



PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO IDENTIFYING
AND MANAGING STRESS
FOR HORECA MANAGERS

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PREFACE

Work organization, organizational culture, and styles of command and supervision, among others, are factors that affect the health of workers and, therefore, psychosocial risks must be part of companies' preventive plans and programs.

When dealing with psychosocial aspects and their impact on work, a "bipolar" approach is usually shown in which, although there is widespread awareness and no one would admit to the design and direction of processes that generate situations of continuous stress, anxiety, apathy or depression, when the time comes to face the analysis and evaluation of the risks that cause them, we appreciate a low receptivity and even a rejection.

At this moment, in which the socio-economic situation is determining extreme contexts for the survival of companies and it is necessary to face the future with a view to maximum competitiveness, it is necessary to promote, more than ever, work environments that generate commitment, creativity and innovation. , in which optimal performance can be achieved, but without compromising the well-being of the workers.

All this, within a transversal approach, in which it is necessary to have a global awareness of the health of the worker, which as a "biopsychosocial being" must be addressed globally, taking into due consideration both aspects of the work organization and the different social and family conditions of employees, which, although extraneous to the organizational capacity of the company, cannot be ignored if it is intended to achieve the levels of efficiency that will be required of workers.

Companies in the tourism sector, specifically hotels, have a series of characteristics that differentiate them from those of the manufacturing sector and that explain the importance of having trained, satisfied and motivated people since their performance will be the main link through which the tourist will issue a value judgment on the quality of the service received in relation to their expectations.

In other words, it will be above all through their human resources that hotels will be able to increase the quality of the service provided and obtain competitive advantages that are sustainable over time and difficult to imitate.

Industrial sector	Tourism sector
1. The product is tangible	1. The service is intangible
2. Change of ownership with the purchase	2. The service produces a right of use without transferring ownership
3. The product can be resold	3. The tourist experience is not transferable
4. The product can be kept for later consumption	4. The service cannot be archived and is lost if not sold
5. The product can be tested	5. The service cannot be tested
6. Consumption is preceded by production	6. Production and consumption generally coincide
7. Production, sale and consumption take place in different spatial environments	7. Production, sale and consumption occur simultaneously
8. The product can be transported	8. The customer is the one who comes to the service
9. The production/consumption areas are delimited	9. The customer participates in the production
10. Customer/producer contact is indirect	10. Contact is direct in most cases

This "manual", considering the human being in its psychosocial complexity and to bring companies operating in the HO.RE.CA. sector closer together to the elementary principles for the **prevention of occupational stress**, intends to make available to

managers and human resources managers criteria and references that can be of help in managing the psychosocial risk of greatest impact: stress.

Stress in today's hospitality industry

Currently, work has undergone important changes, i.e. the labor market and the organization of work itself have undergone profound transformations and these changes have produced new psychosocial risks, increasing the risk of suffering stress, a situation that has increased enormously in recent years due to the crisis. which is affecting the world economy in general and which damages not only large enterprises but also the so-called small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which have, in fact, suffered most of these effects due to the limited resources to cope with them.

Work-related stress is a phenomenon that affects a high percentage of workers, so much so that it has been called the "pandemic" of the 21st century.



Chef photo created by stockking - www.freepik.com

Stress: for the WHO, work-related stress is the reaction that the individual may have to work demands and pressures that do not fit his knowledge and skills and that test his ability to cope with the situation. In some cases, stress can manifest itself in very different work situations and is aggravated when the employee feels that he

does not receive sufficient support from his area managers or colleagues (UNWTO, 2017).

It should be noted that, despite the importance of the problem, relatively few studies have been conducted to promote and improve the quality of work and the quality of working life in this regard.

