



SAFETY2BUSINESS

TOP 5 WAYS TO REDUCE WORKPLACE STRESS



Results from HSE research has revealed that about half a million people in the UK suffer from work-related stress making it a top risk factor for every business. Sometimes you can't avoid risk by eliminating it- in today's fast paced world stress is inevitable. However, as an employer you are legally obliged to take care of the physical and mental well-being of your staff. You can achieve that by putting the right control measures in place to reduce stress to a level that is not a threat and the consequences are less severe. As a duty holder, failure to do so means you could face prosecution and fines which, due to the new H&S sentencing guidelines, may be pretty high. To help you avoid that we have put together a list of the top 5 most effective ways of reducing workplace stress:

- **IDENTIFY THE TRIGGERS:** Identifying the actual causes which make employees feel under pressure is the first and most important step you should take when assessing stress as a risk factor at your workplace. It is important to bear in mind that your point of view may be ambivalent so the best way to get your answers is by discussing the issue with the people who experience stress from a first hand- your staff. Moreover, communication enables you to show your workforce that you are doing something to protect them and that you truly care about them which is always a good thing.
- **TRAIN MANAGEMENT:** Big companies invest in hiring mental-health first aiders to combat the work-related stress boom which is probably something which you wouldn't be able to afford, especially if you operate a SME. This doesn't necessarily mean you are out of alternatives- be innovative and find ways to train your managers in the art of caring about others. They don't need a university degree to be able to figure out that someone is not feeling well emotionally, do they? Don't pass the ball of blame to 'the lack of strength' of your employees- mental problems are real and we, as a society, can't ignore them any longer. You, as a leader, need to understand the impact of stress and not expect people to just push through it.
- **RECOGNISE HARD WORK WITH TANGIBLE REWARDS:** Lets be honest- all of us love it when our boss communicates our successes, recognizes our accomplishments and contribution to the business. On the other hand, we feel taken for granted, invisible and unappreciated for all the hard work that we do when no one is paying attention to our efforts. Focusing on the positive aspects of the job and letting each staff member know they are appreciated for what they do doesn't cost you anything but the benefits are huge. This leads us to another way to reduce stress and this is by...
- **CREATING FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT:** If you think it is not your job to establish a work environment where everyone works together to achieve the business goals you are wrong. Start with changing the way you behave- employees feel less stressed when the management is more caring and relaxed. You don't need your staff to fear you in order to get the job done- people work for people and they will be a lot more productive if they like you and don't feel threatened and insecure. Allow short breaks during the work hours and early finishes on Friday- the way you treat your staff has huge impact on their well-being as well as the progress of your business. You know the story about the happy bees, don't you?
- **PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS:** There is nothing more stressful than not being able to have a normal work/life balance. Lets face it- we all work to provide a better lifestyle for our families and secure our future. But when the high job demands are hardly achievable and require extra hours of work on a regular basis, exhaustion is just the tip on the iceberg. Many people can't afford to leave their job in order to handle their family responsibilities and feel trapped trying to put priorities first in a situation where they can't really make a choice. Don't be the one asking your employees to choose between the two. All you need to do now is select what you think will help you reduce the stress levels at your workplace and have happy and healthy staff. Then take action and do it. It is your legal and moral responsibility, remember?