



Carole Spiers Group

International Stress Management and
Employee Wellbeing Consultancy

Established 1987



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‘Overcoming Stressors within the Family Business’

A Special Report by

Carole Spiers MIHPE MISMA

**World Authority on Corporate Stress
BBC Broadcaster & Best-selling Author**



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Employee Wellbeing Consultancy (UK)

Detecting and Combating the Everyday Pressures That Can Harden into Stress

Family businesses are perhaps more susceptible to stress than any other business structure because of the unique issues surrounding family dynamics and the complex nature of interpersonal relationships both at home and at work.

The Roots of Stress

Stress is a reaction to continued excessive pressure or responsibility which makes an individual feel inadequate and unable to cope. Pressure, that is not excessive can, on the other hand, be defined as the stimulation and challenge that is needed to achieve job satisfaction and high self esteem.

Stress is an extremely complex phenomenon that can affect individuals in many different ways and to differing degrees and can, therefore, severely impede the performance of an organisation to the detriment of its staff and its end product or service.

The cost of stress to a business is considerable and is reflected in high levels of absenteeism, poor job performance, low morale, increased incidence of accidents, poor industrial relations and low levels of staff retention.



How Good Communication Reduces Pressure

These problems are well documented but the solutions warrant more consideration. Essentially, most stress-related problems in family businesses centre on poor communications and unresolved conflict. Many of these problems can be resolved by implementing clear channels of communication, establishing regular meetings between both executives and managers as well as between different levels in the organisation.

In certain circumstances, it may prove necessary to enlist the help of an external facilitator to defuse difficult or intractable situations that give rise to conflict and emotional tension.

Stress and Organisational Change

Essentially a family business should have similar policies and procedures in place to deal with performance, disputes and grievances, as any other organisation and family members need appraisal and performance reviews in just the same way as non-family employees of the business.

When managing change, transparency is essential throughout the organisation, as a prerequisite for a successful outcome. Change is a key issue for the family business as it, for example, enters new markets and seeks to achieve a ranking in highly competitive environments. Unfortunately, stress is often an acknowledged side effect of organisational change and early identification of the signs and symptoms of stress in individuals and the workforce, as a whole, is essential.

Stress can act as a brake on progress and competitiveness by reducing the effectiveness of decision makers and creating interpersonal conflict. The correct and efficient management of stress, in a family business, where emotions can run high between members, is of critical importance, particularly when personal issues can spill over into the office. Stress awareness and early intervention are the key factors here.

Scenarios and Stress Factors in the Family Firm Environment

The following scenarios are common in family businesses. The solutions are often obvious to an outsider but not to those emotionally, and financially, involved:

'If you don't like your job, you can always leave and go to another one, but you can't just leave a family firm – much less, a family!'

To ensure continued growth and the sustained success of a family business, members have to work alongside each other effectively. However, there is frequently a lack of understanding and appreciation of what each person brings to the business, coupled with unrealistic expectations and different perspectives.

In non-family businesses, age-seniority doesn't necessarily govern promotion. But in a family-run concern, age and position within the family is often of prime importance. Most family businesses involve several generations in day-to-day operations and that can bring conflicting outlooks and opinions.

Take a typical father-and-son relationship in which the parent is conservative and risk-averse whilst the offspring accepts new methodologies and technology. The father fears losing control of the business he may have himself built with tried and trusted methods whilst his son wants to implement new ways of working. The parent brings with him a respect for tradition while the offspring is excited about throwing tradition 'out of the window' in a bid to embrace the future.

2-Way Constructive Feedback

'I wish someone would listen to my ideas – they could improve our delivery (or production) times!'

Constructive feedback on business matters should be regularly sought and acknowledged so that every family member of the business feels that they have a voice and their opinion can be heard. Consensus is more likely to be achieved when objectors have the opportunity to speak up, while being reminded of the boundaries and framework within which they are required to work.

Value the Differences

'No-one understands that I am not merely a clone of my father (or grandfather) – I am an individual with ideas!'

All family members have different strengths to bring to the business and these need to be identified, recognized and evaluated. However all individuals have different levels of ability and expertise. This expertise naturally needs to be used to best advantage for the overall benefit of the business.

