bupa Growth+** offers to craft a bespoke policy that suits you and your business. Don't forget to communicate the policy back to your team.

²⁸ Worrying data about business owners' struggles with mental health revealed. BACP.

Power your performance with Bupa

Bupa can help you create the connections your business needs, from training and support for you, to practical benefits for your employees. Understanding that all areas of your business need to be able to work together is key. Just as vital is facilitating your employees' understanding of this connection, ensuring that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Seeing the bigger picture

From meeting your customer needs all the way through to improving operational efficiencies, taking a top-down view can help you make the right choices for your business.

Learn what makes a business stronger and more efficient with training from the **Bupa Academy** for small businesses. Then make smarter changes to support your employees with:



Ways to improve your culture

A strong workplace culture is one that knows how to appreciate its employees and play to your business's strengths. Discover how to juggle priorities and where to best put your efforts.

From communicating your company values to staff, to making sure you're on top of paperwork. Get the knowledge you need to improve your culture, with deep dives into resilience, retention and recognition from **Bupa Academy**.



End-to-end healthcare

Providing direct access to fast, end-to-end health and wellbeing care for your people has a direct impact on the motivation and commitment your business needs to operate efficiently and successfully.

At Bupa, we reduce inefficiencies, delays and waiting time, delivering fast, seamless healthcare. Employees are happier, healthier and back to their best more quickly.

It starts with 24/7 access to healthcare guidance at your fingertips and scheduling GP appointments within 24 hours.

With our new mental health service, your people can get treatment started in under 10 days. And by focusing on preventative care and tackling aches and pains earlier, our new MSK service cuts treatment costs by 20%.

At Bupa, we continue to develop the innovative ways we deliver healthcare to achieve better outcomes for your people and your business.



Real benefits for employees

Offer practical support for the challenges your employees face with **Bupa small business health insurance**.

Small business employees that have Bupa cover enjoy access to commonly needed support. In the past year, 72% accessed MSK support, 23% received support for cancer and 21% got help with their mental health²⁹. Health insurance stands out as a prime benefit looked for by potential employees, with 63% actively seeking dental coverage and 62% specifically valuing healthcare provisions as a motivating factor³⁰.



Ways to improve wellbeing and reduce stress

Access support for business-related stress with **Bupa Growth+**, free HR support and resources from WorkNest. Find out how to handle common HR processes as well as guidance for tricky situations. Perfect if you don't have a dedicated HR department.

With **Bupa small business health insurance**, you can also access mental health treatment for business owners and decision makers, to help you stay at your best and drive your business forward.

²⁹Bupa internal figures. Bupa.

³⁰Bupa wellbeing index 2023: healthy planet, healthy people. Bupa.

Business health is making the connection

Ready to hear how Bupa can help you
power the performance of your business?

Ready to invest in your team's health
and wellbeing?

Get in touch today or find out
more at bupa.co.uk/small-business

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Arranged and administered by Bupa Insurance Services Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered in England and Wales with registration number 3829851.

Registered office: 1 Angel Court, London, EC2R 7HJ.

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OCT23 BINS 13062

