



THE INSTITUTE OF
LEADERSHIP
& MANAGEMENT

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Leadership Essentials

The Healthy Workplace

Achieving leaders recognise the importance of a healthy workplace



The Institute of Leadership & Management's Mind Culture Report (2017) highlighted how many people are affected by mental health issues and how much this is costing employers not least in terms of days absent. Managers have a responsibility to look after the physical and emotional wellbeing of their employees and in so doing improve the performance of the organisation as a whole.

Health and Safety

Everyone is entitled to work in a healthy and safe environment where risks to their health and wellbeing are properly monitored and controlled, and this matters to employers because this moral obligation is reinforced by a legal framework that they must follow to ensure compliance with relevant health and safety legislation.

Keeping your employees, customers and visitors safe, and not exposing them to health hazards, is usually a matter of simple common sense and should be done because you care about them, not because you're frightened of being sued for neglect! As the Health and Safety Executive's website says: 'Managing health and safety doesn't have to be complicated, costly or time-consuming. In fact it's easier than you think.' HSE (2014)

Not managing health and safety usually turns out to be much more complicated, costly and time-consuming.

If you work in an organisation with five employees or more, it should have a written Health and Safety Policy with which you should familiarise yourself. You must make sure that you and your team follow it.

Remember that you do not have to remove all risks; life itself is a risky business, but an effective leader will want to minimise risks as much as possible, and legally you are obliged to do so. The best way to identify possible risks is to start by walking around your team's workplace(s) and look out for hazards. Involve your staff in this for more than one pair of eyes and for ideas about what to do about any dangers you've identified. Talk to each team member about any other hazards that they might be confronted with in the course of their work, or which customers or suppliers might face and what can be done to minimise these.

Bear in mind that circumstances change (new equipment, change of office layouts) as do staff; a new member of staff may be disabled and need special consideration, or one of your team may become pregnant. If you feel at all unsure about any aspect of Health and Safety, refer to <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/>

Stress and Work Pressures

Stress is defined as a state of mental or emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

This includes work pressure, and can result in physical symptoms. It's not just day-to-day activities that contribute to work pressure, many factors add to the demands on your team.

Most sectors experience frequent change and there's no doubt that working within a constantly changing environment can be demanding and require you and your team members to cope with unpredictable workloads. As well as to help find ways to help your team meet these demands.

Help team members to reduce stress and manage tasks by encouraging them to adopt a positive attitude and see the value of the task, particularly the scope it has to support their development, or as recognition of their ability to perform at a certain level.

**Adopt a
positive attitude**

**Focus and
prioritise**

You can also support them in working out what needs to be done and when, drawing up a schedule where necessary, as well as considering any other deadlines and tasks that can be renegotiated or delegated to others.

**Time
management**

**Get help
from others**

How to say no

You may need to say no to your team taking on extra work, or support team members with learning how to say no. This can be really difficult, make the process easier by:

- Understanding the nature of the task and considering how the request fits in with your team's objectives and responsibilities.
- Reviewing the availability of team members, making it clear when it will or won't be reasonable to allow them to take on extra responsibilities.
- Explaining how additional tasks will impact on other work, making the reasons for saying no, if you choose to do so, clear.

Rewards

It may not always be possible to reward team members financially for managing a heavy workload, but you can remind them of other benefits, including a sense of achievement, an enhanced profile in the organisation with the potential to lead to promotion, as well as allowing them to gain new skills and experience. Say "thank you" and, where your organisation is able to, offer non-monetary rewards, such as time off at a later point. Set an example and lead the way in demonstrating the same attitude and actions you want your team members to employ.



**WELL DONE!
THANK YOU!
GREAT WORK!**

Work/Life Balance

The Mental Health Foundation, encourages each individual to take ownership for their work-life balance by:

Speaking up when work expectations are too much, taking proper breaks and monitoring work hours

Working 'smart not long' by assigning time parameters and not getting involved in less productive activities

Drawing a line between work and leisure and not bringing work home

Reducing stress through exercise, relaxation, hobbies and spending time with family and friends – making sure these aren't sacrificed to work longer hours

Flexible Working

The growing trend towards flexible working practices, gives employees flexibility on where, when and the hours they work. Although traditionally associated with the needs of parents and carers, increasingly organisations are recognising the business benefits of a more flexible way of working.

'My business is built on flexible working. It means I attract and retain very good, committed and loyal people who are never worried about work/life balance as that is at the heart of our business values.'

Private sector CEO, 10–49 employees (Institute of Leadership & Management, 2015).

Mindfulness

Although short periods of pressure can help individuals to achieve challenging targets, in the long term stress can have a serious impact on both physical and mental health. Research by Be Mindful (2017) has shown that mindfulness can reduce the physical symptoms of stress and reduce anxiety. Mindfulness encourages the use of techniques such as meditation, yoga and mind-body exercises helping individuals learn to cope with stress.

Implementing a well-being initiative

Take action to address wellbeing in your organisation and consider with the HR team the following steps:

1 Identify the need to take action – A good starting point is to look at sickness and accident records, as well as the outcomes of exit interviews and questionnaires or discussion at team meetings.	2 These investigations will help you decide what action to take and who to target. This might be a specific group of individuals, or all employees.
3 Set objectives for the initiative, identify the activities, consider the costs, resource requirements and budgetary constraints, and seek support from senior employees where necessary.	4 Evaluate the impact of the activity and consider what you might need to do differently next time.

References

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Dimensions of Leadership

The Institute of Leadership & Management's Dimensions of Leadership offer, often elusive, insights into great leadership. This is not a static representation but an evolving description of the complex nature of leadership activity.

Find out more at www.institutelm.com/learning/dimensions-of-leadership.html

