

Marilyn Manning and The Consulting Team's Leadership Tips



NOTE FROM THE CONSULTING TEAM

The Consulting Team salutes the summer with a focus on how to relieve stress in the workplace. We think summer is the perfect time for this topic. Besides the usual occupational stressors, teams also must tackle vacation coverage, face piled up work after their own vacations, and in some cases, grapple with mid-year results reports or new and tighter fiscal-year budgets.

In this issue of Leadership Tips, we provide tips and tools for leaders and managers that can help them lessen or eliminate stressors in the general work environment. We offer methods that work for managing individual stress. We also provide information about The Consulting Team resources that support a calmer, more productive atmosphere.

We hope this issue helps you reduce stress in yourself and your organization.

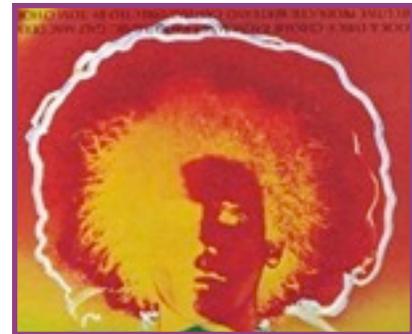
**Our warm regards,
Marilyn Manning, Ph.D.
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Stress Relief

Antidotes for the Most Trying Times

*“Summertime and the living is easy. The fish are jumping and the cotton is high.”
Summertime, by Gershwin/Heyward*

With the summer sun comes the lure of leisure, fun, and relaxation. But in today’s business world of temperature controlled offices, constant pressure to do more with less, and covering for others’ summer vacations, You may be more stressed than relaxed. How do we beat the heat of stress against the call of summer?



Throughout the year, leaders do double duty. They set conditions that make workplace living easier while trying to maintain their own cool. There are basic strategies to reduce the stress throughout an organization, many that we have presented in issues of this newsletter - strategic direction, measurable objectives, better run meetings, conflict resolution - to name a few. There are also other fundamental concepts and practices you can implement to minimize stress.

Clarity is helpful for reducing confusion and anxiety. Are employees clear about their roles and your expectations of them? Have you given them appropriate responsibility to deliver their assigned accountabilities? Roles, expectations, responsibility, and accountability need precise definitions and to be distinctly communicated, in order for team members to feel that their leaders support their work activities.

“Make money; have fun” was the slogan one of our clients, a Division Manager, adopted for his large team. Visitors to his office had not doubt of that when they were greeted by a four-foot high, grinning, green plastic dinosaur. His employees were motivated and engaged by the latest goal or contest he offered.

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Morale was high; results were high; and a party atmosphere pervaded the group's offices. He planned recognition events throughout the year. He maintained a cordial social climate with picnics, seasonal gatherings, and breakfasts for newcomers. Even important business meetings were comfortable, because he was a respected leader who remained calm in tense situations. His team could be externally competitive, but they maintained a close, collaborative relationship with each other that fueled their high performance. Enthusiasm replaced anxiety when the team faced great challenges.

The Consulting Team provided a dynamic, insightful presentation on stress reduction. Humor and energy made the talk most enjoyable. Their timely suggestions will be easy to put into practice. Everyone felt positive and empowered.

~ Jean Hardin, Literacy Coordinator
Livermore READ Project, City of Livermore

Value-based workplaces can also foster a sense of order and assurance. When employees agree to and are held to common values, they understand expectations and maintain professional behavior. When actions occur that are contrary to the stated values, employees feel comfortable in calling attention to and dealing with them. Managers support the values by modeling them and enforcing zero-tolerance policies for serious breaches like harassment and bullying.

Organizational change can be particularly stressful. People resist change. This resistance can raise stress and conflict levels. See **Tools of the Trade**, on page 4, for eight actions for **Stress Reduction During Major Change**.

Each employee is responsible for managing their personal stress as well. There are many physical and behavioral practices as well as practical methods in time management and organization that they can choose from.

One team we worked with combined exercise with conflict resolution. It became their practice for those in disagreement to take a 20 to 30 minute walk together through their company's large campus. The combination of fresh air, movement, a change of environment, and being left alone to work out issues reduced the stress of the situation and led to resolutions.

To manage physical stress you can drink chamomile or lavender tea or decaf coffee instead of Jolt to calm your frazzled nerves. You can choose to practice yoga or

Tai chi or run marathons or ride your bicycle to work to pump stress-reducing, mood enhancing endorphins through your body. Or you can borrow the "make money, have fun" philosophy from the Division Manager. Remember to laugh. When you do, it actually causes positive physical changes. Laughter turns your physical responses from stress and produces a beneficial, relaxed feeling.

