

Management Ideas



FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally
for stepped up performance

edited by

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on problem-solving and creative ideas

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3255 EXECUTIVE STRESS: A recent study made by Renu Bhatnagar of functional heads of Pune-based industrial units revealed that a majority of managers (48.8%) experienced most pressures due to:

- a. Time limits and meeting deadlines. In a large number of cases, these pressures appear to be self-imposed rather than from external sources.
- b. There was a moderate degree of concern in dealing with superiors. External authority and regulations seem to be viewed with a tinge of negativism and may be a cause of moderate degree of stress.

The data revealed that the highest degree of stress is felt by production/maintenance and marketing functions. The lowest level of stress is felt by personnel and R&D functions. There was no significant effect of age on the levels of stress. This could be owing to the fact the majority of managers between ages 45 and 50 have more or less 'made it' or have come to terms with their present role.

It was found that a large number of people had 'adjusted to their situations. While their early ambitions and aspirations were not fully met, the negativism stemming from their dissatisfactions was low. Age and lack of opportunities probably create these conditions.

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These individuals have employed coping mechanisms which can be broadly classified as:

a. long term remedial approaches (thinking rationally, reworking plans, discussing with friends, expecting less perfection and taking to favourite hobbies, and delegation of work) and b) short term methods (smoking, drinking, taking pills, sulking etc.)

For more, see article in "Abigyan" Spring 1990.

3256 READING IS FUNDAMENTAL: That is the name of an organization that motivates children to read. (Address:600 Maryland Ave. SW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20024) Its Director (Ms. Nancy Sullivan) conducted a survey recently.

Some 300,000 elementary school children were asked to list their favorite books. Results--in order of preference:

Charlott's Web by E.B.White, Harper Collins, 10 E.53 St., New York 10022. \$2.95 Ages 5-8.

Superfudge by Judy Blume, Dell,666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103. \$3.25. Age 8-11.

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls, Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103. \$3.25. Age 8-17.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume, Dell, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103. \$2.95. Ages 8-11.

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids by B. Hiller and E.Faucher, Scholastic, 730 Broadway, New York 10003. \$2.95. Ages 8-11.

Indian in the Cupboard by Lynne Banks, Avon Books, 105 Madison Ave., New York 10016. \$2.95. Ages 8-11.

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl, Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103.\$2.75. Ages 8-11.

James & the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl, Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103 \$2.95. Ages 8-11.

There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom by Louis Sachar, Knopf, 201 E.50 St., New York 10022. \$2.95. Ages 8-11.

Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein, Harper Collins, 10E. 53 St., New York 10022. \$14.95. Ages 5-8.

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, Dell, 666 Fifth Ave., New York 10103. \$3.25. Ages 8-17.

May be, you can bring this to the notice of your children.

3257 YOUR CHOLESTEROL COUNT:ALWAYS DOUBLE-CHECK: With the increase in concern over health, and cholesterol in particular, more and more companies are offering free cholesterol checks for employees. But one time tests may not reveal your true cholesterol level. According to a new study, even under ideal conditions you can rarely trust a single test result, since your blood cholesterol level naturally changes dramatically from day to day.

Researchers at Georgetown University's School of Medicine gave weekly cholesterol tests to 20 people for one month while the subjects' diets and weights were kept stable. In 80 percent of the patients, at least two of the four test results were 30 points apart. And one in four of these subjects experienced fluctuations exceeding 50 points.

Researcher Michael Mogadam, MD, assistant professor of medicine at George town, says such zigzagging occurs because "total blood cholesterol is actually more than 100 different substances--and each is subject to biological changes." The implications: Any single reading may place a person in the wrong heart-disease risk category, which could result in unnecessary treatment for some and no treatment for those who may need it.

Dr. Mogadam recomments these steps for a trustworthy cholesterol count:

- * If your initial cholesterol reading is under 180, it is unlikely that further tests will push you into the National Cholesterol Education Program's "borderline risk" (200 to 240) or "high risk" (over 240) category.
- * If your initial reading is over 180, get a second test within eight weeks. If it's within 30 points of the first, average the two. If the tests vary by more than 30 points, get a third test and average all three.

