

MANAGING STRESS - THE KEY TO ORGANIZATIONAL WELLNESS

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In the 21 century, the century of fast changes, business operates faster and with more complexity and uncertainty than ever before. The impact of stress on profitability, whether creative or negative, must be understood, measured and managed in a realistic and thorough way if a company is to successfully navigate today's business environment. Stress has huge implications for company profitability. While there is always a certain degree of strain and tension in our daily lives, the impact and control of stress in organizational life have received increasing attention and concern. The negative, often quite costly, consequences of stress in the workplace are reflected in rising numbers of industrial accidents, heightened turnover and absenteeism rates, escalating health-care cost.

Keywords: stress, cost, managers, investment, knowledge, efforts, profit.

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1. Introduction

Stress is a psychological state that develops when an individual is confronted with situations that exhaust or exceed his or her perceived internal and external resources. When the changes appear, for most of people, the stress appears. The change is permanently; this means that the stress is always present. Stress is a feeling that's created when we react to particular events. It's the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness. Controlling stress at its source is a big piece of how we do take care of ourselves to achieve behavioral wellness and the key to controlling stress is meaningful assessment and data-driven Behavioral Wellness Action Planning.

Organization is an open, dynamic system. There are inputs and outputs. Human resources are one of the most important inputs. Organizations mean human resources and in the end depend on them efforts. Companies invest in employees (salary, benefits, training, etc.) in the hope is making a profit on that investment. The most profitable employees should be those in whom there is the greatest investment. If the high investments are in knowledge workers and in managers, supervisors and executives than it would also follow that this investments and the profits that accrue from them are at the grates risk in terms of stress effects on performance.

Stress plays havoc with our health, productivity, pocketbooks, and lives, but stress is necessary, even desirable. Exciting or challenging events such as the birth of a child, completion of a major project at work, or moving to a new city generate as much or more stress than tragedy or disaster. Without it, life would be dull.

In normal conditions people must find the balance and answer to the new situation. The stress is not necessary a negative phenomenon and therefore is a mistake to consider just negative and not the positive effects. A middle level of stress can be an important motivational factor. On an individual level, stressful situations may lead to physiological problems, physiological difficulties and adverse behavioral reactions. One of the more significant symptoms from an organizational perspective is employees burnout – deteriorating job performance and decreasing energy levels caused by the cumulative effect of continuous daily pressures.

2. The stressors and the myths

Stress is precipitated by a number of environmental factors, referred to as stressor, the separate effects of which are difficult to isolate and measure. Work-related stressors can occur at several organizational levels:

- intrinsic to the job (role conflict, ambiguity, insufficient control);
- associated with structure and control of the organization (rigid policies, organizational politics)

- related to facets of the reward and feedback system involving concerns about equity and fairness;
- associated with human resources concerns about training, development and career advancement;
- connected with leadership relations.

Stress is a confusing and mysterious problem for most people, to many of those who manage their health care, and to companies that pay ever-mounting health-insurance premiums. Six myths surround stress. Dispelling them is a first step toward understanding stress and how it affects our lives and finances.

Stress is an unknown think to most people; there are a lot of myths and misunderstandings about it.

Myth 1: *Stress is the same for everyone.*

In fact, stress is different for each of us. What is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another; each of us responds to stress in entirely different ways.

Myth 2: *Stress is always bad for you.*

According to this view, zero stress makes us happy and healthy. In fact, the only time you have zero stress is when you're dead. Stress can be the kiss of death or the spice of life. The issue, really, is keeping it under control. Controlled stress makes us productive and happy; uncontrolled stress can hurt or even kill you.

Myth 3: *Stress is everywhere, so you can't do anything about it.*

In fact, you can plan your life so stress doesn't overwhelm you. Effective planning involves setting priorities and working on simple problems first, solving them and going on to the more complex difficulties. When stress gets out of control, it's difficult to prioritize where to devote your energies. All your problems seem to be equal and stress seems to be everywhere.

