



Role-play game

Company: STRESSMAN LTD

Introduction – rules:

Stressman Ltd is a family business operating in the clothing industry. The company manufactures menswear from leisurewear to formal suits. Currently, the company has 37 employees. Nine of them are white-collar employees (CEO, senior vice president, marketing manager, quality manager, production manager, and four designers), and other employees work for production. Company's financial administration, property maintenance and repairs have been outsourced. The company was established in 1960. Its founder is about to retire, and therefore the company is facing a change of generation. The owner's son is about to continue as the company's CEO and owner.

During the last few months it has become evident that many of the company's employees suffer from work-related stress. The company's CEO has discussed the problem with an outside specialist, but wishes to try and solve company's stress-related problems at this stage without help from the outside. Therefore, he has decided to form a working group from the company's employees. The working group's goal is to identify the causes for work-related stress, to evaluate their significance, and to draft an action plan to rectify the situation. To achieve these goals, the working group has access to the tools received from the outside specialist.

The role play will have 6 – 10 participants. The director will cast the roles. The working group's task is to identify the causes for work-related stress, and to evaluate the significance of these causes, as well as to decide on actions to be taken, and to draft an action plan to rectify the situation.

The game ends after all given tasks are completed.



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Scenario:

Stressman Ltd

Founded: 1960

Corporate form: Limited Company, all stocks owned by one family

Business idea: Stressman Ltd manufactures menswear from leisurewear to formal suits combining high quality craftsmanship and latest fashion trends in a cost-efficient manner.

Number of staff: The company has 37 employees, 9 of them are white-collar and 28 work for production. The CEO's wife is the company's marketing manager and owns 25% of the stocks. Two of the family's children work for the company, one as a designer and the other as the senior vice president.

Currently happening at the company:

- the CEO is about to retire
- no decision on the next CEO has been made, most likely one of the CEO's sons will be nominated as the new CEO
- company growth
- internationalization and keys to success in new market areas

The company has undergone several significant changes within the last few years. The company that operated earlier only in the domestic market has now started to export its products to other European countries, its staff has increased by 10 new workers, and there has been a significant increase in the company's net sales. Also, the whole production related technology was renewed at the same time when the company started to export its products. The renewal included actions such as moving the production management to the company intranet. Company's marketing manager, one designer and the senior vice president have participated in the IT trainings. Training for other staff members will be organized sometime in the future. According to the CEO, there is no time to organize the training at this point. The new export business has



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brought about an increase in the incoming orders and the company is currently operating at full capacity. Tight delivery schedules have also resulted in a lot of overtime work for staff members. However, there is no clear agreement on overtime work between the management and employees. Some of the employees believe that accumulated overtime work can be taken as leave later at an appropriate time, and some are expecting an immediate compensation in the form of overtime pay. Understandably, the situation has created tensions between management and staff members. The senior vice president, the son of the current CEO, expects everybody to work overtime. "Having a family is not a reason to refuse to work overtime", he says. The manner in which the senior vice president presents his ideas is somewhat intimidating, at least for the women in the working community. The haste has also resulted in an alarmingly high number of quality deviations in the company within the last few months. A month ago, a big patch of men's trousers was returned from France, as every delivered item was found imperfect. As a result, the company had to compensate the customer for the damages caused by the poor quality. The working environment has deteriorated and no one dares to speak about any mistakes they may make or notice. The employees are keeping an eye on each other and hide their own mistakes as they fear for possible penalties.

The industrial accidents have nearly doubled within the last 12 months. The same observation applies to sickness absence. Also, the production facilities have several locations with a clearly elevated accident risk.

The company's CEO is becoming very concerned about the situation. In addition to complaints from customers, the tensions between workers have become more frequent and the working environment has unmistakably taken a turn for the worse. Accident and sickness absence costs are already starting to affect the company's financial situation. The CEO wishes to leave his son a company that is succeeding both financially and mentally, but at the moment it seems impossible to do so without intervening.



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Roles - tasks:

CEO Paul Pettersen: The CEO is a 60 years old and has been a businessman for most of his adult life. He is a very headstrong character and has always wanted to do all the big decisions. The CEO enjoys running a female-dominant working community and is allegedly having an affair with a young seamstress at the moment.

Marketing manager Brit Pettersen: The marketing manager is the CEO's wife and 10 years younger than his husband. Mrs. Pettersen gave up a promising university career to work in her husband's company.

Designer Petter Pettersen: 30-year-old fashion designer who has always worked in the family company. Petter is a very creative and a short-tempered character who tends to get into quarrels, especially with his brother.

Senior vice president Ben Pettersen: 29-year-old Ben has a background in economic science and he has been the company's senior vice president since his graduation. Ben is constantly competing for favor with his older brother and tends to entangle other employees into the brothers' conflicts.

