

BUSINESS ADVICE

Stress and Work-Life Balance

Corporate Advice



Caryn Walsh

Workplace stress is not new. But it is becoming big business.

As workplaces become more demanding, competitive activity is increased in the global economy and there is increased pressure on individuals and teams to perform, stress and workplace tension are increasing.

And they're killing many of us.

Causes of Workplace Stress

They include: A power and blame-based Organisational culture, ineffective leadership, workplace relationships steeped in conflict, ongoing change within the company or industry, trauma (such as the death of a colleague at work), too much work for the role, isolation, job insecurity, boring work, micromanaging, lack of resources to perform the role well and a lack of support.

Stress at work is getting worse

Researchers at The American Institute of Stress have identified that workplace stress is the major source of stress for workers in major countries around the globe and it has progressively escalated over the past few decades.

This ongoing perception of having greater demands placed on them with little control has resulted in workers experiencing increased rates of heart attack, hypertension and death.

In some areas in America (New York is an example) the relationship between job stress and heart attacks is so well acknowledged, that any police officer who suffers a coronary event on or off the job is assumed to have a work related injury and is compensated accordingly. (Source: <http://www.stress.org/workplace-stress>)

Workplace Stress: A Leadership/Management Issue

Whilst the consequences of stress are felt and manifested down the line and throughout the whole Organisation, the responsibility for creating and providing safe and enjoyable workplaces lie at the door of the leaders, regardless of the level at which they sit in a company. But undoubtedly the buck stops at the top!

Many Organisations believe that 'hard work and no play' is the way to go, but research indicates that this draconian way of leading will result in affecting companies negatively.

7 MOST STRESSFUL JOBS

CareerCast, an international Recruitment Agency, to understand which jobs are the most stressful, researched 200 professions in its database and focused on 11 different job demands that it deemed likely to provoke stress.

This included including travel, growth potential, competitiveness, physical demands, hazards, environmental conditions and risk to one's own life or to others'.

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/01/07/the-most-stressful-jobs-of-2014>

1 Military - Away from home and familiarity and exposed to war and danger



7 Newspaper Reporter - working in a highly stressful role where they fight against other journalists and social media to get the best story out - fast!



2 Firefighter - Fighting against unforgiving fire and trying to save lives



6 Public Relations Executive - often rejected by those who they approach and are regularly 'ignored' by others

5 Senior Corporate Executive - Responsible for the livelihood of many others working for them

3 Airline Pilot - Directly responsible for ensuring thousands of people each year travel safely

4 Police Officer - Exposed daily to homicide, assault, domestic violence and community aggression



Symptoms of Workplace Stress

- **Psychological Symptoms:** Depression, a sense of hopelessness, anxiety, worry, a feeling of ongoing dread, panic attacks
- **Physical Symptoms:** Stomach problems, fatigue, migraines, tension headaches, aching joints, sore neck and back, exhaustion, weight loss or gain, heart attacks
- **Behavioural Symptoms:** Irritability, pessimism, mood swings, lack of interest in work, low level of frustration and tolerance and a sense of disinterest
- **Spiritual Symptoms:** A loss of interest in their faith because no matter what they try to do, nothing at work changes

People burn out, get sick, lose the zest they once had for their job (if they had it!) and productivity goes out the door.

Presenteeism

Defined as 'the practice of being present at one's place of work for more hours than is required, especially as a manifestation of insecurity about one's job.'

Presenteeism occurs when people come to work to get the bare minimum done, but they are not truly emotionally or mentally engaged in their work.

They are tired and zoned out. And it's costing company owners mon-

ey. A lot!

Conclusion

Watch out for Workplace Stress. It can kill or at best, make you unwell. For leaders and Organisations, it is your responsibility to provide a safe environment where your people will work well. To not do this is both neglectful and illegal.

■ Caryn Walsh is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker. Do you have a question about your team or business. Write to us at info@puremagicbusiness.com.au. We will gladly answer it.

TIPS: How to Manage Your Stress at Work

- ✓ Make you the most important person in your working day - if you don't look after you, chances are nobody else will. Don't give up your life to work for an unappreciative boss or Organisation that don't value you
- ✓ Track those things that stress you greatly - get a handle on what stresses you most. Is it the demands of your work, having too much to do, critical colleagues or a moody boss? If you know what the major stressors are for you, you can put strategies in place to deal with them
- ✓ Make healthy choices - eat well, exercise, sleep 8 hours a night, watch your alcohol intake and don't smoke
- ✓ Establish boundaries - put protective strategies around you to give you some 'down time.' For example, don't use your mobile phone after 8 pm or over weekends. The world won't stop if you don't use your phone 24/7
- ✓ Regularly recharge - take regular breaks whilst at work, go away for the weekend, read, hang with family and friends
- ✓ Learn how to relax - a tough one but necessary! Meditation, yoga, exercise and laughter are great ways to chill
- ✓ Talk to somebody and get support - speak to your Supervisor, friends, family for assistance. A problem shared is a problem halved
- ✓ Learn how to live in a balanced way - look after yourself mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. Learn to have balance in an increasingly busy world