

Sample term paper on stress and well- being at work

[Business](#), [Company](#)



INTRODUCTION

The alarming increase in stress incidents in workplace in recent years and its harmful influence on employees' well-being has made stress management the most essential field of study and improvement for American companies. They often face situations when a high pace of work and constantly changing market situation cause increasing fear, anxiety, management dissatisfaction and staff complaints. Often these difficult situations are caused by quite ordinary reason - by the high stress level of both managers and employees. Since stress has a negative impact on work efficiency, the problem of stress management is currently quite relevant and this is extremely important to find effective ways of coping with stress.

Nearly 75% of American employees surveyed in 2011 emphasized that they suffered from stress because of work and its consequences. According to APA (American Psychological Association) work is the major source of workers' nervousness and high stress levels (" Stress Survey"). Fortunately, number of research works on stress has considerably increased in recent years. However, the opinions concerning effects and preventive actions are rather confused. In this research there was done a trial to analyze existing information about stress in workplace, to reveal its main causes, to summarize experience of some companies that have effectively applied stress management strategies and to find the most appropriate method of stress managing in companies.

TOP STRESSORS

Job stress is usually appears when job demands considerably exceed the worker's abilities and work resources so they feel lack of necessary skills that prevent achieving the desired results.

The APA reports that the following factors belong to the top stressors for employees (“ Stress Survey”):

- Very low salaries
- Heavy working load
- Lack of promotion and professional growth
- Loss of faith in the fact that something can be changed
- Inefficient business processes that lead to all sorts of breakdowns
- Security at work

Stressors listed above can be divided into those that people can control and influence and those that do not depend on the individual and require solutions at the level of the whole organization.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

There already exist many ways of stress managing that can be applied in different workplaces. However, not every company succeeds in stress management as job stress imposes heavy expenses on employees' wellbeing and company profitability. One good thing about this is that some expenses can be still avoided. Researches confirm the fact that stressors listed above can be successfully reduced applying effective strategies. According to Dr. Michael Baime, such strategies must include both organizational approach to changes introduction and tackling the emotional burden by employees (“

Stress”). Some companies, including the largest corporations in the world, have successfully managed stress in their workplaces using variety of methods.

For instance, Virginia-based WRSystem balanced workload and time for relax by introducing remote work (at home) and responsibilities sharing. The result was striking as employees’ claims were significantly reduced and they feel very comfortable both at work and at home.

Bank of America, in its turn, introduced health care promotion program applying risk assessment form, different mailed information, which let to reduce healthcare expenses by five times over two years. Moreover, BofA emphasized considerable positive changes in employees’ behavior and their attitude to the fulfilled work.

Thus, different methods applied by corporations in stress management can be called corporate wellness that continues to prove its extreme popularity among employers all over the world.

Actually, the first wellness program was introduced long ago in Pullman Company in 1879. Nowadays 4 out of 5 American companies have some wellness program that helps to keep workers well and healthy (“ Stress”). Health programs help to avoid heavy expenses associated with employees’ illnesses, absence, and health insurance costs. Companies that apply some wellness program have ROIs (Return on Investments) of 5: 1 (“ Stress Survey”). Moreover, such companies use workplace wellness as a business strategy that involves employees into decision-making process, gives opportunities of open communication, and provides balance between work and private life. Hence, wellness programs applied in workplaces can help

enterprises to (“ Wellness program”):

- Attract and hire experienced personnel that can positively influence the company’s economic indicators.
- Reduce the expenses on health insurances and employees’ absence.
- Reduce the level of stress and its effects on quality of performed work.
- Improve collective spirit and create supportive working atmosphere.

A workplace that addresses stressors through some wellness program not only helps its workers to feel well, but it demonstrates sincere concern for them. As the result, the employees receive both emotional and physical support in their fight against stress.

Usually there are primary and secondary causes of employee’s stress. For example, an employee may be distressed because of bad personal attitude towards other workers and poor communication skills. Managing stress will enable to solve the problem of staff relationships and encourage them to work successfully in a sound environment reducing stress and its influence.

