



ON THE JOB STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

J. Gladson

M.E., M.B.A., M.Phil, Part Time Research Scholar in Management Studies, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Post Graduate and Research Centre, Department of Economics, S.T. Hindu College, Nagercoil

ABSTRACT It is universally accepted that IT firms are highly knowledge intensive. The most disturbing feature of IT professionals is that they live at the edge of constant change. They have to cope with long working hours, unending user demands, unmet dead lines and skill obsolescence. In fact the work environment of the IT professionals, the world over is complex and stressful. Stress is considered to be a very dangerous problem which is endowed with the innate potentials to impair the lives of its victims. However, those who want to achieve great things in life and make the best possible use of the highly enviable opportunities available in the IT field should necessarily learn the ways and means of conquering it at any cost. This paper seeks to explain how the dreaded problem of stress could be over come by making use of the facilities provided by the IT firms themselves for meditation, creative visualization, counseling and relaxation. As these stress fighting programmes are easily accessible, company sponsored and specially designed to suit the needs and convenience of IT professionals at work they are treated for all practical purposes as “on the job stress management programmes”.

KEYWORDS :

The information technology industry is one of the most competition ridden profitable and fast growing industries across the globe. It plays a significant role in the growth of almost all industries including agriculture. Its magnificent growth mirrors how science and technology are mutually reinforcing and constitute the ace print of all economic and social transformation visualized by mankind. But, it cannot be denied that advancement in the field of science and technology cannot be dreamt of without hard work and abstinence from rest, relaxation and perseverance. However, hard work results in the problems of stress, which if overcome brings success and reputation. At the same time, it leads to loss and failures if it is allowed to over power or dominate anyone.

The phenomenon of stress is highly individualistic in nature. Some people have very high levels of tolerance for stress and thrive very well in the face of several stressors in IT companies. One example would suffice to make this point clear. Working under deadlines and time pressure, meeting high expectations of performance and working with inadequate welfare schemes. Practically speaking some people are not able to perform well except

when subject to a level of stress that activates and energize them to put forth their best efforts. There are certain others who become desperate when they are confronted with deadlines orders and fears of being thrown out of the company when their performance levels are not up to the expectations of the company in which they are employed. These people have obviously a low level of tolerance level.

It has become evident from the survey conducted for the present study that every individual has an optimum level of stress for performance at full capacity. If the stress is experienced below this optimum, boredom sets in and motivation to work starts dwindling down. Any professional operating in very low stress environment and feeling awfully bored is likely to withdraw from work psychologically or physically. Psychological withdrawal results in careless and repeated mistakes, forgetting to do tasks and mental distractions at work. Physical withdrawal on the other hand manifests itself in increased rates of tardiness and absenteeism. Under circumstances when the stressors in ones company are too many or too intense any IT professional gets seriously affected. When one is constantly being picked on by ones boss and has too many conflicts with the supervisors or disagreeable workers, or is engaged in a job that is exposed to high health hazards, its effect on performance will be adverse. The error rate will increase, bad decisions will be made and the professional concerned may experience insomnia, stomach problems, psychometric illness and burnout.

IT professionals working in the midst of stressors and surrounded by a stressful environment can become very successful and emerge as enviable achievers if they can convert their stressful environment into a practical field to acquire the basic skills needed to change their

cognitive behaviours, through meditation, creative visualization and methodic counseling, to prove themselves equal to their mounting work pressure. This idea has been accepted on all hands by IT professionals whose only ambition in life is to emerge as trail blazers and pace setters in the fields of their interest. It means that they are gearing themselves up for a multi pronged battle against the life threatening adversary of stress. As the IT professionals have been led to believe that their identity is based on the jobs they have been called upon to execute, they have started shedding the catastrophizing attitude. As their growing interest is in material prosperity and an alluring life style and getting international reputation, they are volunteering themselves to go through stress management programmes launched by the companies in which they work. The following table would show the extent to which stress management programmes have gained popularity among IT professionals during recent years.

Stress management programmes and their growing popularity among IT professionals

Name of the programme	Percentage of beneficiaries		
	2015	2016	2017
Counselling by professional counselors	67%	70%	78%
Training in creative visualization for refocusing and programming the minds of IT professionals	58%	63%	76%
Meditation programmes	47%	67%	69%
The place for relaxation set up and its usage	63%	77%	82%

Source: Survey figures

Stress management programmes are, thus; well received by the IT professionals who are aspiring for growth in their respective careers. Counselors with high esteem and professional skill, meet IT professionals, who feel very much burdened and over strained, in frequent intervals and show them escape routes when they face the formidable onslaught of stress. With this they can emerge as successful competitors, with their energy recuperated and skills refurbished. IT companies are convinced that stress prone technocrats can change their lives by changing the inner attitudes of mind. Their mental energy could be fully focused on their work once this goal is attained.

They are systematically led to believe that it is their altitude that determines their attitude. So the practice of training in creative visualization² as an essential prerequisite for refocusing and reprogramming the minds of the IT professionals, is resorted to in almost all the IT companies. This initiative has been well received by IT professionals of various categories as shown in the above table.

Another stress management programme which has been launched with significant success is the introduction of meditation sessions and places and time for rest and relaxation. Meditation and relaxation are basically intended to quiet the troubled minds of IT professionals.³ It is an invigorating experience because it allows anyone to watch the incessant and relentless activity of one's own mind and how much one is driven by it. It is widely believed that by constant practice IT professionals facing stress can quiet their thoughts and mind. An inner balance can help them to overcome the turmoil of life. In fact proper meditation and relaxation can change the mental behavior of any overworked and excessively strained IT professional. Meditation and relaxation which exercise such a profound influence on the mind set of any one is nothing but "non-doing". When there appears to be no thought taking place, one feels sufficiently relaxed and fit for taking up any arduous task with renewed energy and enthusiasm. It has been agreed on all hands that a few minutes of meditation a day can change a habit that took years to form and get reinforced. It can cancel out, hours, days or even weeks of negative thinking and acting.

The IT field is quite competitive and the prospect of growth available is quite unfathomable to any one who is firmly determined to combat the problem of stress at any cost and emerge as an achiever and an innovator. So, stress management needs to be scientifically crafted and judiciously practiced in the larger interest of the country in general and the young and vibrant IT professionals in particular.

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