To control your environment you can adopt habits that will help to relieve irritations. Set limits and protect them. Learn to say no to added responsibilities or activities.

Review your *To Do List* every day. Remember Steven Covey's advice to identify the urgent and important items to tackle first. Expand that concept when you review the issues you face. Apply energy and focus first on those that are urgent and important. Many issues that cause stress are either "gravity issues," (those that are beyond people's abilities to influence or control), or they are daily dramas that distract from issues that are important.

Take a broader perspective of the issues that surface. Ask how important they are in the long run. Are they worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

Sometimes simply keeping your work area organized can help ease a stressful work situation. Frustration rises when you can't find that important folder or an urgent note in the pile of papers on your desk. Keeping up on voice and emails can reduce anxiety for you and your colleagues, who may be awaiting your response to an urgent need.

Managing time underlies many environmental stresses. When stretched thin and running late, it's hard to stay calm and focused. Build in a brief daily pause to plan your day to ensure you don't overextend yourself. Before you reach home, review what worked today and what you need to change tomorrow. These brief reflections will help you improve your personal stress level. Don't forget to have fun in the summer sun.

The Consulting Team did an outstanding job resolving a difficult and stressful team dynamic that was eroding our morale and productivity.

~ Reed Kingston, President and CEO
Voci Corporation

The Consulting Team's Leadership Development Resources

The Consulting Team provides workshops and services that facilitate change, leadership growth, and conflict management:

Keynotes: The Consulting Team presents keynotes on many stress management topics. Here is a partial list of our offerings:

- ▶ Using Stress Positively
- ▶ Leading Positive Change
- ▶ Making Time at Work
- ▶ Resolving Conflict with Difficult People

Conflict Mediation Services: Unresolved conflicts, grievances, miscommunications, and blame waste time and energy. With our conflict mediation services you begin the process of resolving differences that may be keeping your organization from thriving. We use easy principles to help resolve current conflicts and effectively manage future conflicts. We also help you to 1) build cooperation, 2) diffuse anger so people can communicate, 3) modify behaviors to avoid future problems, 4) surface the real issues and clear the air, and 5) create closure so everyone can move forward.

Conflict Resolution Workshop: Conflicts drive up costs through lost productivity, potential legal actions, and stressful work environments. In fast-paced, stressful, or competitive environments this is especially true. Discover how to save time, money, and energy by resolving conflicts early, when they are easiest to solve. Learn to recognize when you need to call in the pros for the most challenging situations.

Strategic Planning: Strategic planning aligns your team for purposeful, effective change. Clear direction, values, and role responsibilities resolve conflicting priorities and ineffective initiatives. Developed with your organization's input and collaboration, this process creates greater teamwork, focus, and productivity. We provide planning guidance by facilitating meetings and workshops.

Leading Positive Change: This workshop helps you set realistic objectives, create strategies to overcome resistance, and implement initiatives for success. Learn how to gain buy-in and motivate others to change. Identify stressors, modify negative patterns, manage conflict and challenging situations, and maximize communications.

Leadership Tips is a periodic newsletter to help deal with the difficult issues in today's busy and hectic work environment. To see past **Leadership Tips** go to www.theconsultingteam.com and select Newsletters

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- ▶ If you know someone who would benefit from reading **Leadership Tips**, please forward this newsletter to them.

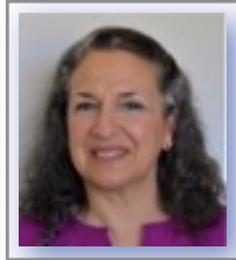


For more information on this new lineup, please contact m@theconsultingteam.com or claine@theconsultingteam.com.

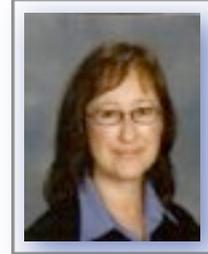
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For over 20 years the consultants of The Consulting Team have helped their clients solve difficult organizational and people problems. The Consulting Team, LLC was founded by international author, speaker, and certified management consultant Dr. Marilyn Manning. The Consulting Team is a recognized expert in many areas including communication, training, facilitation, coaching, leadership development, change, conflict mediation, strategic planning, and team building. Our success is evident in that 94% of our work is repeat business.

Tools of the Trade:

To Reduce Stress during Major Change:

- ➔ Communicate frequent updates
- ➔ Give specific and timely information and feedback
- ➔ Set short-term measurable goals
- ➔ Let people vent
- ➔ Provide responses to concerns
- ➔ Coach employees on explorations of options
- ➔ Reward employee acceptance, commitment to the change