

## **Case Study: Air Canada and Goldman Sachs**

### **Integrating Mental Health into High-Pressure Workplaces**

#### **1. Context and Rationale**

This case study examines how two large organisations in different high-pressure sectors – Air Canada (aviation) and Goldman Sachs (finance) – are integrating mental health into their core operations.

Both operate in environments characterised by long or irregular hours, high responsibility, and strong performance cultures. In such settings, unaddressed psychological strain can affect safety, decision-making, client service, and retention. Treating mental health as part of organisational risk and resilience, rather than simply a benefits issue, is therefore strategically significant.

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#### **2. Organisational Approaches**

##### **2.1 Air Canada – Mental Health as Health & Safety Infrastructure**

Air Canada embeds mental health within a broader health, safety and wellbeing framework. Key features include:

- **Integrated wellbeing programme**  
Mental, physical and social wellbeing initiatives sit under a single, identifiable framework. This positions psychological health alongside physical safety and reduces fragmentation.
- **Mental Health First Aid and peer support**  
Large numbers of employees are trained in Mental Health First Aid. These staff are equipped to recognise signs of distress, offer initial support, and guide colleagues towards formal help. They do not provide therapy but act as informed peers embedded across the organisation.
- **Accessible professional support**  
Employees and their families can access confidential counselling, an Employee and Family Assistance Program, and virtual healthcare/telemedicine. This design accommodates shift patterns and the operational realities of aviation.
- **Digital wellbeing hub**  
A central online hub consolidates self-help materials, expert content and mental health education, moving the focus from crisis-only response to ongoing learning and prevention.
- **External standards and certification**  
Air Canada has pursued external workplace mental health certification, requiring

evidence of policies, governance and implementation. This provides some assurance that programmes are structured and monitored.

## **2.2 Goldman Sachs – Mental Health Through Leadership and Capability**

Goldman Sachs offers an example of how a global financial institution can embed mental health into leadership expectations and team-level norms.

- **Mental Health First Aid network**  
Hundreds of employees globally are trained in Mental Health First Aid, forming a distributed peer support network. They provide confidential first-line support and act as a bridge to professional resources, with clear boundaries around their non-clinical role.
- **Mandatory mental health training for managers**  
Managers (for example, at vice president level and above) undertake mandatory mental health training. Typical content covers recognising behavioural changes, initiating supportive conversations, understanding role limits, and signposting to specialist support.
- **Broader wellbeing toolkit**  
Employees have access to digital wellbeing tools (e.g. mindfulness and resilience resources), employee assistance programmes, and internal content. Mental health is framed as directly linked to judgement, performance, and long-term career sustainability.
- **Leadership signalling and culture**  
Senior leaders communicate explicitly about mental health, emphasising that distress is a legitimate workplace concern and that early help-seeking is encouraged. This is important in a performance-driven culture where stigma can otherwise be a barrier.

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## **3. Interventions and Mechanisms**

Across both organisations, several common mechanisms can be identified:

- **Prevention and literacy**  
Training (e.g. Mental Health First Aid, manager education) increases mental health literacy and normalises discussion of stress, burnout and common conditions.
- **Early detection and peer response**  
Trained peers and managers create multiple points where early signs of difficulty can be noticed and addressed before they escalate.

- **Multiple access pathways**  
Employee assistance programmes, counselling, telemedicine and digital hubs provide several routes into support, reducing practical barriers related to time, location and working pattern.
  - **Governance and feedback loops**  
External standards and internal monitoring (e.g. utilisation, participation, feedback) support continuous improvement rather than one-off campaigns.
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#### 4. Key Findings and Implications for Finance

From a research perspective, the combined case suggests the following characteristics of organisations that treat mental health as a serious strategic issue:

1. **Positioning:** Mental health is framed as part of risk management, safety and resilience, not solely as an HR or benefits topic.
2. **Scale:** Training and support are delivered at scale (hundreds of staff trained), creating a critical mass of psychologically literate employees and managers.
3. **Accessibility:** Support is confidential, multi-channel and realistically accessible to people working long or irregular hours.
4. **Culture:** Leadership communication, peer networks and visible frameworks are used to shift norms around vulnerability and help-seeking.
5. **Evidence:** External validation and internal data are used to demonstrate implementation and guide ongoing refinement.

For financial institutions more broadly, this case study implies that meaningful mental health practice involves structured frameworks, leadership capability, and measurable standards, rather than isolated wellbeing activities.