

THE ROLE OF TIME MANAGEMENT IN STRESS CONTROL AT WORK

Dr. Palki Sharma

Associate Professor, Chandigarh School of Business, Jhanjeri, Mohali.

Dr. Sanjeev Sharma

Chief Accounts Officer, Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd.(PSPCL)

Abstract

Job Stress is caused by a mismatch between job demands and individual abilities to deal with these job demands, the major reason being large volume of work and long working hours which create work life imbalance and increase the stress level of employees. Time Management is a method of optimization of most important resource at work namely time by exercising control over amount of time spent on various activities in order to improve one's productivity and efficiency in work life as well as after work life. The main activities in the process of Time Management is to plan in advance, setting up objectives, prioritizing tasks according to their significance, setting up time deadlines for these jobs and keeping a focused approach to maximize the output in the given time period. In this way, Time Management can ensure maximum productivity in given time which leads to lower Job Stress level of employees. Time management is also considered to be the management of one's life in an appropriate manner. Good time management means deciding what an individual wants to achieve in life and how he should establish ways to attain his desires and objectives.

Keywords: Job Stress, Time Management, Optimization, Stress Control.

1. Job Stress

Arnold and Feldman (1986) have defined Job Stress as an individual's response towards new or threatening factors at work. This definition clearly elucidates the specific nature of Job Stress, a factor that seems threatening to an individual may seem challenging and motivating for another individual. To take it further, Randall and Elizabeth (1994) have explained Job Stress as the interplay between various characteristics of a person and work requirements, if work requirements are more than abilities of that person, it will cause stress whereas if the person is able to cope up with work requirements, there is little chance of any Job Stress. Similarly Beehr and Newman (1978) have defined Job Stress as a condition which arises from interplay between people and their jobs, it is manifested by changes in their normal behavior and functioning. It can be said from above that Job Stress is caused by an imbalance between abilities of a person and job demands, it is manifested by special physical, psychological and behavioural demands at work from an individual. The above mentioned studies clearly establish that Job Stress level can be controlled by either lowering the volume of work or better management of work by concerned employee as Job stress is inherently an individual state and the same volume of work will be managed differently by different employees according to their individual abilities.

2. Reasons of Job Stress

Richards (1998) studied the reasons behind high stress level in employees and stated that mismatch between work demands and individual abilities to deal with it decide the level of stress carried by individual employee. Saraji & Dargahi (2006) found that any unforeseen increase in volume of work results in corresponding increase in job stress level of employees. It follows that better management of work can lead to lower stress level at work. Rajagopalan and Noyaline (2012) examined the stress level of BPO employees and found that heavy work load was one of the major reasons of high stress level among employees. Ravindran and Vijaylakshmi (2010) examined the job stress level of employees working in software field and found that ambitious targets

and long working hours at night were responsible for high stress level in employees. Khattak et. al (2011) researched the reasons for job stress among bank employees and explained that heavy work load and long working hours were responsible for causing stress in bank employees. Kumar (2012) analyzed the reasons of job stress among IT professionals and found that overwork and long working hours were amongst the major reasons of job stress among employees.

It can be seen from studies on Job Stress that major reason for a high stress level is large volume of work and long working hours required to achieve ambitious targets at work, which creates work life imbalance and low quality of work life (QWL), all this results into high level of Job Stress among employees.

3. Time Management

Drucker & Maciariello (2005) have stated that time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed. Time Management is concerned with effective use of time to increase productivity and effectiveness of employees which in turn lessens the stress level of employees at work. It includes various processes such as planning in advance for work schedule, setting specific objectives which should be ambitious as well as attainable, Prioritizing various activities according to their significance and urgency and maintaining a focused approach at work to maximize one's productivity. Time is most significant factor in everyone's life as it is the basis for coordinating and arranging all the responsibilities at one's hand in an effective manner. Time Management is a method of organizing one's work life according to desired outcomes at work, it can also be compared to a program written to produce a required outcome which is to optimize time according to significance and urgency of tasks at hand. The objective of Time Management is essentially to ensure achievement of stated objectives within given time to avoid any job stress. The usual method is to figure out how to make the most of each and every day and this goal should be further divided into various time zones in the day and further into hours in each time zone in order to maximize one's potential at work and it can be extended to after work life also which plays a great role in controlling the overall level of stress in one's life. Time Management can also be extended to after work life with a great amount of success in improving one's social and family life. Time is definitely one of life's most important belongings as one can never get it back in one's life time. Therefore, time should be efficiently managed between various activities at work and after work life according to their significance and urgency in one's life. In this way, one of the most fundamental abilities of any human being is to be able to effectively manage one's time usage at work as well as after work life. Time Management is the method of efficiently managing one's time between various priorities to optimize one's productivity to achieve the given targets within set time and resources. It is used in every aspect of human life especially at work, it is used to manage work stress which arises out of stiff targets to be completed within given time frame. However, effectiveness of time management can't be understated in other aspects of human life, which are called after work life. The judicious arrangement of time available to one after work decides the quality of after work life which in turn affects the quality of work life as both of these are interdependent.

