

HEALTH AND FITNESS

Take Back Control and Personal Power in the Workplace

At the heart of the worst economic crisis we have known in years, employers definitely have the upper hand and employees can definitely be left feeling vulnerable, insecure and stressed. However it doesn't have to be that way. Mark Shields explains.

With the unemployment situation worsening and redundancies being announced daily many workers and senior staff are feeling the pressure. In some cases where colleagues have already been made redundant staff are finding themselves picking up new responsibilities and having to work a great deal harder in their current roles as the job crisis bites. In other cases life in the workplace has got far more political with back biting and a lack of trust between colleagues. Everyone would like job security and at times it would appear to be at any cost. Colleagues that you once thought you trusted, you are now in competition with so in order to keep your head above the pulpit you work harder to ensure that you remain indispensable to your employers. The days get longer and harder, the pressure more

intense, workloads double and the insecurity gets worse as the economic crisis deepens. This all has an impact on employees as the stress and worry increases.

You hate playing the political game often feeling that you are not very good at it and it is just not you. I wonder if that friend or colleague would have admitted the same if you gave them a lie detector test? Some enjoy the game but most deep down hate it, but see it as a survival technique.

You find yourself suffering from Sunday Night Syndrome. Those niggling thoughts and worries about work start as that internal voice begins to drive you mad with worry about going to work the following day. This is often followed by a sleepless night and so the cycle continues.

In some cases Sunday Night Syndrome can extend into Saturday

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Night Syndrome, and then you find yourself worrying all weekend. The weekends are important to enable you to relax and recharge your batteries so it is easy to see how stress begins isn't it. The roll on effect from this is that you find your confidence starts to disappear with doubt and low self esteem issues beginning to surface.

This in turn worries you more as you don't want your bosses to think you are stressed and are unable to cope as you need to keep your job at all costs.

So what do you do, to combat this vicious circle and how do you survive?

I have been in this situation personally and worked with many people over the years especially recently in helping people overcome these challenges.

If you follow the 5 step plan I describe below you will begin to feel stronger, much more confident and this will reflect in your performance at work. Always remember you are what you are perceived to be.

STEP 1 BE PROACTIVE

Make a conscious step to start doing things differently from right now. Today.

The first step is to change your outlook and stop playing the waiting game. There is nothing to be gained by waiting around for the worse to happen. You want to avoid attracting the wrong kind of attention and awareness, as this is when self fulfilling prophecies tend to happen. Make a conscious decision right now that you are going to do something about the situation you find yourself in. No more waiting around, take action today.

Mark your diary as the first day of the new you and notice immediately how your feelings begin to change.

Once you have made a decision to act, you are in control.

STEP 2 REMEMBER YOUR SUCCESS

There is nothing more stimulating and refreshing than updating your CV. This ensures you have an up to date record of all your achievements and previous successes. You are also prepared formally if you need to get ahead of the game when job hunting as most people leave this until they are unemployed and it then takes them several weeks to complete.

Most importantly it acts as a great exercise for you to recall and relive all of those past successes and achievements you have forgotten and you start to realise your actually good at what you do. You didn't get where you are today through failing.

A great confidence boosting exercise is to pick your 5 greatest professional achievements and write them down. Then quietly and silently relive each situation one at a time. Remember all of those good feelings and how great you felt at the time.

STEP 3 GET FIT

If you are suffering from Sunday Night Syndrome, or stress, the best and most sustainable course of action is to begin a structured daily exercise regime. The natural endorphins that the body releases directly combat the stress hormones you feel when you are under pressure. If anything ensure that you complete twenty minutes per day of cardio vascular exercising. In my experience the best exercise is swimming, however a brisk walk along the seafront at lunchtime will make you feel much better very quickly.

STEP 4 DEVELOP A STRATEGY

Once you have started to act on the above points you are halfway into your new strategy. Once you have a plan you are back in control and have moved from the back foot to the front. A tip that I have used is go and buy yourself a small notebook. Think about what you really want to do with your career and note your goals in the front of the book.

Then over time formulate a list of valuable networking contacts that you already know and add to this list as you meet new contacts and as time progresses.

Highlight each name individually and have a written reason to contact them every few months. As you go through this contacting process note down against each name what you discussed and diarise a future contact and follow up date.

Very quickly you will have built up a very valuable list of contacts all focused on future opportunities and job prospects. As this list grows so will your confidence and self esteem.

STEP 5 MARKET YOURSELF EFFECTIVELY

Proactively search out head hunters on the Island and target yourself to introduce yourself to one recruitment consultant per month. This is always confidential and it is good to proactively get your CV out there into the employment community. You will have some interesting meetings and begin to feel valued again especially when you receive encouraging and meaningful feedback from potential employers.

So there you have it. My top five tips into developing a strategy that will not only make you feel better, but help you take control of your current situation. Once you feel in control stress levels decrease, confidence grows and you will actually perform better in your current control than you do at the moment.

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