Communicating is the Key to Family Business Success

'Just do what I say!'

Like a family working out a domestic problem around the dinner table, families in business have to be open about their problems, expectations and plans.

There can be a total communication breakdown if individuals are discouraged from talking about their challenges, and senior members need to listen to suggestions from everyone, even if they disapprove of many of them. It is the listening that is important and the unbiased evaluation of new ideas.

If a family member has a stress-related problem, then facilities should be available to allow them to talk it through and, if necessary, that external support is resourced for this member to ensure a speedy resolution.

Roles and Responsibilities

'I don't know what to do'

Role ambiguity is a major stressor. Everyone in the business should be clear about their role and the demarcations of duty. Clear lines of responsibility and communication within the company are essential, both for individual self-esteem and for the avoidance of resentment and frustration. When roles and methodologies are changed, then revised responsibilities need to be explained and implemented with co-operation from everyone concerned.

Mutual Respect

'Stop shouting at me in front of everyone'

Every person in the organization needs to be treated with dignity and respect and there must be zero tolerance to workplace bullying, from board members down to the lorry driver. When everyone is made aware that they are of value, then the entire business machine runs well. When they see that they are not appreciated, the engine will be difficult to start and harder to run.

All family members must be responsible for setting the right tone in their individual departments and need to be aware of their personal judgements and internal prejudices, especially over cultural diversity disputes.

On-Going Training

'I don't have the skills to do this'

Insufficient training in new methods of working and new IT or other equipment can very often be an issue and support needs to be properly resourced, either in-house or externally. Family members should not see it as a sign of weakness to ask for help. If there is a skills shortage, this needs to be resourced as soon as possible in the interests of the business.

Team Building

'We must work together'

Competitive advantage depends on everyone working together as a unified team. Older family members, who may see younger ones as a threat, should resist instinctive resentment or attempts to marginalise those with new ideas. New thinking is the life force of any undertaking, and should be encouraged alongside the tried and tested methods. Innovation can often make the difference between growth and stagnation.

Judgements and Prejudices

'You've never had it so good!'

Tradition should not preclude the introduction of new methods and systems. There are many ways of going forward to ensure a successful business.

Younger members of the family may wish to try new, unfamiliar ways of running the business, to compete in today's fast-moving world. They need the opportunity of going forward with their ideas, provided they can present a suitable feasibility plan. Proving themselves to older family members is an important part of their development. Mistakes may be made but it is up to the family to trust and respect their judgements and offer the support necessary to keep the business moving forward.

Personal Relationships

'I'm so frustrated about what is going on in the business'

Family members may view themselves quite differently to how others view them. No two people in the same family can be the same; they will have experienced different influences throughout their lives. Everyone will have been through different challenges and stressors in their schooling, with different peer group pressure.

Some members may be angry with each other over long-unresolved family issues and will be reluctant to offer support to one another, when needed.

Female members may feel they are not fully valued within the business or that their role does not stretch them sufficiently. With women now taking up their place in the boardroom it is important that family businesses recognise and develop the potential of their female family employees.

Succession Planning for Continuity

'I'm too young to retire ... without me, the business is nothing...I built the business - nobody can run it as well as I can...'

In a family business, the MD's decision to retire includes deciding what happens to the business. What will happen to my legacy? Who's going to manage the business as successfully as you did? How will ownership be transferred? What retirement income will you arrange when you retire? Such tensions give rise to stress and early succession planning is essential to avoid internal rivalry.

'Clearly these are the kind of issues that often need to be addressed with the help and insight of a qualified external counsellor and coach.'

The role of a Family Relationship Coach is to help individual family members manage stress-related factors within the business:

Stimulating Self Development

- Empower individual family members to take responsibility for themselves. Encourage everyone to gain a greater empathy and understanding of other members and to obtain a different perspective of each other.
- Build personal self-esteem and confidence levels, and learn how to say 'No!'.
- Identify the self-limiting beliefs that get in the way of unlocking hidden potential.
- Bring about a greater appreciation of individual ability and understand that different mindsets and attitudes can be a strength and not a weakness.

