

news & notes

STRESS SURVEY

Highlights from Insightlink Communication's (www.insightlink.com) 2015 *Annual Survey of the American Workplace* reveal that there is a clear correlation between high stress levels in employees and increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, higher levels of disengagement, and excessive turnover, according to a press release (www.prweb.com/releases/2016/01/prweb13171333.htm).

Based on research conducted in November 2015, the Insightlink survey reveals that:

- 25% of employees continually have more work than they can finish, up from 20% in 2007;
- 70% find their work stressful, and one in three strongly find it extremely stressful; *and*
- Only 25% strongly agree that they are able to find a satisfactory balance between personal/family obligations and career responsibilities, even though this is important to almost all employees.



April 2016

Stress factors

Learn to manage your stress

April is Stress Awareness Month (stressawarenessmonth.com), so refresh your awareness of what can cause stress. Work-related causes could include:

- Long work hours and commutes;
- Pressures from tight deadlines, work overloads, reduced budgets, etc;
- Difficult relationships with bosses, employees, or peers; *and*
- Being unclear on goals and priorities.

Personal causes could include:

- Family problems (e.g., death, illness, divorce);
- Major changes (e.g., marriage, having children); *and*
- Conflicts between work and personal life.

Attitudinal causes could include:

- Demanding perfection in self or others;
- Inability to handle failure; *and*
- Believing that one can and must do it all.

Also understand how stress can manifest. For example:

- Depression;
- Reduced resistance to illness;
- Fatigue and/or insomnia;
- Aches and pains (e.g., stomach, head, back);
- Anxiety or nervousness;
- Irritability; *and*
- Directing anger or other strong emotions at self or others.

Use these stress busters to manage stress:

- Have a good attitude and sense of humor toward yourself and your job.
- Accept compliments.
- Don't try to control others' behavior.
- Laugh as often as possible.
- Find exercise you enjoy (e.g., walking, softball, tennis, bowling).
- Get outside; exposure to sunlight may make you feel better.
- Get up from your desk; take a walk; get a drink of water; etc.
- Practice for presentations or performance reviews to feel more control.
- Leave for work earlier.
- Decide if all tasks must be done—or be done by you.
- Let off steam with a trusted person, then put issues behind you.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as stretching or deep breathing.
- Leave yourself unscheduled time each day.
- Volunteer, and think less about yourself and more about others.

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VACATION VORTEX

Deloitte's Workplace Pulse survey (www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/deloitte-study-reveals-that-one-third-of-workers-do-not-feel-comfortable-taking-vacation-time-300189562.html) reveals that roughly one in three respondents (33%) do not feel comfortable taking personal time off/vacation days. Moreover, nearly one-third (32%) say they've consistently placed work commitments over family/personal commitments, and fewer than half (48%) say their organization as a whole values their life outside work.

The survey of more than 1,000 full-time employed adults also reinforces well-being as more than a gender or generational issue. More men than women reported that in the past 6 months, they consistently placed work commitments over family/personal commitments (35% vs. 27%). In addition, Millennials are also struggling to balance work and well-being.

The data also suggest a way to address these issues: modeling. More than a third of respondents say if they saw their direct managers (39%) and senior leadership (38%) prioritizing personal commitments over work, they would feel more comfortable doing the same.



Questionable decisions

Make ethical choices by asking the right questions

Here are clarifying questions to ask yourself about any course of action at work in which you are faced with a potential conflict of interest or ethical dilemma:

- Does what I propose to do comply with the company's policies and procedures?
- Would this course of action violate any laws or regulations?
- Do I need to discuss this problem with my boss and get his or her approval?
- What have others in the organization done in similar situations in the past, and how has that turned out?
- Will my decision be fair to everyone who will be affected by it, now and in the future?
- Is this decision in the best interests of the organization, employees, customers, vendors, stockholders, the community, and other stakeholders?
- Am I under any pressure to make a decision with which I'm not comfortable? Where is this pressure coming from?
- Would someone I particularly respect agree with my decision?
- Would my family support my decision?
- Can I take pride in my decision?
- Would I be comfortable seeing a report of what I'm proposing to do in the morning paper for all to see, including my boss, my employees, and my family?

By asking and answering these questions—and others like them—the ethical choice in most business situations will usually become clear.

Recall check

Keep up to date on recalls for your vehicle

Whether you drive company modes of transportation or just commute in your own car or truck, you need to be aware of vehicle safety recalls.

In 2015, there were nearly 900 recalls affecting 51 million vehicles nationwide. And every year, an average of 25 percent of recalled vehicles are left unrepaired, leaving drivers and passengers at risk.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has launched a campaign called Safe Cars Save Lives (www.safercar.gov). It urges consumers to check for open recalls at least twice a year and to get their vehicles repaired as soon as parts are available.

Said Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, "Recalls are a serious safety issue that should be promptly addressed. An informed consumer is one of our strongest allies in ensuring recalled vehicles are repaired."

The NHTSA recommends checking for recalls in March and November when daylight saving time begins and ends.

The federal government, safety officials, and the auto industry are engaged in an effort to examine the reasons for low-recall repair rates and options for improving the process.