4. The Process of Time Management

Time Management can be studied as a process as follows:

4.1 Effective Planning

Planning is the first step in the process of time management, one should plan its day well ahead of time schedule to avoid any last minute hiccups. There has to be a To Do List for tomorrow always to extract the most out of it. The activities to be done should be matched with time available in the day in order of their significance to optimize the time allocated for each activity. The critical and significant work should be on top followed by other works in decreasing order of priority right now. One should try to avoid any new work which is not in the list of works scheduled for the day unless it is really urgent as it will adversely affect the planned schedule for the day but at the same time, one should be flexible enough to accommodate any critical work.

4.2 Setting up Objectives

The specific objectives to be achieved should be set up in advance for an effective scheduling of time available against various activities to be performed to achieve these objectives. However, the objectives should be balanced in a way that they should be ambitious as well as attainable. The over ambitious objectives will put undue strain on the individual leading to increased stress level whereas easily attainable objectives will not provide necessary motivation for one to exert to realize its potential, therefore it is very important to set up objectives in a balanced manner.

4.3 Prioritizing Tasks

It is a universal truth that no one has everlasting time on hand, it is a resource which is always constrained and therefore it should be managed with great precision. Therefore, a crucial part of the process of Time Management is to prioritize the tasks at hand according to their significance for an individual and time available at hand. The interplay of both these factors decides the order of priority of various tasks which is followed by allocation of time available to these tasks in order of preference of an Individual. It is a given some of the lesser critical tasks will be left unfinished and rolled over for future as time is always limited even for critical tasks.

4.4 Setting Deadlines

Time Management involves setting up of deadlines for various jobs at hand, in fact the process of setting up deadlines eventually decides the effectiveness of time management as the amount of time allocated to each job at hand should be optimum which means it should not be either more or less than ideal time required to do that job. The best way is to use historical data to set up time for each job at hand which can be twisted a bit according to present situation. In this process, the judgement of person setting up the deadlines is very important as giving more time for each job will lead to under achievement and allocating less time will lead to over exertion and resultant increase in stress level.

4.5 Focused Approach

One should focus on job at hand to utilize the allocated time effectively, the effort should be coordinated and organized by proper planning pre hand to maximize the output. Multi-tasking is good but focus should be on main job as if one starts to try too many activities at the same time, the results would be half baked for each activity which will lead to loss of time and effort and eventually the scheduling would go haywire. There should be provision for rest breaks in schedule as one is not expected to work efficiently without proper rest breaks.

4.6 Delegation of Responsibilities

Time Management is involved with optimization of most important resource of time, it is also important to shift some of work at hand to others in organization in order to perform one's work in an efficient manner. The job delegation should be according to hierarchy in the organization so that skill level required to do a job is matched with specific individual in order to get best results. The jobs should be assigned according to intrigue and specialization of individuals to complete responsibilities inside cutoff times. An individual who doesn't know something about a job needs additional time than someone who does it on regular basis.

4.7 How Time Management works to control the Job Stress level?

- Time Management is involved with optimization of the most important resource called time at work which is achieved by allocation of this precious resource to various tasks at one's hand in order of the significance of tasks to achieve maximum productivity.
- The optimum allocation of time to various activities according to their significance and urgency leads to increase in level of productivity of individual employees. The increased productivity of employees lessens the stress level of employees as their improved performance is beneficial for them as well as their organization.

- Time Management is also concerned with ensuring work life balance as this balance is crucial to control stress level in one's life. It is achieved by optimizing the time spent on work and after work life as sacrificing any one of these two in favor of other can lead to undesirable stress level in one's life as career.

Time management is the process of setting goals, prioritizing those goals, deciding and allocating specified time to specific tasks, tuning plans as they change, revisiting the goals to prioritize regularly and observing the results. (Carla Crutsinger, 1994)

Mr. Lynn Underwood (2001) indicates that time management is managing the time of self and the time of others. One may need to struggle to overcome one's own personality. If one is sort of person who tends to put off tasks until the very last minute, he/she is going to have to make immense efforts to change the way of working.

Mr.Reuben Roy (2008) states that time management is splitting your time among various activities in which you are involved throughout a given period of time. It may help to three categories such as organization-imposed, boss-imposed and self-imposed. Time management is the process of setting goals, prioritizing those goals, deciding and allocating specified time to specific tasks, tuning plans as they change, revisiting the goals to prioritize regularly and observing the results. (Carla Crutsinger, 1994)

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5. Conclusion and Recommendation

It is found from various research studies on Job Stress that it is mainly caused by large volume of work and long working hours. Time Management is concerned with optimization of time by prioritizing the jobs at hand

according to their significance and urgency, it increases the productivity and efficiency of individuals which leads to lower the stress level of individuals. It has been seen that many people face a high stress level due to improper work life balance which results from improper allocation of time to either work life or after work life. The ideal mix is to allocate optimum time to both work and after work activities so as to minimize the stress level in one's life. Therefore, effective use of Time Management can lead to Stress Control in employees, organizations should invariably train their employees to enable them to use the technique of time management to control their stress level at work.

6. Future Course of Action

This study has clearly established the use of Time Management in controlling the Job Stress level of employees, the future research in this area should focus on use of Time Management in after work life of employees which is equally important as work life of employees as stress in one part of life has its effect on other part of life. Therefore, it can be useful for organizations to explore the effective use of Time Management in after work life of its employees to improve the overall quality of life of its employees.

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