



**National Stress Awareness Day – A Good Day to Start an
Organisational Healthcheck**
2nd November 2005

Wednesday 2nd November is National Stress Awareness Day¹, this year it will focus on stress in the workplace. It is estimated that 12.8 million working days are lost every year, due to work-related stress² and that work-related stress, depression or anxiety affected 557,000 people in Great Britain in 2003/2004. Stress affects most working people at some point in their lives, it is when it exceeds a person's ability to cope, over a long period of time that it can have a severe effect. The Association for Coaching is urging companies to consider stress in the workplace, before it has an adverse affect on the workforce and productivity.

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 clearly states that employers are responsible for both the psychological, as well as physiological well-being of employees. Court cases for stress-related illnesses are becoming increasingly common and individuals can be awarded large sums of money for being exposed to intolerable levels of stress by organisations.

Specialist coaches are available to offer help and advice to employers on how to minimise stress in the workplace and to offer coaching sessions for employees on how to cope with pressure and stress at work. The Association for Coaching is a good place for employers to source well-qualified, accredited Organisational Coaches. Its accreditation scheme promotes best practice and the Association is committed to raising awareness and standards across the UK coaching industry.

Bruce Grimley, Honorary Secretary for the Association for Coaching is a chartered psychologist with considerable experience of Life and Executive Coaching. He comments: "It is very important to employ a coach with excellent qualifications, the right code of conduct and the right approach to organisational psychology. Choosing a coach with accreditations from the Association for Coaching guarantees a high standard of expertise and professionalism."

He offers the following tips to avoid additional stress in the workplace:

¹ Organised by International Stress Management Association: www.isma.org.uk

² 2003/04 survey of Self-reported Work-related Illness (SWI03/04): www.hse.gov.uk/statistics

- Ensure a visible presence of senior management within the company. This is a great opportunity to encourage employees and can act as a useful information gathering exercise.
- Use language that is straight forward and easily understood.
- Listen to what your employees / colleagues tell you, act upon it when it makes business sense, and when not tell them why on this occasion it is not appropriate.
- Ensure your organisational policies are consistently and comprehensively executed throughout **the whole** company.
- Make sure training and development is relevant to tasks needed within the organisation, and that staff have the opportunity to put their training into use.
- Reward good organisational behaviour, not bad organisational behaviour. Have robust development processes, which make explicit this distinction.
- Ensure all employees understand precisely what is expected of them in their job description. When they do it well do not use that as an excuse to increase their workload without consulting them or renegotiating their package.
- Be very clear at the Senior management level what your business outcomes are and ensure you select the most appropriate employees to assist you realise that vision.
- Conduct regular annual stress audits to provide an objective measure of stress in your organisation, and to consider what if anything could be contributing to that stress.
- Make sure you log the findings, and act positively on the arising action points.

More information on the Association for Coaching can be found at

www.associationforcoaching.com.

Don't miss the 2nd annual AC International conference, Leading the Way being held in London on the 24th of March 2006. Details available from November at www.acconference.com

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