Generating Effective Dialogue

- Coach family members how to improve their communication skills and diffuse outstanding issues, such as: *'I demand that'...* *'This is my right'...* *'It is my way or no way'...* *'you don't understand'* mentality.
- Identify and investigate instances of divided loyalties and limited motivation, for instance - *'I only work in the company, for the money'*
- Encourage everyone to express their feelings in a clear and constructive manner. Set realistic goals and expectations for each person.

Resolving Family-Related Stress Issues

- Identify potential future competition from a disgruntled family employee.
- Defuse potential conflicts between family members before they become personalised. Identify any long-standing dissent or resentment and encourage the underlying passion for the business.
- Recognise personal stress and teach skills and techniques to help manage it. Learn to build resilience levels and help with work/life balance issues

How The Right Policies and Procedures Can Help

- Ensure that disciplinary procedures for gross misconduct are established and make them known throughout the company
- Encourage regular, weekly or monthly, family meetings to discuss business issues and settle any disagreements.
- Formulate a clear strategy regarding financial control and equity participation and, (as far as is possible given confidentiality constraints), make this information known to family members.

Next Phase of the Business

- Ensure that succession and retirement planning is firmly on the agenda for the growth and sustainable success of the business
- Stimulate open discussion regarding business aims and targets for the next 3-5 years



Carole Spiers MIHPE MISMA

World Leading Authority on Corporate Stress.

Motivational Speaker. BBC Broadcaster. Best-selling Author

'Achieving sustainable success by adopting a healthy corporate culture' has been Carole Spiers' mission for the past 20 years. She provides the cutting-edge of expertise in this vital field and brings together **individual empowerment and executive management** to improve performance and increase profit.

This gives her unique credibility as an authority on personal empowerment and as a **BBC Broadcaster** and **best-selling author** on stress-related subjects. Carole is frequently contacted by the **international media** for professional comment and is a sought-after **Keynote Motivational Speaker** for international conferences and seminar platforms. She is also an **Expert Witness before the UK Courts**.

***TESTIMONIAL:** Her inspiration is touchable as she provides you with the impetus to permanently transform the quality of your life, be reinforcing in yourself the absolute will and determination to succeed'. Mark Stagg, HR, Maritime Coastguard Agency*

Experience in UAE

Carole doesn't just talk success – she lives it!

Over the past 2 years, **Carole has been working in the UAE** – primarily to fulfill public speaking engagements, stage in-house training and deliver High Performance Coaching assignments to Senior Board Executives

As a **weekly columnist for Gulf News**, Carole writes on topical business issues facing Middle East managers, their staff and employees, in the most critical areas affecting growth, development and success -

<http://www.carolespiersgroup.co.uk/gulf.html>



Corporate Expertise

She works with Senior Boards and Management to forge dynamic leadership teams to think and act strategically in a world that moves faster every day.

Author of the industry bible, Tolley's '*Managing Stress in the Workplace*', Carole is also a **successful entrepreneur and founder of the Carole Spiers Group (CSG)**, an international Stress Management and Employee Wellbeing consultancy which, for over 20 years, has advised, coached and trained clients to achieve sustained success through a healthy workplace culture.

Passionate, International Motivational Speaker

Carole is a high energy, charismatic, motivational speaker with a unique ability for **empowering people to change attitudes and mindsets** that hold them back from unlocking their untapped potential.

Let her audience speak for her!

'Carole's event hosting produced excellent direction for our high profile event...it was an experience to work with someone with such boundless energy and strong eye for detail who combines charisma with credibility'. Lawrence Young, Director, Packfords & Young. UK.

'Carole Spiers' energy, experience and knowledge was greatly appreciated....the value she added was immeasurable. Her presentation was intelligent, interactive and energetic – just what we needed as the closing keynote to our 2008 Family Business Forum in Abu Dhabi'. Purva Hassomal, Director, Leaders of Abu Dhabi, Family Business Forum

Proven Results From a Proven Expert

In her role as a High Performance, Executive Coach, Carole Spiers **helps bring out the best in business leaders**, enabling them to deliver sustainable performance both individually and in their teams.

