


Managing for Maximum Performance
UCSD Extension Business & Technology
Chapter 16 – Managing Conflict & Stress – Fall 07



Managing Stress Technostress

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- Do you find yourself multitasking more, juggling multiple things at once?
- Do you feel like your personal and work boundaries have become blurred?
- Do you feel anxious if you haven't checked your voice mail or e-mail within the last couple of hours?
- Do you have a hard time determining when you are finished researching a topic on the Internet?
- Do you feel that no matter how much you do, there is still so much more to accomplish?
- Do you feel helpless when your computer or program doesn't work?

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What is Technostress?

Personal stress generated by reliance on technological devices, a panicky feeling, when they fail, a state of near constant stimulation, or being constantly “plugged-in”



How is this affecting us?


- Unable to complete task
- Find yourself forgetful
- Unable to think clearly
- Incapable of having a restful night’s sleep
- Headaches
- Stomach discomfort
- Backaches

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Technostressed

- Majority of the population feel uncomfortable with technology
- Even people who are comfortable and confident with technology can feel frustrated, intimidated and/or distressed in many ways



Combating Technostress

Finding ways to achieve a healthy balance of using technology without becoming consumed by it:

- **Awareness is the first step**
- **Take a technology time-out**
- **Limit your need to multitask**
- **Slow down and take a break**
- **Rekindle old interests**
- **Take vacations**

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Awareness is the first step

- Pin point where technology has created stress
- Keep a daily log or diary to identify when and how long you use the technology such as email, internet, fax, etc
- By becoming more aware of ways you use and possibly abuse technology, you'll learn to take control of it instead of being controlled by it



Take a technology time-out

- Take time each day to avoid plugging into anything
- Avoid computers, fax machines, phones, and any other technological devices that habitually demand your attention
- Get up, walk around the office, stretch, do breathing exercises, or meditate
- A quick time-out can help you feel more refreshed and better able to tackle the next technological task

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Limit your need to multitask

- Not everything needs to be done all at once. While you may feel as if you are getting more accomplished, multitasking actually hurts your concentration.
- Learn to focus your attention on one task at a time. Instead of answering your e-mail while talking on the phone with a client, only check your e-mail or only check your voice mail.
- You'll find that by learning how to prioritize and setting goals for when and how you use technology, you'll be less distracted and better able to concentrate.



Slow down and take a break

- Give yourself more time to complete tasks: e-mail, phone call, read, etc
- Give yourself time to get to next meeting
- Take 5-15 minutes away from your desk to strength
- Exercise-whether it be during lunch or after work

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Rekindle old interests

- Take time to enjoy the non-technical things in your life
- Spending time on other interests will give you a different perspective on your time pressures at work and help you feel better refreshed when you return to the office.



Take vacations

- When you decide to take a vacation, make sure it is a real vacation
- Don't tote your laptop, cell phone, or BlackBerry on the trip or expect to keep in touch with the office
- Go out to dinner or to the movies with family and friends and don't take along your cell phone

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Learning to feel completely relaxed without access to technology may be a little daunting at first, but in the long run it will prove worth it!

We must learn to be the driver and not be driven by technology



- Interview with Barry Parker, VP of R&D
- How many hours do you work a week?
Approximately 60
- What is stressful to you?
It is stressful when we are not satisfying our customers and also when I am trying to maintain a high level of responsiveness while communicating with numerous global locations and contacts. I like to respond to questions within a few hours and sometimes with the overall load of activity it takes a few days to respond. I also hold others to the same high level of responsiveness and service and I become stressed when they do not perform to my expectations.
- What is the chief source of stress in your work and life?
Time – I constantly battle with time constraints and priorities. With a good amount of hours worked and a heavy travel schedule, it is difficult to balance the work life and personal life and complete everything in the time frames required.
- How does stress make you feel?
Stress makes me feel like I should be pushing, driving, working and accomplishing more and if I don't maintain that level I'm not being effective which impacts my self worth. I am driven by accomplishment and when I am feeling stress it seems I am not accomplishing enough. I suppose the primary feeling is fear of not being as good as I desire to be. Physically it feels like an increased heart rate, general lightness, and a different pattern of breathing.
- How does stress affect you?
Stress has both positive and negative effects on me. On the positive side it is somewhat of a motivator keeping me focused on what is really important to achieve the results I'm seeking. On the negative side it affects my moods and how I deal with other people. I like to be very personable which is my nature but when stressed I don't take the time to be as personable as I would like to. Stress also negatively affects my energy level. When in the heat of the moment the stress actually increases my energy level but over extended periods can leave me with no energy and therefore less productive. It also occasionally affects my sleep habits in the form of insomnia.
- How do you cope with stress?
I have come to understand stress much better over my career and feel that I cope with it pretty well. I have a good sense of the signals in my system when stress begins to rise and I take measures to head it off. The measures that I take include occasionally backing off of an issue and not pressing for a solution or taking pause and re-evaluating my priorities to assure my efforts are focused in the proper areas. I also attempt to guard my personal time closely rather than sacrificing it to demands of work. I take time for physical conditioning in many forms which takes my mind off the stressful thoughts. I think that this leaves me more relaxed and productive overall.
- Name several ways that stress can manifest itself in the workplace?
- It can become an overall culture in the workplace; it can create conflict, it can mobilize and unify efforts; it can sub optimize important efforts; it can differentiate employees; it can de-motivate employees and make them less productive; a proper level can foster a high level of performance; it can cause errors
- Is technology helping or causing more stress?
I have mixed feelings on this topic. I don't believe that I could accomplish nearly as much as I do if it weren't for technology. However, technology has minimized the amount of spoken communications which I feel are quite essential. The absence of this type of communication leads to a good deal of miscommunication and misunderstanding. These outcomes actually end up requiring more time to resolve. Also feel that I spend too much time resolving technology related issues which costs me valuable time and therefore creates stress. Overall I would say that technology helps stress but on any given day I might answer differently.
- How does having BlackBerry affecting you?
I like having the BlackBerry as a tool. It enables me to turn non productive time into productive time which I really like. I also like it from a schedule and task management perspective. It used to be a stress creator for me as I felt the need to respond to every e mail communication immediately but I have since made it serve me rather than me serving it. I keep it in a quiet/non-vibrating mode for everything other than phone calls. This way I don't feel compelled to read e mails as soon as I get them. I consider it valuable and an aid in helping manage multiple tasks and priorities. I like that I can have a portable place for storing information. The less data I have to keep in my head the better I can manage my stress level.

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