



# MAKING A WINNING PITCH

Tips for Young Professionals Advocating for  
Mental Health Initiatives in the Workplace



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Are you a young professional looking to advocate for mental health initiatives in your workplace? You're not alone. Gen Z professionals report **higher levels** of stress, anxiety, depression and burnout compared to other generations, making mental health is a top priority for young workers. While speaking up about it can feel daunting, many Gen Z workers feel **moral obligated** to do so.

To help you make a compelling case to senior leadership, we've put together some tips with insights from Bob Pragada, CEO of Jacobs and Dr. Lauren Smith, Chief Health Equity Officer of the CDC Foundation.

To hear more, check out a recording of the **Workplace Mental Health Action Summit 2.0**.



**[To advocate for mental health], one needs to have a tremendous amount of courage, especially in light of the stigma that still exists. So believe in yourself and have confidence that you are doing the right thing.**

**Bob Pragada**  
CEO, Jacobs

## Do your homework.

Engage with team members at your company and utilize assessment data to identify the unique mental health needs at your company. Research **evidence-based practices** and conduct a landscape analysis to determine what other companies are doing to address similar needs.

## Define the business case.

Use tools like the National Safety Council's **Mental Health Cost Calculator** to estimate what mental health issues are costing your company. On average, companies see a **\$4 return on investment** for every dollar spent on mental health. You can also use the Business Case from the **Workplace Mental Health Playbook** as a starting point to tailor your pitch.

## Define clear, measurable goals.

Set ambitious, but achievable benchmarks. Whenever possible, demonstrate how other companies have achieved desirable outcomes from similar practices and how those outcomes impacted company performance and the bottom line.



## □ Outline a plan for success.

Consider the financial, operational and personnel commitments necessary to execute a mental health initiative at your company. Find opportunities to align your initiative with existing efforts or investments.



**Have a plan. Leaders like to have issues brought to them with potential solutions as well.**

**Bob Pragada**  
CEO, Jacobs

## □ Align your goals with company values and strategic priorities.

Talk with leaders at your company to understand their priorities, enabling you to demonstrate how your mental health strategy can contribute to achieving these results.



**Be able to make an argument for why this is both in the best interest [of the company] and why this is aligned with the mission of the company.**

**Dr. Lauren Smith**  
Chief Health Equity Officer, CDC Foundation

## □ Get feedback and buy-in from others.

Before presenting your plan, solicit and incorporate feedback from other employees at your company to ensure your strategy resonates with their needs.

## □ Choose the right timing.

Making your pitch prior to a strategic planning session or a budget review can help your leadership successfully incorporate your mental health plan.

## □ Invite leadership input.

Approach your pitch as an opportunity for collaboration, allowing leadership to weigh in. This will improve buy-in and aligns your proposal with existing leadership priorities for successful execution.

## □ Don't give up.

Recognize that recommendations may take time to consider and implement at your company. Continue to follow up and advocate for your plan.



**It is the right thing to do to address [mental health] head-on. So number one, don't quit. If you get a no, go back. If you get another no, go back again.**

**Bob Pragada**  
CEO, Jacobs

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