Carole the Person. Going Beyond Expectations

As a **Vice President of the International Stress Management Association^{UK}**, and **President of the London Chapter of the Professional Speakers Association**, Carole's philosophy is wide acknowledged *'Your corporate edge will increasingly depend on a healthy workplace culture – an environments of mutual respect where well-rewarded employees can feel a sense of mission in optimising performance and productivity!'*

In 1999, on behalf of the International Stress Management Association^{UK}, **Carole created and established the UK's highly successful media campaign – National Stress Awareness Day.**

TESTIMONIAL: *Carole Spiers' industry's bible 'Managing Stress in the Workplace' will be compulsory reading for all HR Managers and Directors, as well as secretaries and business Managers with responsibilities for people (Personnel Today 04/04)*

Her client list reads as a roll-call of leading international organisations including -

- Unilever, Accenture, Etisalat, Tecom (Dubai), AXA Insurance,
- Walt Disney, Panasonic, IIR (Dubai), Bank of England,
- Nat West Bank, TiE Dubai, MBC Media, Law Society (London),
- British Transport Police, Zawya (Dubai), W H Smiths,
- London Underground, Kanoo Group and many others.



Stress Management Training, Workplace Counselling and Consultancy at the Service of Top Corporations

***‘Our mission is to empower organisations to achieve sustainable success
through a healthy corporate culture’ Carole Spiers***

Established in 1987, the Carole Spiers Group (CSG) has established a valuable niche in the field of workplace stress management, working with equal success in the contrasting cultures of the UK and Dubai bringing proven benefits to blue chip corporations such as Abbey, Tecom, AXA Insurance, Rolls Royce, Walt Disney, Panasonic UK, Unilever, Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, IIR (Middle East), London Underground, Etisalat, Kanoo Group, TiE Dubai, Accenture, the Bank of England, W H Smith, Zawya (Dubai) and many others.

CSG consultants have introduced, into these organizations and companies, anti-stress measures that have decisively shown to have improved productivity and competitive advantage through healthier employees working in a healthy corporate culture.

With a network of professional consultants, trainers and a nationwide Employee Counselling team, CSG are uniquely equipped to advise professionally on both the human and the legal aspects of workplace stress, including workplace bullying, organisational change, cultural diversity and post-trauma.

Training Courses, Coaching and Employee Counselling Service

- Specialist stress management courses, individual coaching for all employees
- Professional counselling for stressed employees and post-trauma cases
- Demonstrating ways to de-fuse a crisis by eliminating stressor-elements
- How Mediation can re-start broken-down talks and avert lengthy arbitration

Media Commentator, Columnist and International Motivational Speaker

CSG are regularly called for professional comment by the BBC, Sky, CNN and other media as well as being a regular contributor to the UK national press e.g. Guardian, Financial Times, The Times, Observer, trade press and professional journals.

Carole Spiers is a sought after Motivational speaker, provocative weekly columnist for Gulf News on managing corporate stress and human resources issues and is the author of *Tolley's 'Managing Stress in the Workplace'* – industry's bible published by LexisNexis^{UK}.

She is an Expert Witness before the UK Courts and launched National Stress Awareness Day on behalf of the International Stress Management Association^{UK} of which she is a Vice-President.

Carole is also the immediate Past-President of the London Chapter of the Professional Speakers Association.

Continue Where This Special Report Leaves Off!

Get deeper into stress reduction – with CSG's selective catalogue of Special Reports, Trainer packs, Manuals, CDs and Audio by Carole Spiers, World Leading Authority on Corporate Stress. Visit our ecommerce site www.carolespiersgroup.co.uk for the definitive solutions to stress management.



'Overcoming Stress within the Family Business' is just one Special Report out of a series, so please contact us for details of our other titles.

Email: info@carolespiersgroup.co.uk

Book Carole Spiers for a charismatic, motivational presentation for your next conference and for more information on CSG's in-house Stress Management Training, Mediation, Mentoring, Executive High Performance Coaching, please contact us at:

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Established 1987