Defining Stress

"Stress" has become the defining maker of industry. Until about twenty years ago, the term was used loosely to refer to the "fight or flight" mechanism in a specific medical context. Today, however, the word has undergone medical semantic wording. Like "magic", stress is used by most people in the popular culture of today, often heard, discussed and observed. This paper attempts to examine some of the many factors that make up our society and culture. The social ubiquity of stress is reflected in its everyday parlance: "stress" is now an everyday term used in everyday life as a term of art, as a term of use.

Managing Technostress in UK Libraries: A Realistic Guide

Stephen Harper has a look at the changing face of stress in the library environment:

Managing Technology

The Employee Responsibility

Before considering major management techniques for stress, it should be emphasised that employees have responsibility for managing their own reactions to technological change. Employees must remember that it is not necessary to "have it all"; their behaviour is expected to be consistent with the new technology. Responsibilities, therefore, must be adapted to new technology. In doing so they take back the library and to information, and stress-relief devices are an important part of the employee's job.

There is an awkwardness in the relationship between employees' attitudes towards technology and psychological damage to themselves. In this sense, "stress" is often used in a career-oriented context. When levels of technological complexity are high, stress may be caused by joblessness and stasis. More specifically, it may be caused by the transition to a new technologically advanced environment. In this case, the job is held by a new generation of employees.

Managing Technology

Consequences for Organisations

Workplace technostress may have consequences for organisations as well as individuals. Certainly, organisations fail to understand the problems of technostress can expect to experience high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover. Managers who suggest that employees can cope with the stress of new technology are, at best, naive.

Psychological Forms of Technostress

"Theodore" in its original Greek sense of "skill". While Brod talks of "new technologies" (the phrase already sounds futuristic) it might be more appropriate to discuss the psychological forms of technostress as they occur in the library environment. The psychological manifestations of technostress may include physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and personal stress. Psychological stress may also result in the inability to concentrate or to think clearly, and may cause anxiety or depression.

Technostress: a Brod definition

"Technostress" has been defined in many ways, sometimes by the same author - such as but not necessarily in the same order. The original and still popular definition is that of Craig Brod, who describes technostress as "the combination of adaptation anxiety caused by the need to cope with new technology in a new environment" (1994-95: 4-5). Brod's definition helps to define the nature of technostress, including the role of the manager and the nature of the stress itself.

"Technostress" as used in this context means the stress caused by the change from one technology to another. In this sense, the term "technostress" is a useful concept for describing the stress caused by the change from one technology to another. In this sense, the term "technostress" is a useful concept for describing the stress caused by the change from one technology to another.

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through validation or arguments. Solutions might include those pointed out in stress in general, such as the workshops run by organisations such as Mindline, relaxation techniques, aromatherapy, kinesiology, colour and nutrition therapy. Such solutions, which are increasingly discussed in library and information circles, could certainly have here be be provided by trained practitioners. Even so, the health benefits of some of these have not been demonstrated conclusively, and much more scientific research on these areas is required. For these reasons budgets for such solutions must be carefully justified. This might be why keeping records of stress-related absenteeism

It might be wise, one feels, for library managers to concentrate on offering more rational, "targeted" solutions to technostress problems. Specific remedies for technostress would be aimed at reducing the psychological and emotional problems associated with the use of automation. Research suggests that certain factors play a role, for example, the use of a technical keyboard besides a computer keyboard. However, training would have to make some allowance for this.

Technology-based training
Identifying the training needs of employees suffering from the psychological forms of technostress may be difficult. Stressful employees may be ambivalent about their lack of confidence or ability to cope and such to hide their difficulties. This will be particularly common where staff have low computer confidence skills, such as those working in the many rural public libraries. Staff in such libraries are trained in technology in the workplace, so staff are willing to discuss their difficulties. However, training would have to show some allowance for this.

Technology-based training in certain sectors of libraries of all types. With more libraries keeping costs low by using staff staff training as an instrument. A disadvantage of in-house training is that the trainer has to reach out to the trainees for a given period of time. Moreover, some sources offer the advantage of better technological facilities and the opportunity for staff to learn away from the distractions of the library. Training outside the workplace, however, training may not always be easy to organise. For example, low staffing levels, especially in rural libraries, may reduce staff availability for training. In such cases training may have to be "on the job". Nevertheless, training likely reduces anxiety about technology.

While highly specific IT training may be desirable in some cases, it is not always necessary. UK academic libraries might wish to follow the example of Pennsylvania State University in the United States, which runs a mandatory 12-hour Automation Skills Training course designed to reduce the anxiety of new employees about technology. Part of this training is specific applications. Flexibility by the library in terms of where the training is given offers an effective way to ensure that it is relevant.

Moreland (1993) advocated the role of the psychologist Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to determine the most suitable form of technology training for individuals. Without scientific corroboration, however, not all managers or employees will be ready to accept the Myers-Briggs premise of possible personality types. What is clear from Moreland's article is that managers must be sensitive to different styles of teaching. Some will be more interested in the cost of training and traditional techniques; others will be more interested in self-study. As a result, the training scheme may be assessed through oral feedback, group discussion or questionnaires; managers should also monitor the employees' job behaviour level before and after training.

The effectiveness of any training scheme may be assessed through oral feedback, group discussion or questionnaires; managers should also monitor the employees' job behaviour level before and after training.

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