The Management of Stress in SMEs

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the sources of generating stress for employees, management actually begins the process of identifying problems their company. Stress affects the human brain, its functioning, because the brain’s ability to function is closely correlated with the emotional state.

When, an SME employee is in a positive emotional state, his brain work best, generating the best performance at work. Employee of an SME, which is in a negative emotional state that: nervousness, anger, depression, acting less and less efficient.

Thus, the stress level increases, decreases the brain’s ability to think, to learn, to act efficiently in various circumstances. SME managers should reduce stress on employees to increase their productivity.

Introduction

A good manager can help to reduce stress and psychosocial risks at work in the enterprise that he manages. It is not true that good leaders are born rarely. Like other skills, and leadership, personnel management can be learned and developed. A good manager is a model that inspires employees; motivate them to achieve their objectives that have been set. The manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of team members.

"A blind faith in the efficient of financial rewards prevent managers also takes into account the strength of feeling of mission and passion, as driving mechanisms of human effort" [2].

A good leader stimulates and encourages team members to work to achieve common goals and general benefits and assume responsibility for their work. He encourages team spirit and high morale and gets all the best from his team.

A recently pan-European survey [5] shows that:
- 72\% of workers believe that the reorganization or insecurity of the job is one of the most common causes of stress at work;
- 66\% attributed stress at "number of hours worked or workload";
- 59\% attributed stress that "are subjected to unacceptable behaviors, such as psychological or sexual harassment";
• 51% of all workers report that workplace stress is common where they work;
• About four in ten workers believe that stress is not well managed at their workplace.

Stress at work is when the job exceeds the worker’s ability to cope. It is one of the most important effects of psychosocial work environment inappropriate, workers who prolonged stress at work then going to suffer serious physical and mental health problems.

Efficient management of health and safety at work is beneficial for workers, the company and society as a whole. This is important to remember, especially during the current economic crisis, it is vital that businesses maintain their productivity when working under pressure of deadlines and when the probability of error is the biggest cause.

Other causes that can lead to stress in SMEs are lack of support from management and colleagues and poor interpersonal relationships, psychological or sexual harassment in the workplace - victimizing, humiliating, or the release of threats from bosses and colleagues against an employee or group of employees. Causes of occurrence of stress are:
• inequitable distribution of work, rewards, promotions or career opportunities;
• inefficient communication, organizational changes improperly managed;
• job insecurity;
• Difficulties as regards the combination of engagements of the work at home.

"Organisations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning "[4].

**Definition of Stress**

The term "stress" comes from the English language, the field quality testing of materials - e.g. glass, metals - and indicates the extent, compressing various materials.

Scientifically, stress is defined as "the way of specific or nonspecific reactions of an organism to stimuli that affect its balance and tired or exceeds the capabilities of combat" [3]. Reaction to stress is different from person to person, some reacting quickly to a low stress level; others can easily combat extremely stressful events. Different reaction to stress is closely related to experience and assess each individual and depends less unpleasant state of tension that can be perceived.

The occurrence of stress activates "an ancient survival program contained in our genes." The program involves a reaction of the body to danger. Conducting stress is divided into 6 phases [3] as follows:

1. orientation - is the phase where the signal is perceived and directed to the brain;
2. alarm reaction - in this phase, the brain realizes that it is a signal that put his life in danger. The human body responds by releasing the hormone responsible for the fight and run;
3. adaptation - involves a full body tensed, ready to run or fight;
4. rest - is the phase that follows winning a fight or run saving;
5. overuse - instals as phase, when the brain is constantly attacked of stimuli that announcing jeopardizing life. The person is always feeling that is attacked and must react by escape or attack;
6. complete exhaustion - occurs when overload condition is prolonged excessively. The person in this phase survives with energy reserves, overburden their immune system will be unable to react adequately to dangerous situations.

There are two types of stress: stress "agreeable" - eustress guarantor health and stress "disagreeable" - distress generator diseases. Eustress stimulates us to obtain performance and distress bridle our actions, we reduce the energy.