Despite the social awareness of the negative impact of stress in the workplace and its damage to people's health and to the quality of performance in organizations, there

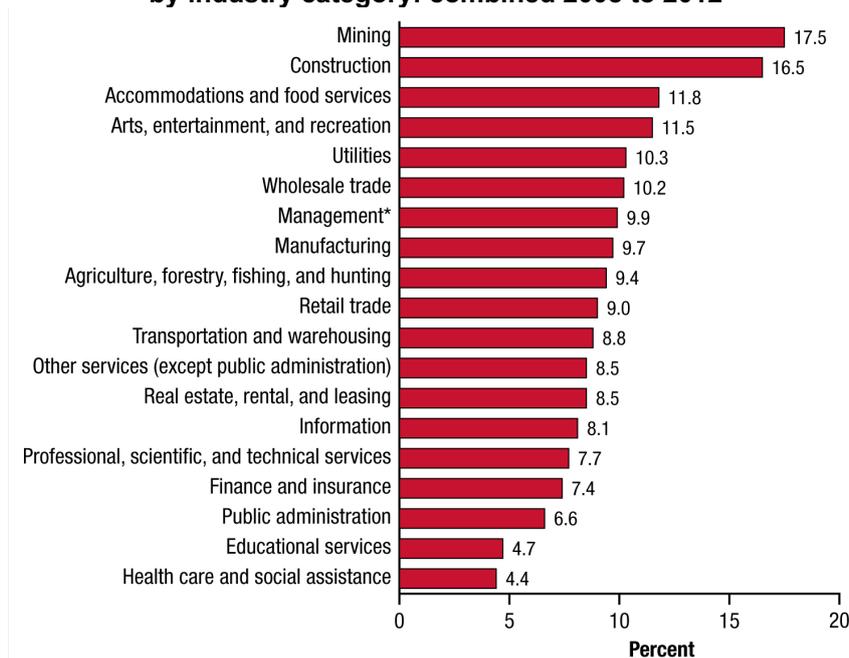
are few and ambiguous assessment tools, methodologies and protocols that facilitate the diagnosis of stress and of its consequences.

The hospitality, hotel and restaurant sectors are among those in which workers experience the most a high degree of stress due to its intrinsic characteristics. This sector is mainly characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion: working hours are generally long and very tight rhythms, making it difficult to reconcile work and family life, salaries are not very motivating because they are relatively low. The relationship with customers or people, which is usually a rewarding aspect in the performance of the job, in this particular sector, can become an additional source of stress, particularly in the presence of interpersonal tensions with the management, with the staff or with demanding and aggressive customers.

Overloading tasks can cause the supervisor to perceive a lack or poor support, causing job performance to be lower than expected. In these conditions, the employee tends to "protect himself emotionally" against a stressful work environment, creating an "emotional shield", which is evident in the act of his performance: working mechanically, marking distances, avoiding involvement, effective coldness, giving rise to an authentic communication and interaction barrier, which can lead to job demotivation in the hospitality professional.

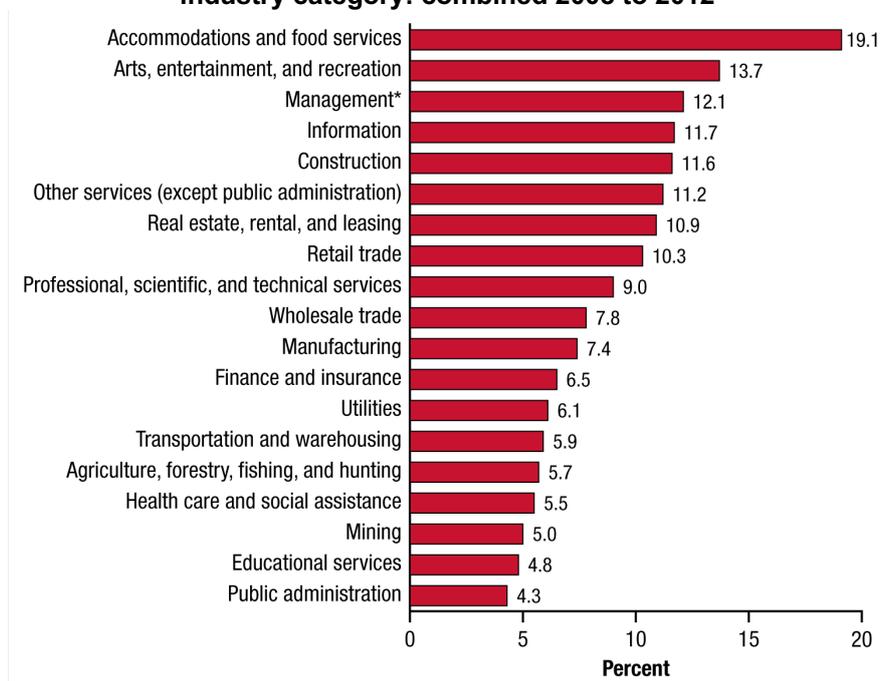
It should not surprise us, therefore, to discover that workers in the hospitality sector are extremely at risk with regard to the abuse of alcohol and especially drugs, especially cocaine.

