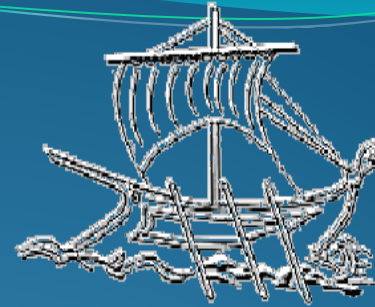




CITY UNIVERSITY



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**THE EFFECTS OF STRESS IN A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
AND HOW THE PROJECT MANAGER COULD HANDLE THE PRESSURE
IN THE PROJECT TEAM**

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PM 601
PROJECT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PAPER

Athens 2009

Abstract

Stress is a very important issue, is part of life in a fast-paced society. In many cases, stress is accepted as part of daily life, so, it is impossible to eliminate stress completely and you need a certain amount of stress to be active and productive.

There are three ways to reduce unwanted stress or manage it productively:

- Manage your physical and psychological well- being.
- Monitor your present level of stress
- Avoid extremely stressful situations

Every project needs someone who, regardless of his title, performs the functions of project management

The primary responsibility for a project manager is:

- To lead all the stakeholders (customers, vendors and project team), and
- Encourage them to work together during the course of a project

A project manager should be in position to handle stress in the project team

because :

“Good management is Stress Management”.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is:

- To investigate the impact of job stress on the employee's performance
- To find out the reason why people get stressed on their jobs, and
- What techniques the project manager use in order to reduce
or to eliminate the stress in the project team

What is Stress?

Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension

“Stress” is a word which is rarely clearly understood and there is no single definition of the term.

What is Work Stress?

Work stress is the kind of stress which results from job features that pose a threat to the individual

Symptoms of work stress

Work stress has three negative personal results:

| <u>Psychological Symptoms</u> | <u>Physical Symptoms</u> | <u>Behavioral Symptoms</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Anxiety | Increase heart rate, blood pressure | Avoidance of work |
| Feelings of frustration and anger | Increased secretions of stress hormones | Lowered performance and productivity |
| Loss of creativity | Skin disorders | Aggression |
| Lowered self-esteem | Headaches | Outright sabotage on the job |

What cause Work stress?

Job design - heavy workloads, not enough rest breaks, long work hours,

Management style - poor communication, employees not involved in decision-making.

Relationships at work - lack of support or help from supervisors, unfriendly atmosphere.

Work roles - too much responsibility, unclear job expectations.

Career concerns - job insecurity, no chance for promotion.

Unsafe or unhealthy working conditions – noise, dangerous work.

Qualities of a Project Manager that improve projects team efficiency

The project manager is the person responsible for accomplishing the project objectives, is integrating the necessary activities to develop a project plan, to execute the plan and to make changes to the plan.

Project Manager Skills

| <u>Communication skills</u> | <u>Organizational skills</u> | <u>Team – building skills</u> | <u>Leadership skills</u> | <u>Coping skills</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Listening | Planning | Empathy | Setting example | Flexibility |
| Persuading | Goal setting | Motivation | Energy | Creativity |
| | Analyzing | | vision | Patience |

Characteristics of an effective Project Manager

- a) **Flexible:** Flexibility is required for a PM especially when dealing with new team members who may need specific direction to get started
- b) **Credible:** PM should be Trustworthy, Competent, Dependable and honest.
- c) **Innovative:** PM should be innovative with solutions as the Resources and capabilities needed to complete a project may be scarce
- d) **Available:** A Project Manager must be available to spend time with various people involved in the project for ensuring project success

Methodology used in this study

A project manager in order to deal with the pressure situations in the project team should:

- Be a leader
- Staff the team
- Use Time management strategies
- Use Conflict resolution methods
- Motivate the project team

Project manager as a Leader

- **Credibility**: refers to a combination of the manager's expertise and trustworthiness in the eyes of the project clients, the manager's supervisors, functional managers, subordinates, and external consultants
- **Creative Problem solver**: The willingness to take risk and attempt innovative approaches can mean the difference between success or failure in determining the best tradeoffs between quality, cost and time.
- **Effective Communication Skills**: is an asset in many managerial jobs
- **Flexible Management Style**: managers who possess a wide repertoire of management styles have an advantage over managers who have a relatively narrow range of styles

Staffing the team

Communication Skills: team members should have skill in both written and oral communication. Communication is one of the biggest problems in any organization

High quality technical skills: team members must be able to solve most of the technical problems of the project without resource to outside assistance

Relation Building Skills: Strong team relationships will help create a successful project

Ability to work on a team: project team members cannot be loners. Team members must feel that they can depend on each other. Trust is very important for the successful outcome of the project

Use Time Management Strategies

Have a mission: A mission gives a focus and direction to our lives. A mission allows us to deal efficiently with the unexpected and then get right back on purpose with our lives

Set Challenging Goals: Goals are what moves us towards our mission

Schedule your Work: (1) Make a weekly plan
(2) Make a daily schedule
(3) Try to schedule tasks according to your personal energy cycle

Set Priorities: Make to-do lists and prioritize those lists. Write down deadlines, and schedule time toward achieving those deadlines

Use Conflict resolution methods

Deal with issues: The intent of any conflict is to have open and honest conversation about different ideas, opinions, values, benefits, attitudes or methods that cause the problem

Be co-operative: This involves approaching the conflict discussions with a Positive attitude.