A positive stress gives [3]:
• increased vitality;
• increasing physical strength;
• increasing immunity;
• optimism;
• sense of power;
• increasing professionally efficiency.

The effects of prolonged action of negative stress are:
• chronic fatigue;
• exhaustion;
• difficulty concentrating;
• nervousness;
• restlessness;
• disorders of memory;
• disorganization;
• making mistakes.

Stress at work is a topic of great interest. In the current economic crisis, the situation of SMEs
and not only is more strained [6]. Many employees feel more affected by stress, watch,
subjugated, hurry, disappointed with the current situation. On the shoulders of employees of
SMEs pressed managers' expectations on all hierarchical levels, expectations of colleagues.
Pressures on employees are related to time, changing time zones etc. Stress becomes a more
dangerous part of economic life with effects on profit, motivation but also on internal activities
of SMEs.

Bioclimatic factors that generate stress in a business include [3]:
• high volume requirements;
• divergent purposes;
• lack of action or decision;
• lack of personal time management;
• lack of trust in managers or colleagues;
• fear;
• separation from family;
• illness;
• disregard.

"In the most of cases, cause of installation the stress, is within us" [3].

Methods of Control the Stress

There are no standard recipes to combat the stress. Each person is different from others by
personality profile with the characteristics of their background, with some experience,
knowledge and a certain attitude.

Stressful situations are perceived differently from person to person, strategies to combat
stress and sets of measures must have an individual character to be efficient.

As techniques to combat stress have the following [3]:
1. Resolving conflicts and problems, which involves the use of tools to detect errors
   and correct them;
2. Attention and rigor - means individual action, thought and application decisions
   consciously and appreciation the new;
3. Positive change - finding solutions to issues, changing the way of thinking,
   improving of reality through awareness the possibilities;
4. Personal Management - involves personal organization, prioritization by
   importance of what is intended to be taken, awareness that sometimes less is
   more, the ability to compromise, change management implementation,
   considering the unknown elements;
5. Goals – including in combat stress of short-term goals, medium and long but also
   those throughout life. Goals should be more efficient, more realistic and
   meaningful to exist an individual balance in relation to stress.

Do not forget, however, that it is easier to prevent than to combat the effects of stress, once
it was installed.

Thus, we can prevent stress by [3]:
1. silence - we continuously improve, take less seriously stressful situation and sometimes even ourselves, considering some situations that as are;
2. relaxation techniques and meditation - to detach us daily;
3. balance body preserved through balanced diet, sports and carefully notification of alarm signals sent by the body;
4. wishes, needs, potential, preference, to be satisfied in proportion as high;
5. Appreciation of life, stress inventory, determining what really deserves to be realise, establish the values;
6. Communication trough connecting to interpersonal networks, independence in action, interaction, appropriate behaviour.

We must always remember that chronic stress once installed on the individual, excludes successful prospects, the links with friends and colleagues, curiosity and ultimately destroys health.

The Management of Stress in a Romanian SME. Case Study – S.C. Iliana S.R.L.

S.C. Iliana S.R.L. has as main activity, production of laminated wooden CAEN code 2020 - Manufacture of veneer sheets plywood, hardboard, plywood, sheets of particles of wood, fibreboard, etc. [1].

The company is a medium-sized enterprise with a number of 120 employees, of which over half are women. Qualified personnel are 70%, with the following specializations: economist-engineer, economist, engineer, carpenter, electrician, stoker, locksmith, auto mechanic. Staff worker is 98% of its workforce.

S.C. Iliana S.R.L. is equipped with advanced machinery used in the manufacture of windows and doors from wood (CNC machining centres, grinding machines, multiple circular etc.). The products manufactured are of the highest quality and have a great design. Most clients (90%) are external customers (Germany, Austria).

As sources of stress on employees Romanian SMEs are considered to be:
1. employees do not have the freedom to work with each other;
2. personal conflicts arise regarding their activity;
3. managers and employees at all hierarchical levels do not communicate openly;
4. the employees do not have enough control over their work;
5. reduced material benefits;
6. insufficient budgets;
7. no reward for work well done.

