

# Oh, the stress...

*How to turn stress into an effective business tool before it turns you into a bundle of frayed nerves*

Approximately 80 percent of physical illness is caused by stress. Most of us believe that all we have to do is eliminate stress in our daily lives. This unrealistic goal, however, just leads us to a higher level of stress.

If we experience too high a level of stress, we can't function efficiently. If we don't experience enough stress, we have little motivation to accomplish anything. Therefore, we can't eliminate stress, but we can make it work for us. The secret is to find an optimum stress level at which you can perform maximally.

Why do we experience stress? We experience it because our bodies, designed millennia ago, have not properly adapted to modern society.

During prehistoric times, man had two clear choices in any stressful situation: fight or run. For example, let's say caveman is walking down a path and comes upon a saber-toothed tiger. Immediately, caveman's body prepares itself to deal with this imminent danger. His adrenal glands increase their production of adrenaline, which now is shooting into the bloodstream. Caveman's heart starts beating faster, his muscles tense in anticipation of great exertion, his breathing increases, and his eyes

intensify their focus. Caveman now is ready to deal with the tiger.

He will either fight the tiger or run away. Either way, caveman will expend all this excess energy in a productive manner. Unfortunately, modern man—you—can't often exert his excited body in a direct fashion toward the modern-day dangers of the snarling boss or the growling, unsatisfied customer.

Most of the time, you have to hold in this excess energy. To do otherwise could be disastrous to you or your customers. Holding this excess energy, however, can lead to panic attacks, ulcers, muscular aches and pains, back problems, anxiety, or even depression. And unloading this energy on a customer could lead to legal problems or decreased business volume.

How, then, can we make this excess energy (stress) work for you? Consider the following:

1. **Pamper yourself**—Treat yourself as your most prized possession.
2. **Begin your day slowly**—That way you can plan your day as you dress for it.
3. **Change gears**—If work becomes too difficult or tiresome, shift to something else.
4. **Lower your expectations**—

Don't set yourself up to be disappointed by unrealistic goals.

5. **Set goals**—With a plan, you'll feel more confident and waste less time getting there.

6. **Use the 80/20 rule**—Eighty percent of value comes from 20 per-

The largest cause of stress is the fear of asking for help. None of us is an expert at everything. We feel our greatest periods of stress when we think we're alone. If you need help, ask for it. Don't fear help; it's the only way we can learn.

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cent of business. Focus on the 20 percent since the rest will bring you little value in the end.

7. **Make a to-do list**—Prioritize items into A, B or C. Avoid the Cs.

8. **Delegate whenever possible**—Your time is too valuable to waste on something someone else can do for you.

9. **Allow one hour daily for uncommitted time**—This will provide time to handle emergencies and to take advantage of unexpected events.

10. **Handle paper once**—When you look at a bill, pay it instead of worrying about it.

11. **Keep a calendar with planning space**. It will help you manage your time better.

And guess what the ultimate stress reducer is: that's right, learning. When we learn, we understand. When we understand, it makes us feel more secure. When we feel secure, stress will always work for us. **SBN**

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## PERSONNEL