Myth 4: *The most popular techniques for controlling stress are the best ones.*

No universally effective stress control technique exists. We are all different; our lives are different; our situations are different; and our reactions are different. Only a comprehensive program tailored to the individual's needs is going to work.

Myth 5: *No symptoms, no stress.*

Absence of symptoms does not mean the absence of stress. In fact, camouflaging symptoms with medication may deprive you of the signals you need for reducing stress-related strain on your physiological and psychological systems.

Myth 6: *Only major symptoms of stress require attention.*

This assumes that the "minor" symptoms, such as headaches or heartburn, may be safely ignored. Wrong again. Minor symptoms of stress are the early warnings that your life is getting out of hand. They indicate that you need to do a better job of managing stress.

3. Personal and corporate behavioral resiliency

Forty-four percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress; 75 to 90 percent of all physician office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints; stress is linked to the six leading causes of death - heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration have declared stress a hazard of the workplace.

Stress can have severe consequences for both individuals and work organizations, stress in and of itself is not necessarily harmful. Moderate level of stress can heighten a person's interest, amount of effort expended and ultimately performance, growth and development. People vary significantly in terms of their ability to handle with stress. Something that might be perceived as extremely stressful to one person, might be viewed as irrelevant or even favorable by another.

We can see how behaviorally resilient we are by taking the Behavioral Resiliency test.

We can make our self more stress resilient by improving our health behaviors, modifying our lifestyle, and building up our financial, social, personal & spiritual resources for coping with stress.

Some firms made many stress management efforts; it made some type of campaign for improving the health of their employees – encouraging workers to assess health risks, stop smoking, control blood pressure, screen their cholesterol and modify their diets and exercise. We can see how behaviorally resilient our company is by taking the Corporate Behavioral Resiliency test.

Learn to think of challenges as opportunities and stressors as temporary problems, not disasters. Practice solving problems and asking others for help and guidance rather than complaining and letting stress build. Make goals and keep track of your progress. Make time for relaxation. Be optimistic. Believe in yourself. Be sure to breathe. And let a little stress motivate you into positive action to reach your goals.

A research realized by Center for Creative Leadership about stress at work underline that: 85% managers say that they manage with this phenomenon, 28% say that they belief that the organization do not use enough methods for reduce and eliminate stress and 79% think that in the organization is necessary the presence of same specialists who try to solve this complex problem.

4. Stress cost

Stress is expensive. We all pay a stress tax whether we know it or not. Health-care costs account for more than 13 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, escalating yearly at a dizzying rate. In terms of lost hours due to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and worker's compensation benefits, stress costs American industry more than \$300 billion annually, or \$7,500 per worker per year.

Based upon accepted standards, the Stress Cost Calculator estimates the cost exposures due to stress in several categories:

Top of Form

- Group Health 22% due to stress
- Turnover 40% due to stress
- Absenteeism 50% due to stress
- Presenteeism 50% due to stress
- Workers Compensation 33% due to stress
- Disability 50% due to stress

Bottom of Form

Based upon median direct and indirect costs per category and percent due to stress, the Corporate Stress Costs Calculator estimates annual costs and potential savings in the table below. The Corporate Stress Costs may be higher or lower than estimated relative to the particular costs per category and the level of stress within a company. Savings depend upon the level of stress assessment and intervention. I gave an example for a small business which has 17 workers. I just introduced in the program the number of employees. We can obtain precious information but we must find methods for saving money, finding methods for prevent and reduced stress.

Cost Category	Annual Costs	Median Annual Median Costs Due to Stress	Potential Savings
Group Health	\$79,322	\$17,451	\$873 - \$5,235
Turnover	\$62,781	\$25,112	\$1,256 - \$7,534
Absenteeism	\$13,770	\$6,885	\$344 - \$2,066

Presenteeism	\$55,080	\$27,540	\$1,377 - \$8,262
Workers Comp	\$5,270	\$1,739	\$87 - \$522
Disability	\$8,721	\$4,361	\$218 - \$1,308
Total	\$224,944	\$83,088	\$4,154 - \$24,926

For Romania there is no statistics about stress cost. European Union estimate that the stress affects no less than 40 billions workers from this region and the cost is no less than 20 billions per year.