Though a workplace wellness program can't reduce the amount of stress that workers experience, it can help to overcome the physical results of stress and to cope with it successfully. Since physically and emotionally strong employee may fulfill more tasks with better results, an unhealthy worker, in his turn, may suffer greatly and have serious physical illnesses including deep depression.

The interesting method of employees’ health promotion is described by Andrea Eriksson in her article “ Leadership, organization and health at work: a case study of a Swedish industrial company” (2008). She reported that the leadership is the most valuable factor of health promotion in workplace. The

author emphasized that the leadership and employees' well-being are interdependent. Numerous studies have found that the understanding of leadership role and application of this knowledge promote healthy workplace and employees' wellness (Eriksson).

Management literature describes various forms of leadership; however the major problem is their suitability for stress managing perspective. Actually, these studies focus mainly on productivity improvement and not address any health issues. The key question here is whether there exist any form of leadership that could successfully lead both to excellent productivity and physical and emotional health of employees. Boumans and Landeweerd (Eriksson) reported that a task-oriented leadership may cause tension and stress in spite of high productivity level. Their findings also confirm that human relations oriented leadership may positively influence productivity and enhance job satisfaction.

Andrea Eriksson in her work analyzes a Swedish company and the leadership model that was applied there. Actually, the founder of this company established such an organizational structure, which was based on employees' responsibility for what they do. This organization with decentralized structure was based on self-managing teams, which controlled efficiency of internal working processes. Employees, in their turn, are offered sources for personal development in comfortable working atmosphere, in which they feel well. Moreover, the company with the described organizational structure had low sickness level that is extremely important for workers' wellness.

Thus, the performance results of this organizational structure confirm the

interdependence between employees' personal control over fulfilled work and their well-being. Self-managing teams allows employees to have a greater degree of control. However, to operate successfully in a healthy team, the employees need constant additional support from top management. Structured guidelines, daily meetings, developed communication channels enable effective cooperation inside the team and reduce stress level. Additionally, the workers need constant information supply to perform their tasks and to cooperate with their colleagues. However, the question appears, whether this strategy really is addressed to tackle stress in organization or it is just the way to monitor employees' work. Many scientists reported that the organization of work should primary be aimed at health promotion at workplace. Moreover, it would be extremely important to take into account the IT level, employees' experience and skills and working environment. The Eriksson's study confirms the fact that leadership style and organizational structure may be good in health promotion and stress prevention, but at the same way it may not suit every worker and company (Eriksson). The employees should adapt to this organizational structure to feel well at work and to prevent stress situations. The conclusion of Eriksson's research is that the described leadership style is rather effective in health and wellness promotion at workplace. However, it can be applied in the companies where employees are able to perceive and accept changes and certain style of work and to cope with organizational tasks effectively. Thus, there are advantages both to management and to employees.

As a future manager I should pay much attention to the leadership style

applied in my workplace to prevent employees' stress at work. I believe self-managing groups to be the most-effective way for supporting team well-being; I perfectly understand their importance and effectiveness. I believe it is crucial for me to pay proper attention to workers' health and emotional state using the following anti-stress strategy:

- Run a survey in order to reveal the main stressors for employees.
- Analyze the stressors and create action plan of further actions.
- Analyze leadership style applied in the existing workplace and to determine its main disadvantages.
- Establish team-managing groups in which employees are responsible for what they do.
- Support employees in their actions using meetings, planning, analyzes, discussions, scheduling.
- Promote wellness program among employees as the way to decrease stress level and improve employees' performance and company economic indexes.

CONCLUSION

Stress management is of the highest importance for the sustainable company development and well-being of its employees. It is crucial to realize the significance of this question and to find the method of health promotion that would be suitable for the certain company and team. In this research it was proved that different wellness programs, leadership style and organizational structure play the fundamental role in stress management and some types of them may be very effective, for instance, self-managing teams.

Actually, it does not matter what method to apply when addressing stress, the most important thing that leads to success is to take care of personnel well-being and constantly improve working conditions.

Works Cited

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