
Stress Management: Case Study Of Frank Taylor's Automobile Dealership

Introduction

The employees of Frank Taylor's automobile dealership have been experiencing stress-related problems for some time. As a result, I have been hired at Frank Taylor's automobile dealership to help high-achieving salespeople to reduce and manage work stress. Upon my arrival to the firm, I was briefed that I will be working with employees that may be classified as Type A personalities that have been experiencing symptoms often correlated to chronic stress, such as, hypertension, high cholesterol, and migraine headaches.

My objective is to develop a stress management program that incorporates both relaxation techniques and physical exercises that can be implemented and utilized in the workplace individually and in-group sessions several days a week. The goal of this stress management program is to improve the overall life and wellbeing of individuals that work in the sales workplace that possibly have Type A personalities who experience the negative outcomes of chronic stress. Furthermore, I strive to guide these individuals to maintain a balance between work and life outside of work and to help in reducing negative Type A tendencies that can be potentially harmful to one's health.

What is Type A Personality?

Before describing my observations around the workplace and going into specifics of the stress management program, allow me to first describe what Type A personality is and the traits and behaviors of an individual with a Type A personality. Type A, with the counterpart Type B, is a theory of personality on a spectrum of personality related to how we react to and cope with stress. An individual with a Type A personality may display behaviors such as the following: impatient, hostile, aggressive, overly competitive, organized, time-conscious, achievement-oriented, work-obsessed (workaholism), and need for dominance. Essentially, people with Type A personalities can be described as ambitious people who are motivated and determined to reach their goals. (Scott, 2019).

Because people with Type A personalities are competitive, achievement-oriented, over-achievers who tend to lean towards workaholism, these individuals have a higher susceptibility to chronic stress. Due to sales being one of the most stressful occupations, salespeople are known to overwork and experience chronic work-related stress due to being under a tremendous amount of pressure to meet quotas and maintain a positive and steady approval ranking in sales. (Hedges, 2016). One may experience stress in any job they do, whether it is short-term stress or long-term stress, and this is completely normal, especially in jobs that may be demanding a deadline or require a great amount of time management, responsibility, or even an unrealistic set of goals. Short-term stress is not particularly a harmful thing because a small amount of stress can potentially be beneficial to motivate one to execute good performance and strive for success. With this being said, chronic stress can be detrimental to one's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

When we encounter a potential stressor, whether it is an actual, real threat or an imagined threat, our body changes physiologically in reaction to the stressor. During the fight-or-flight response, the release of the neurotransmitter catecholamine which releases the hormone adrenaline and noradrenaline which results in increased heart rate, respiration rate, and blood pressure. When people are subjected to experience chronic stress, whether it is work-related or not, are susceptible to developing health problems, such as, coronary heart disease, obesity, diabetes, a weakened immune system, etc. (Pietrangelo & Watson, 2017). Chronic stress can contribute to the development of depression and anxiety, too. People who encounter excessive stressful situations oftentimes deal with the stress in an unhealthy way, for example, overeating or undereating or turning to cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs for stress relief.

Observations

After days of navigating around the workplace and observing the high-achieving employees as they fulfill daily tasks, I can confirm that the employees unequivocally exhibit signs commonly characterized as Type A behavior. Throughout the day I captured moments of hostility, impatience, tension, and competitiveness amongst the employees, especially those working together in groups. In addition, I noticed the majority of the employees were seemingly aware of the time as they constantly checked their watches or the clock on the wall to ensure completing tasks at an adequate pace. Further, the employees were highly organized with to-do lists to ensure completion of certain tasks with a set time period in which tasks must be accomplished. Some of the employees were seemingly multitasking and juggling multiple duties at once.

I also saw moments of strong achievement-orientation and ambition and deadline-drive in these employees. Some of the employees seemed satisfied by their work only when the employer was satisfied, which I feel shows clear indication that the employees were not happy with how hard they were working and were actually critical towards themselves and hard on themselves. Because sales is a stressful occupation, it requires a high demand on meeting certain deadlines and when employees make an error, it makes it more difficult to reach the goal. Instead of working together to reach a goal, I noticed signs of social isolation, hostility, aggressiveness, and competitiveness, almost like they were all secretly wishing the other would fail so that one could be ahead of the rest.

