

Happy Holidays!

Dear

I hope you all had minimal impact from the winter storm and hope your holidays are joyful and peaceful.

This month we look at the role of stress in team work and take another look at generational issues in response to a reader's question.

Hope you enjoy!



Alan Krieger

Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.



Alan Krieger
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Survey Question

What is the factor in your workplace that impacts most negatively on teamwork?

email your comments to me:
alan@krsol.com

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Team Work **Working Well With Co-Workers**

PART III - THE ROLE OF STRESS!!

As noted in [earlier issues](#), (<http://www.kriegersolutions.com/oldnews/index.asp>) I've been hearing from a number of organizations about their staff not working well together. I identified three critical factors that impact on teamwork.

The last two issues discussed two of these factors - poor communication and the role of leadership.

This month we'll discuss the third and final factor - stress!

It's no secret that tough times lead to higher stress. "Do more with less" means working harder with ever increasing demands.

We can't eliminate stress (and wouldn't want to - some stress is helpful), but we can eliminate the negative impact stress has on our team.

The first step is to recognize stress as early as possible - in

yourself and others. Stress appears non-verbally at first, in tense muscles, anxious thoughts, frustration, depression, etc. The next version of stress is in behavior - anger, withdrawal, complaints, and lack of cooperation. Left unchecked this leads to teamwork breakdown and other negative consequences.

What to do?

Three things:

- reduce our own stress
- help others reduce stress
- focus on positives to keep the team strong

Reduce our own stress:

- Take several deep breaths and visualize a peaceful place - simple and it works!
- Find a good listener and talk to them
- Find a good problem solver and ask them to help you resolve the cause of the stress
- Take a brisk walk
- Think positively! Visualize a positive outcome.
- Take a stress management, time management or conflict resolution class

Help others reduce stress:

- Suggest some of the above
- Be the good listener and let them vent
- Help them find the source of, and solve, their problems
- Offer to help in other ways

Focus on the positive to keep the team strong:

- Take time to recognize and celebrate success
- Ask for input on decision making, not just on problem solving
- Ask for suggestions as to how to make the workplace even better
- Thank people for the good work they do and for being helpful to you and others
- Share a funny story, go to lunch together, have fun

I hope you found this series helpful. If you have other ideas about strengthening teams or reducing stress, let me know. I appreciate your input. email me at: alan@krsol.com

Return of the Generational Question

A reader wrote in: "I have witnessed that younger employees do not have much concern for coming to work on time. They wander in up to an hour late. Then it takes them

Time Management Tip

Take time at the start or end of your day to prioritize your work. Brainstorm your to-do list and highlight those that are most important and those that are causing you the most distress.

Once you've identified your priority tasks, schedule them into your calendar as if they were appointments. This is key!!

It often works best to schedule these at the time of day when you have the most energy and when your work space is least chaotic.

If you have a favorite tip or a tough time management challenge, let me know and we can discuss it in a future issue.

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45 minutes to get to work. Lunch is longer than allowed and going home is on time. In addition, they text message or talk on their cell phones when they should be doing company tasks.

How do you train a new employee that the start time and use of a day to do work is important?

This is a very common concern... and has been for decades (not the text messaging part). I think the key here is the focus on young, new employees, not the fact that they are the famed "Millennials". (See our [June/July](#) and [August/September](#) issues of the newsletter for more discussions on this topic.)

<http://www.kriegersolutions.com/oldnews/junejuly2008.pdf>

<http://www.kriegersolutions.com/oldnews/augsept2008.pdf>

Young people are at a stage in life where they are more focused on themselves and their peers than on older folks, especially authority figures. Youth is about developing your own sense of self and asserting your independence. Taking orders from a boss clashes with that. Young people also want freedom to do things their own way (Burger King). So time and attendance doesn't rank high on their list of values. They understand the importance of getting work done, but the details about time are less in their focus.

Texting or talking on cell phones is being connected to their peers, again an important issue for young people. It's higher on their value list than working.

This does not excuse their behavior and it is certainly correctable! We were all young once and while we didn't text or use cell phones (since they were not yet invented!), we had our priorities and values that were similar to today's youth. We talked on the phone and at the water cooler about non-work related subjects and/or complained about the boss. Yet most of us learned to be good workers and were successful.

Youth today, as all youth and all new workers, need clear directions and clear behavioral expectations. They need to know why these expectations are being set and why they are important. They need to be told what is appropriate behavior at work and what isn't. What's obvious to us may not be so obvious to them. Don't assume.

This can be best done informally through a discussion, not through written memos, although the written policy can be a good follow up.

The key to this is constant and equitable enforcement of the policy. For fairness and consistency, the policy needs to be measurable and specific.

For example - what does "being on time" mean?

In the door or at your desk starting to work? What is

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A Little Humor

For those of you struggling with the latest technological glitch... a few words of wisdom from John Cleese:

"Technology frightens me to death. It's designed by engineers to impress other engineers, and they always come with instruction booklets that are written by engineers for other engineers - which is why almost no technology ever works."

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"excessive lateness"? If these are specified, then it's easier to orient new staff and hold everyone equally accountable. If they come in early can they leave early or take a longer lunch? How about coming in late and staying late?

Different workplaces have different standards and practices. It's important to be explicit about those in your work place. Be sure to explain the "why" even if you think it's obvious. Coming in late may delay a meeting, or cause others to have to cover your work, or could make us look unprofessional, etc. Not working a full day makes others work harder, frustrates others, hurts the organization, violates the work contract, etc.

While this is obvious to us and important to us, to young workers it may be neither! Your job is to help new workers acclimate successfully to the work environment, so clear explanations and frequent feedback (positive and corrective) are needed.

And then there's the wisdom offered by one of my favorite comedians - Dave Barry - on understanding the younger generation:

"Another possible source of guidance for teenagers is television, but television's message has always been that the need for truth, wisdom and world peace pales by comparison with the need for a toothpaste that offers whiter teeth and fresher breath."

Let me know if you have other ideas or perspectives!

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