MEDIA RELEASE

Xero launches wellbeing check in for Kiwi small businesses

Since Alert Level 4 lockdown in March, 58% of small business employees have not talked about wellbeing in their workplace.

Wellington, New Zealand — September 2, 2020 — Xero, the global small business platform, is encouraging all Kiwi small business owners to take part in a series of simple steps to check in on the wellbeing of their team during September.

The Check In consists of quick and easy activities that don’t require a lot of time or money and help leaders to get to know their team, foster stronger connections, support others to look after themselves and make it okay to ask for help. It also includes additional wellbeing resources and policy guides for small businesses that want to take wellbeing further.

The initiative comes after research revealed that since the country’s first Alert Level 4 lockdown in March, 58% of small business employees have not talked about wellbeing in their workplace and more than a third (36%) of Kiwi small businesses employees haven’t been offered any wellbeing support.

Craig Hudson, Managing Director for New Zealand and Pacific Islands at Xero, says it can be really hard to know where to start but there is a clear benefit for all small businesses to address wellbeing in the workplace.

“The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our small business industry is far-reaching - impacting wellbeing and inflating the stresses many of us feel day-to-day. All workplaces play a central role in building people’s resilience and positive wellbeing, helping them to be healthy, contributing members to their families and communities,” says Hudson.

According to the survey, 36.4% of SME employees would actively like more personal wellbeing support from their employer, while 56% of Kiwi employees would make use of a wellbeing and support programme if it was available at their workplace.

“This is particularly timely considering we’ve seen the re-emergence of COVID-19 in our communities, which has led to another lockdown situation across certain regions of New Zealand - including Alert Level 3 in Auckland, affecting more than 1.6 million Kiwis.”

Furthermore, 52.9% of small business team members are experiencing increased anxiety due to financial hardship and more than a quarter of the small business workforce (26.2%) said their mental wellbeing suffered during the March/April lockdown.

“2020 has been a year unlike anything we could have imagined and it’s important we address the pressure this has put New Zealanders under.
“After specialist mental health services and primary health care, workplaces are the next biggest place of mental wellness support in the country, and 97% of New Zealand businesses are small businesses. So it’s vital that small businesses know what to do and how simple it can be,” says Hudson.

“We need to take a look at how we address wellbeing. Whether it’s mental, physical or spiritual, it all works together to give people a sense of self-satisfaction and happiness – and if this is lacking, it can lead to huge problems.

“In 2019, we launched the Xero Assistance Programme (XAP), a free and confidential wellbeing support service to approximately 850,000 New Zealand small business owners, their employees and families. It gives users access to face-to-face, telephone, live chat and online counselling.

“But if wellbeing isn’t being acknowledged in your workplace, you probably aren’t going to be confident to take up this service, that’s why we’ve created The Check In,” concludes Hudson.

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Media Contact
Xero New Zealand
Natalie Benning
021 026 19604
natalie.benning@xero.com

About The Check In
Xero has designed The Check In based on what it’s learnt running a best practice wellbeing programme internally and sought advice from wellbeing experts to ensure it was purpose built for SMEs.

Access all the resources here: xero.com/nz/resources/the-check-in

Why Wellbeing?
Facts about the financial benefit of addressing wellbeing:

- Every dollar spent on mental health services in New Zealand will repay the nation with $3.50 in productivity gains and other savings.¹
- New Zealand lost 7.4 million working days and $1.79 billion due to absence in 2018.²
- Organisations that prioritise employee engagement and wellbeing outperform the industry average by approximately 10% on the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index.³

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¹ “For example, for every $1 spent treating depression, $2.50 of productivity is restored and $1 of physical health care cost is saved.” - He Ara Oranga Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction.
³ Mentalhealth.org factsheet.
A Deloitte study in the UK found mental health awareness and proactive intervention can result in an ROI of up to £8.40 for every £1 spent, while reactive support can result in an ROI of up to £5.10 for every £1 spent.\(^4\)

**About Xero**

Xero provides a beautiful and easy-to-use cloud-based accounting software service for small businesses and their advisors around the world. Xero connects more than two million subscribers with an ecosystem of over 800 third-party apps and 200 plus connections to banks and financial service providers. The IDC MarketScape recognised Xero as a Leader in the Worldwide SaaS and Cloud-Enabled Small Business Finance and Accounting Applications 2020 Vendor Assessment. On the 2020 Financial Times High-Growth Companies Asia Pacific list, Xero was the largest company by revenue to come from New Zealand or Australia. Xero has also been included in the 2020 Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index.

\(^4\) Deloitte: Mental health and employers, January 2020.