By the end of the work day, I noticed the majority of the employees showing physical signs of stress and Type A personality characteristics, such as, facial tension, facial sweating, tongue clicking, teeth grinding, dark under-eye circles, and I even noticed several employees rubbing their temples or massaging their necks, which indicates they may be experiencing aches, pains, and muscle tension. Overall the employees looked physically and emotionally drained. When the majority of the employees headed home for the day, several of them stayed behind to work overtime. Being work-obsessed is a common trait in people with Type A personalities. Oftentimes individuals with Type A personalities become so committed to their work that they begin to develop stress or symptoms of prolonged stress overtime.

On the final day of my observation, I met with each employee of Frank Taylor's automobile dealership one-on-one for some alone time for the purpose of learning about their thoughts about working at this firm as well as discussing the symptoms they have been individually experiencing since working at this firm. The majority of the employees shared similar symptoms of stress; hypertension, high cholesterol, and migraine headaches.

Others have experienced additional symptoms, such as, anxiety, depression, irritability, muscle tension, chest pain, sleep disturbances, lack of motivation and focus on things outside of work, overeating, and not performing enough physical activity throughout the week. Several of the employees have shared that visits to the hospital have been more frequent than ever before. A few of the employees opened up and share that they have been dealing with problems at home with their families, spouse or with their children due to stress from work and workaholism putting a strain on interpersonal relationships.

The Stress Management Program

I have created a stress management program for the salespeople of Frank Taylor's automobile dealership that comprises both relaxation techniques and physical exercises that can be performed by employees of all ages. The program consists of effective stress relief techniques, such as, breathing and relaxation exercises, easy physical/aerobic exercises and a weekly one-on-one and in-group counseling sessions. Because the goal of the program is to aid the salespeople of Frank Taylor's automobile dealership is to reduce and manage stress as well as improve the overall quality of the workplace and the lives of the salespeople outside of the work setting, it is mandatory for the employees to be present throughout the entire program. The only exception to absence is if an unexpected emergency arises.

Program Schedule

Monday

12:30-13:00 Deep Breathing

15:45-16:30 Mindfulness Meditation

Tuesday

12:30-13:00 Progressive Muscle Relaxation

15:45-16:30 Easy Physical Exercises

Wednesday

12:30-13:00 Deep Breathing

15:45-16:30 In-Group Counseling Sessions

Thursday

12:30-13:00 Mindfulness Meditation

15:00-17:00 One-On-One Counseling Session

Friday

12:30-13:00 Visualization

15:45-16:30 Yoga

Benefits of Activities in the Stress Management Program

Relaxation techniques, such as, deep breathing, mindful meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualization are part of the program. Relaxation techniques are vital in stress reduction because it slows down heart rate, reduces blood pressure, promotes core muscle stability, and helps in managing stress. (Scott, 2018).

Physical exercises include yoga and easy to do exercises, such as, stretching, 30 second planks, pushups, sit ups, jumping jacks, and walking outside around the building of the firm. When we exercise, our body releases endorphins, which are neurotransmitters that make us feel good. (Madell, 2016). Physical activity is essential in stress management as any form of exercise can be a stress reliever. Exercise overall improves mood and self confidence and can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Counseling sessions included in the program are in-group counseling sessions and one-on-one counseling sessions. In-group counseling sessions and one-on-one counseling is considered to be one of the most beneficial approaches to dealing with stress or grief. Having someone to confide in, whether it is a loved one, a friend, or a trained professional, is ideal in successfully managing and coping with our stress because opening up and expressing our true thoughts, feelings, and grievances help relieve us from stress. (9 Key Benefits of Counselling and Talking Therapy, n.d.).

Conclusion

The salespeople of Frank Taylor's automobile dealership have been experiencing symptoms developed from prolonged stress. As previously mentioned, working in the sales world is one of the most exceptionally stressful careers, therefore, salespeople experience a tremendous amount of stress on a normal basis from being required to meet weekly, monthly, yearly quotas and maintain a high sales ranking. People, particularly with Type A personalities, experience constant stress because of their qualities. Moreover, people with Type A personalities are high-achieving and work-obsessed so they are more susceptible to becoming workaholics which leads to prolonged periods of stress. Stress is a natural part of life that everyone experiences from time to time and occasional stress is not particularly a harmful thing. With that said, chronic stress and being under constant pressure with the inability to manage and recover from the stress can take a major toll on the human body and mind and can lead to the development of serious illnesses later on in life.

With the implementation of my stress management program, I hope the salespeople of this firm can work together to make positive changes and to consistently practice the stress reducing methods for positive improvements. Most importantly, I hope the quality of not only the work life but the personal lives of the employees can be positively improved once they learn to reduce, manage and cope with stress.