

# How leaders can help manage employee stress to improve performance

Not all stress is the workplace should be considered "bad", and team leaders need to know how to help employees manage such stress in order to build stronger teams and increase productivity. Additionally, identifying and using stress to their advantage, new employees and the recently promoted are more likely to rise to the occasion.



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“Someone given a new job or added responsibility at work may initially be anxious about the task ahead. With some leadership guidance, support and encouragement, their anxiety will push them towards becoming more productive at the task, to reach a point where their understanding and enthusiasm makes them excel,” says Georgina Barrick, MD of Cassel&Co, Insource ICT and IT Edge – the specialised recruitment agencies of ADvTECH Resourcing focusing on Finance, Accounting and IT.

But she says without support, and with the inevitable addition of further challenges and pressure, performance will suffer and burnout ensue.

“Tasking an employee in a company with the next step in the career ladder will almost always increase anxiety and stress, and so it should. The mix of excitement and trepidation of learning something new, with increased responsibility, usually gives enthusiastic, prepared people the impetus to learn more and produce more.

“However asking too much, too soon of employees – perhaps giving them the promotion but expecting them to pick it up and run with it and know everything about their new function immediately - creates the type of bad stress that is tantamount to sabotaging their chances of success.”

Barrick says that determining how to tell whether a prospective candidate is ready for a role, or an employee for new or additional challenges associated with a promotion, requires some insight from business leaders – not only about good and bad stress and its effect on individuals, but about the individual themselves.

## **Know your staff**

“Not all employees who appear enthusiastic and capable are ready for the next step; and not all the quiet but conscientious staff members should remain exactly where they are because they seem to perform that specific function so well,” she says.

“Today’s business leaders are required to know far more about their employees to be able to determine which are the innovators, the leaders, the high performers and the quiet, backbone-of-the-company members. Spending time getting to know your team members and how much of a challenge each can handle and when it’s most appropriate is key to retaining the most agile and best possible talent for your company.”

Barrick says by knowing who is ready to take a leap on the ladder and who will merely be over-loaded, leaders are able to create specific challenges that can be met by individuals, adding to the growing base of institutional knowledge and performance in their companies.

“These leaders are the ones who understand good stress and how it creates innovators, and who can help their employees navigate the challenges associated with increased responsibility. And these are the leaders who will build the top teams required to stay competitive in our rapidly changing world of work.”

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