

Mental health management: How Sanctus can support your employees

Creating a system to support and maintain your employees' mental health is absolute crucial: it isn't something that should linger long on the to do list. Sanctus wants to help businesses offer such support as commonly as they do with gym memberships. Maddyness finds out more.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What is Sanctus?

James: Sanctus is a movement towards a world where we work on our mental health like we do our physical health. Our mission is to inspire that movement and we have a vision to put the world's first mental health gym on the high street.

We want a world where quality mental health support is accessible and open to us all. For so long, mental health has been covered in shame and has been a taboo topic: we want to completely transform that and show that we all have mental health, all of the time.

It's not something to be afraid of, it's something to be interested in, and there's a huge benefit to working on your mental health, just like there is with your health and fitness.

How did you evolve the business from its blog origins back in 2016?

James: I didn't really want to start another business after shutting down my first one: I felt wounded and hurt from that journey. Yet Sanctus felt different – it felt totally organic and desperately needed.

After I first told my story, I just kept writing and speaking out and I didn't stop. From there, our community grew organically and I found the first Sanctus Coaches who had the skills, knowledge and experience to support people with their mental health.

We started creating group coaching and 1:1 coaching spaces together and eventually, businesses started to become interested in how we could support their employees. From there, referrals grew and grew. It's not all been plain sailing, yet it has felt really natural, which we believe is evidence that we're creating something the world really needs.

How have you funded the business?

James: We have raised investment from angel investors who supported my cofounder George and I to set up the business, and we've taken on more money here and there along the way.

Other than that, we've always wanted to make money and be sustainable from the start, so our customers have funded us by paying for Sanctus Coaching for their employees. But if we want to impact more people and reach more employees, we will need to continue to raise investment.



Chris Slater, CEO, and James Routledge, founder at Sanctus. © Sanctus

How did you come to partner with corporate customers such as KFC and The Body Coach?

James: When we partner with a business, we work closely with them to change their internal culture around mental health and then we offer Sanctus Coaching to their employees.

Sanctus Coaching is a 1:1 safe space for an individual to work proactively on their mental health with a Sanctus Coach. KFC came about because I used to work there ten years ago! The Body Coach came about from a referral: George got to know Joe and the COO Nikki as they wanted to support their team's mental health through the COVID pandemic.

How does it feel to partner on mental health with such big names?

James: It feels so good to reach more people with Sanctus Coaching! We want to create access to quality mental health support for as many people as possible, so when we partner with a big brand, we directly impact their employees and our movement grows.

The big names are nice, but ultimately for us it's about reaching people and making them feel comfortable and safe enough to go on their mental health journey with us.

How has the pandemic impacted your business?

Chris: Aside from the obvious impact of having to move our model to a virtual environment, and ensuring the safety and confidentiality of the space being retained for both coach and client, there have been a number of more subtle, yet important impacts felt of the pandemic on Sanctus and our team.

The demands of a virtual environment on the emotional safety of the team and our ability to connect on a deeper, relational level has challenged even the most supported members of the business.

A culture built on support has needed to respond and we continue to learn about how to do this in a 2D world; what conversations need to be had, what needs to be made more explicit, what communication channels are needed for people to feel connected.

A business built around a belief that human connection is where the magic happens continues to test different ideas to allow us to continue to

live through the work we do with each other and our partners.

Why is it important that companies invest in services to support employees' mental health?

Chris: We believe now more than ever, companies need to do whatever they can to support their employees' overall health, with their mental health being a critical part of the picture.

We are embarking upon a global, once-in-a-lifetime experiment about what it means to be at work and bringing into this a much clearer demand on what we individually want out of our work.

The challenges facing businesses in how to meet this demand and transition out of the pandemic are huge and, therefore, establishing support for employees through this transition just makes sense: it makes sense in terms of having employees connected with the conversation and engaging in the change. It makes sense when thinking about the financial impact on a business if they 'get it wrong'. It just makes sense in terms of the workplace holding the torch for what we have all learnt is important - a sense of belonging and a return to community.

How businesses can possibly think they can get the best out of their team without helping people know how to support themselves through this global change should be a topic on every Board.

James Routledge is founder and Chris Slater is CEO at [*Sanctus*](#).