

INTELLIGENCE

How to Be OK

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Please pardon the delay, due to publishing schedules and my two-part customer service series, in reporting how readers responded to the September column “Are We OK?” I received some great ideas on how companies can help workers deal with anxiety due to terrorist attacks, military deployments, the

sluggish U.S. economy, and so forth, and improve productivity and emotional ROI. Here’s a sampling.

(For the column,  **Intelligence, T+D September.**)

Provide a time and place to discuss concerns.

During the United States’s first Gulf War, Ken Camel, then a captain with the U.S.

Air Force, found that offering a designated time and place for his staff to talk about their concerns enabled them to focus on work the rest of the day. The members of his team, “warfighters” taken out of combat to conduct training, would watch and discuss the daily television briefings from the U.S.

Readers respond to my column on emotional return-on-investment.

Central Command. Those 30-minute sessions, Camel says, were lively, informative, and therapeutic. According to Camel, distraction at work will only get worse “unless we find a way to allow people to discuss true everyday events in a personal way.”

Assign advisors. Bill Dixon, Ernst & Young’s director of knowledge and communications, shares the company’s idea of advisors, who are matched with every worker below associate director level. Employees can talk about whatever they want to and get a listening ear, and all conversations with advi-

sors are confidential. If the personality mix isn’t right, workers can ask to be re-assigned. Dixon says this program “has been a great benefit in reducing worker anxiety over life and professional events.”

Develop a constructive culture. Janet Szumal at Human Synergistics/Center for Applied Research, suggests that companies can reduce worker anxiety and increase productivity by ensuring that internal structures, systems, technologies, and required skills are consistent with the organization’s stated values, philosophy, and

mission. Companies can do that, she says, by developing the skills and qualities in employees required to achieve the values and mission and by reinforcing those skills and qualities with the structures, systems, and technology daily.

Emphasize education. Leo McIntyre, training assessor and instructional designer at a large international company, says that his CEO emphasizes education—for employees’ personal as well as professional growth. If employees are learning, he says, they’ll want to stay at the company and perform to

their highest potential. “Employees feel valued,” he says, “and have less stress, are less distracted, and are more focused on the job.”

NEDS: “Carpel Tunnel of the Mind”

Do you have New Economy Depression Syndrome? Do your company’s workers? Even without the stress of current events, modern life wouldn’t be great for our mental health.

NEDS, discovered by Tim Sanders (author of *Love Is the Killer App*), is defined as “a form of self-reinforcing depression, which is caused by information overload, constant interruption, and a reduction in relationship quality. The victim feels a sense of being overwhelmed, helpless, and ultimately alone. The process from stress to breakdown to self-medication is a downward spiral of increased expropriation of expertise and social interaction to technology. This is best understood in a workplace scenario as carpal tunnel of the mind.”

Sanders saw the trend later deemed NEDS while researching his book and examined it with the help of psychologists and treatment providers. It’s estimated



Ten Stress-Relief Tips

These suggestions for calming workers and managers were submitted by the American Management Association and compiled from the content of their seminars.

1. Pace yourself and help your employees do the same.
2. Calm the body and soul by taking a walk. If you can’t go around the block, go to the printer.
3. Avoid high-pressure lunches. Go to lunch with friends or by yourself.
4. Consider your personal body rhythms and those of your staff. Work on tough projects when you’re most productive and least harried.
5. Determine the events and situations that produce the most stress. If you can, try to control or eliminate them.
6. Put people and situations into perspective. Not every task is a matter of life or death.
7. Don’t try to be perfect. Continuous good work is a worthy goal.
8. Learn to say no. Accepting every request puts added pressure on you.
9. Be realistic about your career expectations. You may not be able to achieve the goals you set 20 years ago. Look for challenges and satisfaction in your current position.
10. Don’t take work home every night. Develop leisure activities, and spend time with family and friends.

ed that 4 to 6 million people may be suffering from NEDS and may be at risk for heart disease, stroke, unemployment, divorce, and drug and alcohol abuse. A university study in North Carolina found that increased contact with other people can provide relief and resiliency from the syndrome. Sanders is partnering with HeartMath, known for its research on emotions and workplace performance, to study NEDS further.

For more on NEDS and a free diagnostic test, www.gotneds.com.

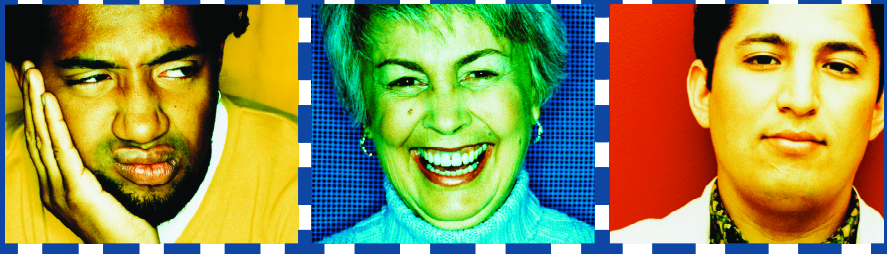
For more on Heartmath, "Put Your HeartMath Into It," T+D February 2002.

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Training Program of the Month

What did that smile *really* mean? Facial expressions can be deceptive, and micro expressions that flash on a face for less than a 15th of a second can be easily missed. Now help is available: The Micro Expression Training Tool and the Subtle Expression Training Tool are CD-ROMs that can help people recognize subtle expressions and the emotions they convey. Most people start the training with an accuracy rate of 50 to 60 percent. After completing it, they reach a rate of 80 to 85 percent. So says the tools' developer, Paul Ekman, who has trained the FBI, the CIA, police officers, and others in reading facial expressions.

Source/ *Wired News*. For more info, www.emotionsrealealed.com.



Ethics Update

Almost half of employees still believe their companies aren't completely on the up-and-up, says a recent study by Walker Information. That should be a serious concern for companies, as the study shows that employee loyalty is driven in part by workers' perception of fair and ethical behavior by the organization. Employees are loyal when they

believe their company has ethical practices, is a good corporate citizen, and shows care and concern for workers.

Employees are more positive about their companies' ethics than in 2001, but

only 54 percent of respondents said their senior leaders are people of high integrity

only 48 percent agreed that compliance problems, once identified, are dealt with at their company completely and fairly

only 41 percent said they felt comfortable reporting misconduct.

www.walkerinfo.com/resources/reports for more info