7 Ways to Reduce Workplace Stress for Accounting and Finance Staff

The world of accounting and finance is filled with stressors, from regulatory compliance to new business demands. And stress can be good at times, driving your staff to be even more productive and embrace a “we’re all in this together” attitude to meet objectives and cross the project finish line. When the stress level becomes too intense and sustained, however, employees can suffer — and potentially, burn out.

As a manager, there’s a lot you can do to help ease the pressure on your employees and even increase their job satisfaction. Here are seven ways to reduce workplace stress for your team:

1. **Plan meetings with efficiency in mind**

   When employees face pressing deadlines and impatient clients, the last thing they want is to be pulled away from their work for a meeting that isn’t a good use of their time. So, before scheduling meetings with your team, be sure to ask yourself these three questions:

   **Is this meeting really necessary?** If you need to impart routine or non-urgent information, consider using memos or emails that workers can read on their own time. Save in-person meetings for major news, mission-critical project updates, ideation sessions or hashing out significant issues.

   **Who needs to attend?** Be strategic with your attendee list. Don’t invite the entire team when only a few key players are needed.

   **What’s the agenda?** Every meeting should have a clear purpose. Outline the topics and who will discuss what (and for how long). Let attendees know the agenda a few days in advance so that they can prepare. These steps will help your workers be more engaged during the meeting — and less stressed about taking time out of their day to be there.

2. **Promote wellness at work**

   Ordering pizza for your staff is always a fun way to relax and celebrate team success — or to boost morale when everyone needs to power through a working lunch or late-hours project. But to help fuel your employees through their day-to-day responsibilities, consider providing healthful snacks, like fruit and nuts, in the breakroom. If your budget allows, give your team access to or discounts for fitness programs and classes, either on- or off-site. (And give them ample time for those activities, too.)

   Why are these things important? Healthy people are typically better able to weather stress than those who are less mindful about their overall wellness or don’t have enough time to focus on it. A comprehensive workplace wellness program can help employees maintain their health and well-being, and be ready to meet the challenges the workday brings. It also can be an effective recruiting
tool for your organization: 73 percent of workers interviewed for a recent Robert Half survey said they consider health and wellness offerings when choosing a job.

3. Assess your own work habits

If you want to reduce workplace stress for your employees, setting a good example can do more than you might think. Are you always staying late at the office? Do you send department-wide emails on weekend mornings? When was your last vacation? Your employees are paying close attention to your habits — and following your lead. If you’re constantly working rather than taking time out for yourself, they will do likewise.

So, take a good look at your own everyday practices at work and, if necessary, make some adjustments. Whether it’s taking part in a lunchtime yoga class or leaving the office at a reasonable hour, explore ways to reduce your own stress levels. Your workers will follow suit. And together, you’ll make work-life balance a hallmark of your organizational culture.

4. Ease commute pressure

One of the biggest sources of employee stress is the daily journey to and from work. A recent Robert Half survey found that nearly one-quarter of workers (23 percent) have left a job because of a bad commute. And among respondents who reported that their commute has worsened in the last five years, 60 percent said their company had not helped to alleviate their commute concerns.

You may, in fact, be able to ease this pressure point for your workers. For example, if your team members’ job responsibilities don’t require them to be on-site at the office every day, allow them to work from home a day or two per week. Telecommuting programs are a much-appreciated perk that can also increase employee loyalty and improve retention rates.

5. Enhance collaboration with tech tools

A company culture that values — and enables — collaboration and connectivity for all employees can create a more positive work environment. Workers who feel disconnected and isolated within an organization can experience heightened stress and low morale.

Look for technology tools that can improve communication and encourage idea-sharing throughout your department. Some of the more popular cross-platform applications include Skype for Business, Google Hangouts, Slack, Asana and Trello. (These tools will also help a team of telecommuters to stay productive and connected.)

Chief financial officers interviewed for a recent Robert Half Management Resources survey cited keeping pace with technology as one of the greatest pressure points impacting their finance teams. So, be sure to help your team learn new tools — and adapt to new ways of working. Doing so can reduce workplace stress for your staff, as well as keep your finance department running optimally.
6. Bring in reinforcements

Workers are under more strain than usual at certain times of the year, such as during tax season or the year-end close. Special projects can create pressure, too. Most accounting and finance organizations only have enough staff in place to handle day-to-day responsibilities. And adding just one unexpected assignment to the to-do list could quickly lead to work overload.

So, if you want to reduce workplace stress for your employees, be proactive about providing them with extra support when they need it. Try to make room in your budget for augmenting your core team with interim professionals during peak periods. Engaging consultants for projects that require specialized skills and dedicated focus is another strategy.

Some employers rely on a flexible labor force regularly to keep up with business demands. Flexible teams include full-time employees who are focused on critical initiatives; interim and project-based professionals who support those workers, usually for a finite period; and other specialized resources that provide additional capabilities and perform high-value work as needed. (Read more about the new labor model for finance here.)

7. Foster open communication

In today’s go-go economy, some employees may be afraid to speak up about feeling overworked, worried that they’ll be seen as not being able to handle their job. So, as a final tip, strive to create a workplace where staff members know they can raise a hand if they’re feeling overwhelmed. Promote a positive organizational culture that values honesty and where employees know they can express their concerns — and be heard and supported.

Again, not all stress is bad. By helping your staff to maintain the right balance between pressure and productivity, your reward will be a team that has a positive attitude and gets more done.

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