3258 LEISURE CAN STRESS TOO: Germans are increasingly suffering from "leisure-time stress," according to leisure researcher Horst W. Opaschowski of Hamburg. A survey found that, despite feeling "free" during their free time, many Germans worry about leisure and hurry from one activity to the next, leaving little time to stop and think. Excessive consumer attitudes about leisure time "do not allow personal initiatives and doing one's own thing," Opaschowski concludes.

3259 A MEMO STUDY: According to a recent study, managers and executives spend an average of 21% of their time writing business letters, memos and reports -- which adds up to one day a week -- or eleven work weeks a year! The study also revealed:

- ...34% of all reports, letters and memos are unclear, poorly written or confusing
- ...41% of the writing ability of executives was rated as weak or poor
- ...one-third of corporate written communications could be replaced by phone calls.

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The biggest complaints about most letters and memos seem to be: (1) too long or wordy; (2) poorly organized; (3) confusing; (4) incomplete or inaccurate information; (5) too much data; (6) no clear purpose; (7) trite and overused expressions.

All business writing is expensive -- studies show that the average cost of a business letter has climbed to \$100. Add that to the enormous hidden costs!

In our training programmes on written communication, we give the following tips and guide people to apply them with purposefulness and judgement.

- * Write to express -- not to impress.
- * Stay with the purpose of your communication. Don't digress.
- * Be concise. Eliminate unnecessary word! Excessive brevity can result in incomplete communications.
- * Avoid worn-out expressions such as "needless to say...as per our conversation...thanking you in advance".
- * Grab the readers attention by getting right to the point with a stimulating opening sentence.
- * Use short, punchy sentences and limit short paragraphs to one main idea.
- * Proofread your writing aloud. You'll spot wordiness, inconsistencies and embarrassing errors.

Improving the quality and readability of written communications will save your business thousands of rupees each year.

And those managers and executives who sharpen their writing skills will reap substantial career rewards.

3260 DOLPHIN WISDOM: Citicorp COSL Training Division has Dolphins as its mascot. This is how the Division explains its choice.

Dolphins normally take responsibility beyond limits and are visionaries. They swim all over the pool creating and recreating vision. They believe that the most sensible for the group is also the most sensible for the individual.

No one is more individualistic than a dolphin but they prefer co-operation to competition because they are change agents. Dolphins help people to change, create harmony and constantly do course correction;. Dolphins have a time horizon of 10 years which indicates a willingness to tolerate ambiguity and lack of instant approval and appreciation.

Dolphins enjoy, exploit, explore and experience to the fullest of their faculties and are a constant think tank.

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We have, therefore, chosen the figure of the DOLPHIN as our mascot since we believe we have to use dolphin techniques in the 1990s to be a visionary Trainer for successful transformation.

3261 COMPANYWIDE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION: A textile group that has operations in Bombay, Nadiad, Navsari and Ahmedabad has 'trained' near 15000 of their workforce in about a year. The workers were pulled out of their work stations for two days of input. The input was given by the company's technical and managerial personnel. In turn, the company personnel was trained by an outside team of trainers. The company is now assessing objectively the outcome.

Meanwhile, they have initiated a similar scheme to train their administrative office staff numbering about 600. Selected technical and managerial people were helped by an outside team made up of (this editor and his associates) and these men will give a planned input to all the clerical personnel in record time.

This is one of the most cost effective companywide training that we have come to know of.

3262 DO YOU KNOW THAT: Cough drops--even those with menthol or eucalyptus oil--are no more effective than hard candies at stopping coughs. Both stimulate flow of saliva, which soothes dry, irritated throats.

3263 LAUGHING MATTER?

Dear Mummy,

Just to let you know that I was caught smoking in the dorm last night and may be expelled. I put the cigarette in my waste-paper basket and it caught fire and burned the school down. Headmistress says she'll send the bill for rebuilding to you.

Your loving daughter,

Sally.

PS: None of this is true, but I have just failed my O levels and thought I would try to put things in perspective for you.

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