Make requests/Not demands: Making people feel pressured to comply will intensify the conflict.

Also understand their concerns working with them and provide necessary support

Motivate the project team

Know your members: it is very important to know the strengths and weaknesses of each

Build trust within your organization: The Project Manager should be visible and available to members. It is important to listen and respond to your members' concerns and feelings

Recognize member contributions: Recognition is vital because it shows each individual proof that contributions are valued

Research

The research took place in Greece, in the Ink Company. Ink was founded in 1991. Ink is growing with fast but stable speed. Currently Ink employs more than 40 people full time, having the employee age average raised to 28 years old

Ink aims at becoming one of the premier IT Solutions Integration companies in the Greek market

The company's priorities are committed to the success of their customers, to succeed the customers' expectations and to deliver excellence in products and services and help them improve their bottom line performance.

Data Collection

As the population that would have to answer the questionnaire was 30 employees, the best way to send the questionnaire was by an email address of the company that all the employees can easily have access to.

Questionnaire Results

Never → Rarely → Sometimes → Often → Most times

- 1) **NEVER**: not at all true of your work conditions or feelings
- 2) **RARELY**: the condition or feeling exists about 25% of the time
- 3) **SOMETIMES**: the condition or feeling exists about 50% of the time
- 4) **OFTEN**: the condition or feeling exists about 75% of the time
- 5) **MOST TIMES**: the condition or feeling is virtually always present

Questionnaire: 57 questions

Questions 1-26 are related to interpersonal factors

Questions 27-48 are related to the physical condition

Questions 49-57 which measure job interest

After measuring the sums for each of the following groups and according to the **job stress scale** in the table below the levels of stress will be measured.

| | <u>Low Stress</u> | | | <u>Normal Stress</u> | | | <u>High Stress</u> | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-----|-----|----------------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Interpersonal | 39 | 43 | 46 | 51 | 54 | 57 | 62 | 68 | 75 |
| Physical | 35 | 40 | 44 | 48 | 52 | 55 | 58 | 62 | 67 |
| Interest | 13 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 27 |
| Total | 91 | 101 | 111 | 117 | 123 | 134 | 141 | 151 | 167 |

The job stress scale

The idea is taken from the book of Rice, Stress and Health, 1999

The main purpose of this scale is to create a work stress profile of all the employees, as it will describe the work conditions, the job environment and some personal feelings that the workers encounter in their jobs.

| Qualities | Interpersonal | Physical | Interest | Total questions |
|-------------------|---------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Leader | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Staffing the team | 5 | 4 | 1 | 10 |
| Time Management | 2 | 9 | 1 | 12 |
| Conflict | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| Motivation | 10 | 7 | 4 | 21 |
| Total | 26 | 23 | 8 | 57 |

Questions refer to skills

Re- organization of research

| | <u>Low stress</u> | <u>Normal stress</u> | <u>High stress</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Leader | 13 | 14 | 18 |
| Staffing the team | 19 | 20 | 25 |
| Time Management | 23 | 25 | 30 |
| Conflict | 13 | 14 | 17 |
| Motivation | 40 | 43 | 53 |
| Total | 107 | 117 | 143 |

The New job stress scale

Results



Stress and skills scales

Discussion, Conclusions

Based on the evaluation of the key concepts of this study, I realized that stress and project manager is familiar meanings. Every project manager in every work has to deal with stress and he should have the appropriate abilities to handle stress not only for himself but also and in his project team.

Recommendations

Company should hire an effective Project Manager

The project manager should take the actions below to increase the morale of the employees

a) Improve communication

- Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities.
- Make communication friendly and efficient, not mean-spirited or petty
- Hold regular one-to-one meetings to ensure that individuals are clear about their role
- Hold team meetings to enable team members to clarify their role and discuss any possible role conflict

b) Consult the employees

- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs.
- Consult employees about scheduling and work rules.
- Be sure the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources; avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- Show that individual workers are valued.
- Make sure his staff has a clearly defined role

c) Offer rewards

- Praise good work performance verbally and institutionally.
- Provide opportunities for career development.
- Promote an “entrepreneurial” work climate that gives employees more control over their work.
- Give support and encouragement to staff, even when things go wrong