Secretary Sibylla Stenman: Secretary Stenman is the CEO's 57-year-old secretary who has worked for the company since its foundation. She is the CEO's "right hand" who knows everything about everything and knows the entire company history by heart.

Production manager Karl Ketter: The production manager is a 40-year-old engineer. He believes that all conflicts can be solved and therefore finds himself often in the mediator's role in conflicts between company workers. Karl is a person that everybody trusts and with whom they can share their sorrows.



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Employee Anna West: Anna West is a 55-year-old seamstress who is actively involved in the labor union as the company employees' representative. Anna has adopted a tight policy on collective agreements and she is also a tough negotiation partner. Anna suffers from a slight lack of trust in her working community, which makes her work as employees' representative even harder.

Employee Eeva Elberg: Eeva is a 20-year-old seamstress – fresh out of school with lots of ideas she would like to put into action. Eeva and Anna don't get along too well due to their clear age difference, different working methods and because they see many things in a different way.

Employee Werner Wilen: Werner is a 55-year-old tailor who has felt an attraction to the CEO's wife for years. Werner is a careful and diligent worker and he tends to analyze the events taking place in the working community very deeply. Werner tries to support Anna in her employees' representative's tasks.

Employee Wilhelm Wood: Wilhelm is a 34-year-old dressmaker. He has been with the company for only a few months. Wilhelm quit his previous job because of the poor working environment. Wilhelm knows what it is like to suffer from work-related stress and burn-out. Wilhelm is actively making suggestions to improve the situation at Stressman Ltd.

Tools:

- Stress-related hazards in your organization – Evaluation
- **Anticipating** stress-related hazards
- Brainstorming
- Prioritization
- Action plan



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Stress-related hazards in your organization – Evaluation

0 = no stress, 1 = slight stress, 2 = reasonable stress, 3 = lots of stress

	points
My work is challenging and it has importance	
There are clear goals attached to work.	
The work tasks are interesting.	
Work includes enough variation.	
Mostly the workload is suitable.	
There is enough time to take care of my tasks.	
Work shifts are planned sensibly.	
Timetables are flexible.	
Personnel have the possibility to take part in the decision making process.	
The work community has enough control (no employee ambushing)	
There is sufficient fair feedback about work.	
Pay is fair in relation to the work.	
Employees have enough information and skills to do the job.	
Employees are familiar with their tasks.	
Work relationships are in good condition.	
The workplace is safe and there is not any workplace intimidation or pressure.	
Managers manage the work and employees well.	



ANTICIPATING STRESS-RELATED HAZARDS

Action/process/ organisation	Stress-related hazards	What can be done to eliminate the risk?



Brainstorming

Why use it?

To establish a common method for a team to creatively and efficiently generate a high volume of ideas by creating a process that is free of criticism and judgment.

It

- encourages open thinking when a team is stuck in “same old way” thinking
- gets all team members involved and enthusiastic so that a few people don’t dominate the whole group
- allows team members to build on each other’s creativity while staying focused on their joint mission

How it works?

- State a brainstorming question and write it down for everyone to see
- be sure that everyone understands the question, issue or problem.
- Each team member gives ideas and writes ideas on sheet of paper (one idea per sheet).
- Keep process moving relatively short (5 to 20 minutes)
- Put ideas for everyone to see
- Review written ideas for clarity and to discard any duplicates (discard only ideas that are virtually identical)



Prioritization

Why use it?

It is systematic approach of comparing choices by selecting, weighting and applying criteria.

It

- quickly surfaces basic disagreements so they may be resolved up front
- forces a team to focus on the best thing(s) to do, dramatically increasing the chances for implementation success
- limits “hidden agendas” by surfacing the criteria as a necessary part of the process
- reduces the chances of selecting someone’s “pet actions”

How to do it?

- Select the ideas (or actions)
- Write ideas (or actions) to table
- Compare ideas from three different standpoint and try to find consensus
- Column 1: Importance. Put ideas (or actions) to order so, that the most important idea (or action) is the first (1), secondly important is second (2) and so on.
- Column 2: Impressiveness. Evaluate ideas (or actions) and put them order so, that the idea (or action) which impress mostly in organisation or impress many employees is the first (2), secondly impressive is second (2) and so on.



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- Column 3: Possibility to effect. Evaluate ideas (or actions). The idea (or action) which is easiest to effect is the first and the idea you hardly can effect is the last one.
- Then account: Importance X Impressiveness X Possibility to effect = ?
- After this you have ideas in order: The one with lowest points is the first one, the second lowest points is second and so on.

Idea/Action	Importance	Impressiveness	Possibility to effect	Total points
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				



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ACTION PLAN

What to do?	When to do?	Person in charge