

Contact:

Jill A. Kleiner
Coyne Public Relations
973-316-1665
jkleiner@coynepr.com

Chris Curran
Esselte
203-355-9022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Psychologically Toxic Office Space
Pendaflex Research Reveals Toxic Stress Risk Facing U.S. Workers

Stamford, Conn., October 18, 2005 – Recent research reveals that an estimated 72 million* Americans face a health risk at work - a phenomenon dubbed the 'psychologically toxic' office. The cocktail of long hours and a result-driven working culture has now become so severe that workers face even more health risks than ever before. As workers jockey through the last stretch of the year to achieve bonuses and score high on performance reviews, stress levels within offices escalate.

While mild stress is part of modern office life, nearly half (48 percent) of American workers experience pressure that has reached harmful levels. According to the study released by Pendaflex, a leading organizational solutions brand, some workplaces are actually 'psychologically toxic,' causing workers severe stress, anxiety and depression. This, in turn, can potentially lead to ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes.

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Workplace Stress Add One ...

The study found that Americans, more so than any of their foreign counterparts, are “on the edge” from stressful conditions in the workplace. While workers under the age of 35 report being under the most stress, research also indicates that women are often more affected by stress than males. With 49 percent of American office workers working late two to three times a week, its no wonder they feel stressed, leading to moodiness, irritability, underperforming in their jobs and experiencing a negative impact on their lives outside of work.

The Contributing Factors

International workplace psychologist Dr. David Lewis, who carried out the research, identified five main factors that affect stress. When three or more of these problematic areas reach high levels the result is a ‘psychologically toxic’ work environment, a wide-scale threat to American health and happiness.

- Heavy workload – affecting more than half (52 percent) of American workers, several of whom say they’ve covered for colleagues on maternity leave.
- Unreasonable boss – 37 percent of the U.S. working population, claiming they are expected to work when ill.
- Disorganization – 43 percent suffer from disorganization, neglecting filing and task prioritization thus making them feel overwhelmed and unable to cope.
- Unrealistic targets – Approximately one-third (32 percent) have been given unattainable sales goals and overly ambitious productivity aims.
- Short deadlines – affecting 31 percent of worker bees in the U.S. Examples include having too little time or notice to complete a task. If this happens in succession, it causes significant stress.

Workplace Stress Add Two ...

According to Dr. Lewis, stress is not caused by high levels of activity but more by a lack of control of one's working environment. Unfortunately, four of the five major causes of stress are outside the typical worker's control.

Stress Management Within Reach

Disorganization, however, is the single factor that workers can control and may consequently prevent the onset of this workplace phenomenon. Heavy workloads and deadlines can be managed by prioritization and time management and having more control over a workload can even improve relationships with the supervisor.

Unfortunately, many U.S. workers don't prioritize getting organized with only 1% regarding filing as an important element of work. In fact, this may be at the root of so many workers facing 'psychologically toxic' conditions in the office. Not surprisingly, lack of organization has meant nearly one-fifth (21%) have missed deadlines.

Candie Harris, Vice President of Marketing, Pendaflex, explains: "Of the five stress causing factors, people are most able to control organization. In fact, our research reveals that disorganization is a 'tipping point' in the build-up of psychologically stressful conditions. With the right coping strategies, even the heaviest workloads can be managed and excellent results delivered. Improving organization should be a starting point for many in combating the psychological dangers of stress in the workplace."

Office life is undoubtedly becoming more pressured. But as the report concludes, successfully mastering basic levels of organization enables workers to face even the toughest challenges.

*figure taken from U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Employment Statistics, 2004 publications

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Workplace Stress Add Three ...

About Pendaflex:

Pendaflex is one of the world's premier manufacturers of organizational solutions, bringing innovation, efficiency and style to workplace and home settings. Committed to simplifying consumers' lives, Pendaflex produces a broad range of filing and organizational products, as well as provides solutions and resources through www.IHateFilingClub.com and www.PendaflexLearningCenter.com. Located in Melville, NY, Pendaflex is the principal U.S. brand of Esselte Corporation, a \$1.2 billion office products company with subsidiaries in 27 countries and distribution in more than 120 countries. More information about Pendaflex can be found at www.Pendaflex.com.

Research Specifics:

Research conducted among 2,544 office workers in the UK, U.S., Italy, Germany, Belgium and Netherlands by Directive Analytics, including 504 in the US

About Dr. David Lewis:

Dr. Lewis is a renowned workplace psychologist who has written several books (including the best selling 'One-Minute Stress Management') on the subject of workplace stress. He has developed a six point plan for Esselte to prevent stress in the workplace

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