

How to Manage Workplace Stress, Uncertainty and Fear

It's the employer's duty to ensure the wellbeing of their employees. This article should discuss specific strategies for management to help the workforce transition into a change without the negative effects of stress, uncertainty and fear.

Short Changed: Managing Workplace Stress, Uncertainty and Fear

Until recently, Asian workers were reporting lower stress levels than their Western counterparts. Today, stress in the Asian workplace is rapidly rising in the face of changes in organisational structure, technology, work organisation and management styles. In Australia, workers compensation claims related to stress have risen to over \$200 million a year.¹ In change initiatives, putting the cart before the horse—change before capacity building—creates stress and insecurity which, in turn, produces resistance to change.



References

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- ² Casey, M.M., W.R. Payne, R.M. Eime. (2011). Organisational readiness and capacity building strategies of sporting organisations to promote health. *Sports Management Review*. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?>
- ³ Ram, N., Khoso, I., Shah, A.A., Chandio, F.R., Shaiki, F.M. (2010). Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity as Factors in Work Stress among Managers: A Case Study of Manufacturing Sector in Pakistan. Retrieved [Date] <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search>

How to put employees first:

- **Ensure genuine employee participation in change processes:** Changes that are planned and communicated to employees are less likely to have a negative effect on employee motivation and performance. In a recent change initiative in Victoria State Sporting Organisations (SSOs), for example, a number of SSOs successfully implemented health promotion programs through system changes but these changes were dependent on first making climate and cultural changes.²
- **Conduct interviews alongside job satisfaction assessments:** Do not simply measure job satisfaction. Engage your employees in discussions on job satisfaction and change. In a job market with less mobility, workers will do more to hide resistance, making it harder to pinpoint the factors negatively impacting performance.
- **Actively engage employees in defining roles and responsibilities:** Lack of clear role definition and conflicting job responsibilities are the main contributors to stress and job dissatisfaction in workers. In Pakistani manufacturing workers, role conflict and role ambiguity led to higher rates of job dissatisfaction, stress and turnover, according to a recent study.³
- **Create security for flex and part-time workers:** Flexible options in the workplace have created a large, part-time workforce but flex employees are feeling insecure. In Australia, full-time employees make up about 55% of the workplace, down from 75% in the early 1990s, according to an ACTU/University of Sydney report. Participation in role definition, workplace change and professional development can help increase employee engagement.