When SME employees are stressed, the brain stops functioning properly, intellectual abilities, psychological and behavioural compromised. This makes the employees to be more vulnerable to accidents and illnesses, leading to poor professional performance.

Thus, when employees are stressed because of their work, or under time pressure, they often ignore procedures that provide safety at work, considering they do not have enough time for these aspects of safety labour. Because stress compromises and personal skills, clear thinking, they do not think about the possible consequences of insecure practices applied in the workplace.

Another component of stress affecting employees an SME activity is overload work. In this case they will rush trying to meet as many of the tasks set. This leads to increased chances of mistakes in business.

When they are stressed, employees become defensive; they rejected their help considering it as an attack. It is difficult for them to appreciate the team spirit, which would be helpful to work safely.

Stress acts on the brain to affect body movement coordination. It is affected in this way, downward, hand and eye coordination, which affects the activity of employees.
When employees are stressed, often have difficulty concentrating because they are focused on their source of stress and less on the activities that need to realise. To reduce employee stress in the workplace, SME managers should reduce their work load level. They have created organizations where employees are motivated, convinced of the importance of their work, excited about the activity they undertake. When employees of a Romanian SME feel all of these, they are able to obtain performance at work.

For as employees to work without stress, managers must identify all sources of stress in the enterprise, investing time and resources to it. Working without stress in a company means going through several stages, which are shown below. The first step is to offer employees greater control over labour as they perform, what they supply a quality work, achieving performance at levels of low stress.

A second step is to ensure that every employee is at work that suits him best, in terms of training and skills acquired. Clear and regular communication with staff managers, removes a big source of stress, so employees finding the level of performance that must achieve at work, this helping employees to achieve good results in the long term. Communication with employees makes them feel and think as a part of an enterprise, acting in their work with more care and professionalism, creating high quality products and services.

SME managers should encourage employees to feel free in their work and help each other, thereby reducing the negative effects of stressful situations that may arise at employees work. Employees, helping themselves as a family, remove daily stress, without compromising physical, mental or emotional. Managers, working with employees to create flexible workplaces, enabling them to balance work and personal life, it provides employees reduce stress and increase the quality of their work.

Mental wellbeing is important for good health and a better quality of life in which individuals can demonstrate their potential, can cope with the normal stress of life, and can work efficiently. Mental health promotion can contribute significantly to achieving healthy workplaces that can be obtained through:

- the introduction of flexible work schedules;
- providing support in problems of personal life such as access to childcare;
- organization of training in awareness of mental health problems for managers and employees;
- free counselling and psychological support free;
- providing the necessary support for employees to be able to make physical exercises.

Managers on all hierarchical levels are responsible for the implementation of a plan to prevent/reduce stress, allowing them to work and to create a healthy psychosocial work environment. Adopting a proper attitude and promoting a motivating work environment, managers of SMEs will not only allow employees to issues, but will encourage them to help identify solutions.

Understanding the difficulties of employees outside the workplace, although is not part of the legal responsibility of the Manager, in its relationship with them, will help build a motivating work environment, as well as creating opportunities for social interaction outside of the work. Mid-level managers have a key role as daily interaction with employees; they should be encouraged to develop their skills by creating a favourable climate of work, with as little stress.

A good manager stimulates and encourages team members to work to achieve common goals and general benefits and assume responsibility for their work. A good manager will encourage team spirit and high morale and get all the best for the team.
Conclusions

Efficient management of stress creates a healthy work environment where employees feel valued and where workplace culture is positive, therefore the economic results are better.

For SMEs, the negative effects of stress in the workplace lead to overall poor economic performance, increased absenteeism, employee illness and higher rates of accidents and injuries. Periods of absence tend to be longer than those caused by other causes; stress at work can help increase the rate of early retirement.

Estimated costs resulting from installation chronic stress among employees, SMEs and society are significant, reaching billion nationally [5].

It is good to eliminate the stress before it dominates us!

References