

# Pressure in the Workplace\*



Many managers feel they're not managing the same people they did five years ago. Although the actual staff may not have changed, rapid downsizing, budget cuts, and hiring and wage freezes have had a huge impact. The simple fact is that in many cases there is too much work for too few employees. As a result they are losing enthusiasm and energy for the jobs that once motivated them.

## The stories are all too familiar

*Since the reorganization, nobody feels safe. It used to be that as long as you did your work, you had a job. Now they expect the same production rates even though two people are now doing the work of three. We're so backed up I'm working twelve-hour shifts six days a week. Employees are calling in sick just to get a break. Morale is so bad they're bringing in some consultants to figure out a better way to get the job done.*

*In my call centre job, the computer routes the calls and they never stop. I even have to schedule my bathroom breaks. All I hear the whole day are complaints from customers. I try to be helpful and sympathetic, but I can't promise anything without getting my boss's approval. To make matters worse, my mother's health is deteriorating. A lot of the reps are seeing counselors and taking stress management classes.*

**Job pressure results when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.**

## Scope of Pressure in the Workplace

These stories are unfortunate but not unusual. About one in eight workers log 50 or more hours weekly, according to Statistics Canada. Job pressure has become a common and costly problem in the workplace, leaving few workers untouched.

- 1/4 of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.
- 3/4 of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago.
- Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor-more so than even financial problems or family problems.

So what to do? During difficult times, managers can assist by watching for declines in overall output and helping employees to pace themselves. There's a wealth of information on workplace stress and what to do about it at the NIOSH web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/stresswk.html>.

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