

Category: Human Resources

Help Your Team to Manage Project Stress

Simon White

All projects involve an element of stress. But how you manage stress will influence your performance in your role.

We all know what stress is. It is the thing that makes your hair turn grey and your *frowns* appear more often than *smiles*. It is natural that projects attract a lot of stress, as you have a fixed set of deliverables to produce in a fixed timeframe and with fixed resources - and all with your project sponsor breathing down your neck!

Positive stress can be generated in an environment which boosts productivity and focuses your team on the end goal. But *negative* stress is another side-effect, which can demoralize staff, reduce efficiency and de-focus your team. In this type of environment, you need to turn negative stress into positive stress, and to do that, we have listed here some tips and hints to help:

Step 1. Time-Out

Positive stress can only be generated when people within teams have positive relationships. And to create these relationships, one of the best ways is through teamwork and socializing. Whether it is taking the team out for regular lunches, drinks after work or a sporting activity, getting the team together so they can get to know one-another outside of the project environment is critical to dumping negative stress.

Step 2. Rallying

Your team members have built positive relationships through taking time out to socialize together. Excellent. The next step is now to rally your team around a cause - your project goal!

Schedule monthly "get-togethers" at which you reiterate the project goals, congratulate them on their successes to date and boost their confidence in doing what it takes to complete the project successfully. Make sure that each person leaves the meeting energized and passionate about finishing the remainder of the project.

Step 3. Boosting

Of course, rallying works fine for teams, but it is not enough for individuals. You need to "boost" every team member by making them feel good about themselves and allowing them to gain confidence in completing the tasks assigned. You can do this by:

- Recognizing great performance when you see it
- Conducting staff reviews and providing positive feedback
- Offering bonuses for outstanding performance
- Reviewing salaries when applicable
- Introducing team awards and prizes

Step 4. Pin-Pointing

Often stressed teams have an "*instigator*". This is a person(s) who generate a lot of negativity and who influence the performance of others around them. You need to address these people directly.

When you conduct your staff performance reviews, make sure that the negativity of an *instigator* is identified in these meetings and agree with them on an action plan to help them to improve. Pin-pointing "stress points" or "weak points" in a team is one key element to ensuring project success.

Step 5: Self-Administering

Of course, to resolve team stress effectively, you need to be in the right "frame-of-mind" yourself. If you are negatively stressed, then those around you are likely to be also.

So to "practice what you preach" you need to feel up-beat and positive about the team. You need to feel fit and healthy, focused, yet inspirational! If you can achieve this frame of mind, then you can turn negative stress into positive stress and give your team a real chance at succeeding.

Step 6: PM Methodology

Use a [project management methodology](#) to give your team a solid process for delivering projects. Use project management templates to make it easier to create project deliverables.

Source: Simon White, Method123's Fortnightly Newsletter simon@method123.com