

# Business and Government: Unlocking the power of successful collaboration during a crisis

Victoria Repa presents us the case of her health and wellness platform BetterMe which has successfully collaborated with WHO in Ukraine, the First Lady of Ukraine, and the NGO “Barrier Free” to create a digital self-help tool to support the mental health of many Ukrainians.

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It has been a long-standing practice for businesses to collaborate with governmental, non-governmental, and international organisations on various social initiatives. Both parties can join the efforts, attracting even more attention from the general public. Businesses gain trust and exercise social responsibility, while agility and creative solutions come into play on another side.

Nowadays, BetterMe is responsible not only for our company but also for our country's future. We had to transform within this new reality to become more socially responsible and emphatic. Here's what I learned about making such joint initiatives successful.

# Every crisis needs a practical solution

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to a significant mental health crisis within the country and triggered many others worldwide. The war is as much of a physical as a mental attack. According to research, 71% of Ukrainians experience stress or severe nervousness.

At the same time, only 5% of respondents have sought help from a mental health specialist. During wartime, access to such services can be limited — that's why digital tools can be the perfect and accessible solution to many.

With the outbreak of full scale-war, various free initiatives have emerged to support those experiencing anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and other mental health issues. For example, the internet platform Tell me is one example of such a solution — a free service offering 30 to 60-minute consultations to those experiencing a mental health emergency. However, Ukraine has also become an example of how businesses and governments can unite and respond to the people's needs in times of crisis.

## Defining the project: supply and demand

The demands of the population undergoing such a crisis are vast. To successfully collaborate on a social project, a business must define its area of strength. On the first day of full-scale war, I asked myself as the company's leader: how can BetterMe support people, our fellow Ukrainians? As a health and wellness platform with over 150 million users worldwide, we know how to offer effective digital solutions to help people care for their well-being.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has been leading by example in Europe: under the guidance of Olena Zelenska, our government has joint efforts with its partners to address the population's needs in mental health. Alleviating the psychological consequences of war has become as much of a priority as rebuilding homes or securing medicine supplies. BetterMe was willing to contribute to this national program with its expertise. Together with the WHO in Ukraine, the First Lady of Ukraine, and the NGO "Barrier Free," we launched a digital self-help tool called "Doing What Matters in Times of Stress." In this shared mission, we aimed to make the tool accessible to all Ukrainians and help them learn to cope with stress in a microlearning format.

With the help of expert knowledge from both sides, "Doing What Matters in Times of Stress" offers practical information on how to manage stress and

anxiety and transform negative thoughts into positive ones through interactive tests, exercises, and visualisations. On our end, we implemented this new section into our BetterMe: Mental Health app, which all Ukrainians have received free access to since the beginning of the full-scale war.

Oskar Braszczyński, Government & Social Impact Partner for CEE in Meta, shared the opinion that the ongoing war has an immense impact on the mental health of many Ukrainians, which is why Meta also supports such initiatives as BetterMe.

## Bring best practices from each side

Today, BetterMe's self-help tool has helped over 260,000 Ukrainians deal with the mental health crisis and alleviate the post-traumatic stress they're experiencing during this ongoing war. What makes this project unique is the collaboration between different parties: each brings their expertise in content, development, design, and distribution to the table. Everyone did their part, which made this project possible and helped Ukrainians cope with the psychological consequences of this war.

As a CEO and founder of BetterMe, I saw a newfound purpose in this project — it is essential for businesses to engage actively with their social mission. Russia's full-scale invasion evoked many crises which needed an immediate response. BetterMe initiated multiple solutions independently, from selling charity activewear collections to helping people affected by war. But implementing this tool is a great example of how businesses can make a positive social impact by working together with NGOs, government institutions, and international organisations.

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