

The state of stress in today's leadership world: How Leaders can reduce, prevent & cope with stress and challenges using business coaching methodology in Conjunction with Neuroscience

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Abstract

Introduction:

Motivation: Stress has become a major predicament in business and leaders are increasingly susceptible to it. Stress has been implicated as an important determinant of leadership functioning. Their stress is proven to impact their followers (companies, countries, team members) and if not prevented or managed properly, it can result in anxiety, depression, and as a direct consequence: burnout, or worse. CEOs and management face many challenges, and critical failures and overwhelming odds can easily break anyone down and make them lose sight of their goals. They have to have the skills to overcome stressful

situations and demonstrate conduct that will make a business, an organization or country, productive and profitable.

The Problem: A leader's stress level will influence his or her behavior and that can impact the stress levels and potential for burnout in subordinates. A lack of resources and time are the most stressful demands experienced by leaders. Stress is caused by trying to

do more with less, and to do it faster. For 88% of leaders, work is a primary source of stress in their lives and having a leadership role increases the level of stress. Unfortunately, very few (only 28%) companies provide tools to help management deal with stress more effectively.

Methodology:

Study & Results: During the many years, I have worked with business leaders, I have come to recognize the 7 most common stressor determinants and I have developed methodology to conquer them.

The top 7 sources are: 1. Expected High Performance in a Short Period of Time, 2. Strong Brand Loyalty, 3. Conflict Management, 4. Reputation Management, 5. Hiring the Right Team, 6. Professional Obligations vs. Balanced Life, 7. Lack of Support And Accountability;

The new avenues for stress prevention and management (individual versus corporate approach) are using stress as an efficient fuel: 1. Using certain technology, online media

platforms, apps, to increase productivity, efficiency, and profits as well as leaders' wellbeing and confidence. 2. Creating strong bonds with clients using innovation and differentiation, that results in full control over the process. 3. Address & control conflict with authority, even before it arises. 4. Learning strong communication with the right infrastructure and teamwork. 5. Mastering the art of delegation & hiring the right people to maximize efficiency. 6. Demonstrating healthy & balanced conduct as an example for the company. (Vacation, hiking conferences, team building, wellbeing) 7. Establishing support & accountability systems in place outside of corporate environment (masterminds, mentors, coaches, trainings, business conferences) These case studies were based on my clients' feedback and their results achieved within less than one year of their solid commitment, execution and implementation of the proposed methods used in my business practice. Leaders add highly stressful environments, yet few leadership development efforts have focused on managing work stress. We posit that self- and shared leadership practices can help leaders manage high job demands and increase long-term program. We examine the consequences of high-strain jobs; identify the outcomes of active jobs, and highlight fitness as a key strategy of, and flow as a natural outcome of self- and shared leadership. We argue that self- and shared leadership, and therefore the consequent and entailed fitness and flow benefits, support healthful regeneration and increased engagement and are thus vital to the leader's ability to manage work stress and make a lively work environment. Our multi-disciplinary model offers a proactive way for leaders to manage the stressful demands of today's work environments. Work Stress may be a timely and important topic for organizational leaders (Ganster, 2005). It is estimated that workstress costs the state billions of dollars a year in lost productivity, health care expenses, and stress-related lawsuits(National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2005; Sulsky & Smith, 2005). Indeed, current work trendsinclude longer working hours and increases in managerial demands and pressures. Job insecurity and the loss of jobcontrol are also significant concerns of the workforce (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). While all employeesexperience work stress, leaders tend to have particularly stressful jobs due to the high levels of demands andresponsibilities associated with the leadership position (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005; Sparks et al., 2001).Therefore an important, yet often overlooked,

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component of leadership development is to prepare leaders to manage work stress. We examine this critical issue by integrating work stress and self- and shared leadership theories. Specifically, we argue that self- and shared leadership could play a crucial role in the leader's ability to successfully manage the stressful demands of contemporary organizations. Moreover, we posit that self- and shared leadership help the leader create a healthful and engaging work environment. Today's leaders exist in complex work environments that are characterized by globalization, rapid technological advances, diminishing resources and increasing costs (Chase, 2000; Jaffe, 1995; Kinicki, McKee, & Wade, 1996; Murphy, 2002). To adapt to these conditions organizations are downsizing, restructuring, utilizing more contingent workers, and demanding greater flexibility in the work schedules of their permanent staff (Sparks et al., 2001). Leaders are at the forefront of these changes and can experience stress from the excessive demands and lack of control they possess over the implementation of certain organizational policies (e.g., layoffs, transfers, and work schedule changes). For example, managers involved in delivering layoff notices and those involved in both direct and indirect downsizing experienced significant increases in physical health problems (e.g., headaches, high blood pressure), depression and job insecurity (Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2004; Murphy & Pepper, 2003). There is also ample evidence to indicate that chronic, unmanaged high job demands result in exhaustion and ultimately, job burnout (e.g., Lovelace, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Therefore an important part of leadership development should be to address these frequent "high-strain" situations of high demands and low job control by offering a means for creating a positive "active" work environment. To create an active work environment that is healthful and engaging, leadership development can utilize the principles of self- and shared leadership. The practice of self-leadership provides the leader with the self-direction and self-motivation needed to achieve personal and organizational performance goals (Manz & Neck, 2004). Self-leadership is additionally associated with greater job satisfaction and lower levels of perceived stress (Dolbier, Soderstrom, & Steinhardt, 2001). Moreover, given the increasing demands faced by contemporary leaders it is no longer practical or possible for leaders to have all the answers and make all the decisions. Through sharing leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) much of the burden that can lead to stress from being overwhelmed on the job can be eliminated. Furthermore, by fostering the capacity of followers to at least to some extent be their own leaders (Manz & Sims, 2001), the potential stress of leadership responsibility can be reduced over time. Thus, the theories of self- and shared leadership offer valuable contributions to the leadership development literature especially when applied to managing high job

demands and increasing long-term job control.