Stress knowledge promotes behavioral health and saves money in the workplace. Independent studies show effective organizational stress interventions:

- Lower operating costs: for every \$1 spent on stress management there is a \$7 return on investment.
- Increase access to, utilization, and valuation of human capital.
- Promote a company's leadership role in nurturing a productive and healthy work environment in turbulent times.
- Leverage intranet technology investments in support of strategic and workforce initiatives while increasing individual and organizational stress knowledge.
- Reduce health-care costs, worker's compensation claims, disability claims, absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, and workplace accidents.
- Enhance productivity at all levels of the workforce.

Stress Directions has the metrics and analytics to assess and interpret the behavioral health of work force. Is necessary to develop targeted, data-based programs that:

- Address the overall behavioral health of the company.
- Assist employees in developing coping skills and positive lifestyle behaviors.
- Audit workplace characteristics that affect employee behavioral health and productivity.
- Measurably decrease the negative impacts of stress on the behavioral health of the organization.

Stress knowledge helps reduce corporate liability. Research shows that in the United States:

- Inappropriate anger in the workplace, a symptom of stress and frustration, is a leading cause of firings - cited ahead of job incompetence.
- There are nearly two million instances of assault in the workplace per year.
- Homicide was the second leading cause of death in the workplace, after fatal accidents.

For organizations and their employees, the customized services lead to positive action and behavioral changes that reduce stress and promote behavioral health in a consistent, organized manner, and help to maintain a healthy and productive workplace.

The behavioral health of a company depends on the behavioral health of the workforce. Effective stress control is the core of behavioral health in the workforce and in the overall health of a company. Stress Directions helps companies improve their overall behavioral health by reducing stress in the workforce.

5. Conclusion - Keep stress under control

What can you do to deal with stress overload or, better yet, to avoid it in the first place? The most helpful method of dealing with stress is learning how to manage the stress that comes along with any new challenge, good or bad. Stress-management skills work best when they're used regularly, not just when the pressure's on. Knowing how to "de-stress" and doing it when things are relatively calm can help you get through challenging circumstances that may arise. Here are some things that can help keep stress under control.

- **Take a stand against over scheduling.**
- **Be realistic.**

- **Get a good night's sleep.**
- **Learn to relax.**
- **Treat your body well.**
- **Watch what you're thinking.**
- **Solve the little problems.**

Specific management policies and strategies that can reduce negative stress include:

- **increased two-way communication with employees to reduce uncertainty;**
- performance appraisal and reward systems that reduce role conflict and role ambiguity;
- increased participation in decision making to provide employees with a sense of greater control over their work;
- job enrichments efforts that develop a sense of meaning and significance in work assignments;
- improved matching of skills, personality and work through carefully constructed career development programs and counseling.

The social-psychological research made in SUA demonstrate that most of people find role of work positive; 4 from 5 persons say that work and colleges are very important for them and they would continue to work even they have enough money. But most of people want to work same where else; that means that stress do not came from work in generally; it came from conditions, social atmosphere at workplace.

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First, managing stress is an important management priority in enabling the organization to fulfil its field objectives. Second it is necessary to protect the wellbeing of individual staff members, their teams and the communities they work with. Humanitarian work is stressful. The Guidelines[™] approaches to managing stress-related risk are based on generally accepted models of the stress response and on interventions used in many other sectors. Stress occurs when individuals are faced with a challenge. The challenge can be a threat to their wellbeing or an opportunity to carry out new and demanding tasks. Effective stress management helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—and the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But stress management is not one-size-fits-all. The key to quick stress relief is to experiment and discover the unique sensory experiences that work best for you. Get more help. Stress Management “ Learn to manage your stress. (American Heart Association). Stress Management: Enhance Your Well-Being by Reducing Stress and Building Resilience “ Special Health Report from Harvard Medical School. (Harvard Health).