

20 Years Ago, Words of Change
CEO-Led Business Plan to Defeat Depression

On July 20, 2000, the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health released the first Business Plan to Defeat Depression in a news conference in Toronto and Geneva. The entire plan is posted on this site.

One of the features of the plan at the time, two decades ago, what the new language used to describe how business should go about promoting mental health in the workplace. Here are examples:

“Target Depression Financially:”

An unheard-of concept at the time. The point, establish financial targets to measure progress as in any other business action.

“The Dollar Value of Healthy Work Climates”

Same point. In this case, establish the financial value of reducing the treadmill effect at work which was exacerbated by the recent introduction of personal computers.

E-Mail Enslavement

Only a few years since personal computers took hold at work, evidence was already mounting that overuse of this technology was causing stress and frustration.

The Physics of Depression

We actually meant the physicality of depression. Around this time, we were just learning that mental illness increased the risks of heart attack.

Inventory of Emotional Hazards

We began to see that chronic job stress was as much of a hazard to the health and safety of employees as physical equipment failure and accidents on the plant floor.

Health-Based Productivity

We introduced the idea of calculating the impact and loss of productivity at work based in the degree to which employees could use their mental skills.

Behind this language was a whole new way of approaching the management of workplaces and the strategic necessity of creating work climates where people felt safe and motivated. That was 2000. Twenty years later, the same principle applies.
