

# BiziniNet



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MY CROWDED HOUR

# Introducing Our Contributors



## Bekir Kilic

Bekir Kilic is the Managing Director of PRO IT. Founded in 1999, PRO IT's objective is to provide an alternative to the conventional IT support and outsource services model for banking, finance and the media industries by focusing on understanding the clients core needs, can do attitude and close client/vendor relationship.

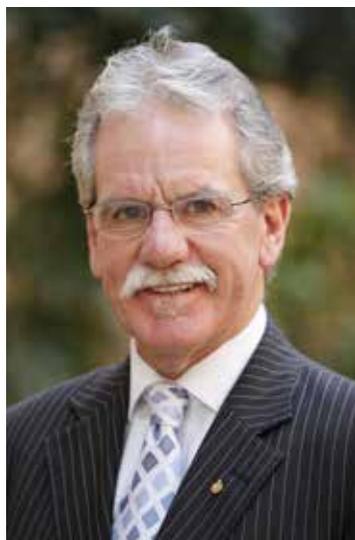
IT support and outsource services is delivered throughout all major cities located in Australia and New Zealand.

Today PRO IT provides data centre "smart & remote hands" for many multinational organisations.



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## Charlie Lynn

Charlie Lynn served in the Australian Army for 21 years. This included tours of duty in Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United States.

Charlie has led adventure treks across the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea for 21 years and has just completed his 78th crossing.

Charlie was elected to the NSW Parliament in 1995 and was the NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans' Affairs from 2011 until his retirement from Parliament in 2015. Although retired, he continues to lead treks across the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea!

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## Steven Brown

Steven Brown founded Etienne Lawyers in 2003. They are best described as having an 'International Reach with Small Firm Personal Service'.

With qualifications from Sydney and Macquarie Universities, Steven has gone on to have over 30 years in the law. With his own practice and a passion to help others succeed, Steven is a total professional, informing and educating along the way.

Steven specialises in all aspects of helping businesses to stay out of trouble and grow. He enjoys the cut and thrust of litigation and is a balanced negotiator for all alternative dispute resolution methods.



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## Rebecca Cushway

Rebecca Cushway is a Registered Organisational Psychologist and the Managing Director of Careers Excelled since 2005. Being about to support individuals, teams and organisations to create engagement, positive culture, develop their leaders and people is not only a passion for Rebecca but a privilege. Rebecca has 20 years experience as a psychologist, consultant and manager. Rebecca has worked with corporate and government clients, SMEs along with individuals and EAP programs over her working career.



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# Let's Talk Mental Health at Work



We are only starting to “touch the sides” when it comes to dealing with mental health issues. One in four of us will suffer with a diagnosable mental health condition over the course of our life and most of us will know or perhaps even live with sufferers. To make a dint in the looming impacts of workplace stress and mental health, leaders need to re-learn their ABCs... and Ds!

## A is for Awareness

Mental Health impacts us physically, emotionally, cognitively (thoughts), behaviourally and motivationally. The key to identifying whether someone may be unwell is to identify changes in these areas, from what is “normal” or “usual” for that person. Common signs include irritability, flat mood, lethargy, changes in appetite and disrupted sleep, social avoidance or withdrawal and reactivity. It is also important to pay attention to how often signs occur, how severe and how long they persist, and perhaps what might be triggering them.

Anyone at any time can experience distress and poor mental health for a whole range of reasons.

## B is for Boundaries

When we employ people we want the best person for the job who fits in and can perform under pressure. Legislation protects employees from having to disclose any form of illness, including mental illness. Once we are familiar with the signs of mental illness it becomes easier to identify.

As leaders we might be compelled to try and manage a person with a mental health issue. It is important to maintain boundaries to keep the employee and the leader safe. Here a few key principles that will assist you.

**1. Choice** – individuals have a choice to talk or not about their condition. They also have a choice to seek help or not seek help. However, there are consequences to all choices. Telling an employee that they must seek help for their psychological issue is unjust and not helpful. Encouragement is fine.

**2. Confidentiality** – If someone tells you they have a mental health issue, make it clear to them who you can tell, or who you need to tell. Don't promise confidentiality if you

can't keep it. Only break confidentiality when there is imminent danger of a person harming themselves or harming others. Under these circumstances safety comes first. In non-safety critical situations, get permission to share information and explain the impacts of not sharing the information. Ask the person what they want you to tell others and who you can tell.

**3. Safety** – Employers are responsible for managing the safety of all of their staff. In situations where there is potential or imminent danger of harm to employees, workplaces need to activate their safety plans. These may include, contacting police, Mobile Mental Health Teams, ambulances or EAP providers. Looking after bystanders who may be impacted is also critical.

Safety also includes ensuring the workplace is free from threats, physical and psychological harm. Having a strategy in place to deal with issues like workplace bullying and harassment and ensuring the culture is respectful is critical.

**4. Workplace Expectations** – Don't lower your standards or expectations when dealing with employees with mental health issues. Reducing standards for one person is stigmatising, and sends a message that you don't believe in them. Lowering standards could also isolate that person from their colleagues and can create resentment.

Team based solutions to time critical tasks are more effective. Re-tasking, offering flexibility and collaborating with the employee to come up with a plan is generally more useful and empowering.

Set your limits up-front when allowing people to work flexibly. Make sure the plan leaves the person with responsibility and accountability. Give and take is important. Additionally,

consider what flexible options you might be able to offer (reduced hours, working from home) and ensure you are able to offer these to others as required. Unfortunately sometimes performance management may be required, and should be fair, consistent and no surprise.

## C is for Conversations

Ignore it and it will go away, is not a helpful mantra when dealing with mental health issues. It is important that people are acknowledged even if they don't want to talk. Asking open questions like “Are you ok? I've noticed you don't seem yourself!” And “I'm here to talk if you ever want to!” Checking back in is a simple way to connect and encourage people.

Never use labels or make assumptions. Never give advice or try to solve the person's problem. The deal is to get them to a professional that can assist them. Having a simple, open and non-judgemental conversation, will not make the situation worse!

## D is for De-Stigmatise

We tend to categorise people as “normal” or “not”. Colloquial language can be dividing. Words like “psycho” or “crazy” or she is a “hypo” increase stigma, and makes it harder for people to ask for help when they need it most.

Consider asking a psychologist or mental health worker to facilitate information sessions for staff. Often sessions like these encourage people to seek help, rather than suffer in silence. 

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