Heavy alcohol use among adults aged 18 to 64 employed full time, by industry category: combined 2008 to 2012



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012) and 2011 to 2012.

Illicit drug use among adults aged 18 to 64 employed full time, by industry category: combined 2008 to 2012



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) 2008 to 2010 (revised March 2012) and 2011 to 2012.

The advancement of technology, new forms of communication and the effects of globalization have caused major changes in the habits and preferences of people on the move. In the case of hotels, they have been forced to review their strategies to compete in complex, dynamic and rapidly evolving contexts, where knowledge and the use of technology are increasingly present.

Faced with these new challenges and opportunities, most of them have sought to improve their innovative capacity and differentiate themselves from competitors through their intangible assets.

Taking into account the importance that people play within any sector of the economy and any organization (but even more so within the hotel sector, where most of the services provided are realized through human resources and imply a direct relationship between guests and employees) and the particularities that the sector presents in terms of human resources, managing them strategically has become one of the main tools to face this challenge. A happy employee is a productive employee and, as a result, the company becomes a successful company.

As a manager, head of human resources, room manager or any other supervisory function, it is therefore essential to have specific and detailed knowledge, as well as of the operational duties and duties of the staff, also and above all of the management of emotions and critical aspects connected to them. The area of human resources has, in fact, the particularity of being an interdisciplinary area that includes concepts from multiple fields of knowledge, such as psychology, sociology, accounting, law and industrial engineering.

Furthermore, in Italy, as in all EU countries, with the entry into force of Legislative Decree 81/2008 and its subsequent amendments and additions, which incorporates the European Framework Agreement on stress in the workplace, signed by the trade union European CES and the European employers' organizations UNICE "European confindustria", UEAPME European association of crafts and SMEs, CEEP European association of publicly owned enterprises and of general economic interest¹, aspects related to Occupational Health were promoted, highlighting stress as one of the main factors involved in various health problems, deterioration of interpersonal

¹ Communication from the Commission of 11 March 2002, *Adapting to transformations in work and society: a new strategy for health and safety, 2002-2006*, point 3.3.1.

relationships, absenteeism and decreased productivity. The current regulatory framework obliges employers to assess and manage work-related stress risk in the same way as all other risks, following the contents of the Europe Agreement.

The manager, therefore, is also legally obliged to take care of the corporate climate and the psychophysical health of the employees.

The stress.

Psychosocial risks are one of the main determinants of the health of people in our environment, which is why they have deserved special attention in recent years.

We understand psychosocial factors such as conditions present in work situations directly related to the organization of work, the content of the position, the execution of the task and even the environment, which can influence the development of work and the health of the workers.

Psychosocial factors can favor or damage the performance of work and the quality of an individual's working life, with favorable factors that contribute positively to the personal development of individuals and unfavorable factors that have harmful consequences for health and well-being. In the latter case, we are talking about psychosocial occupational risk factors or sources of work-related stress.

TERMS ANALYSIS

Dealing with integrated stress management in a business setting requires the interpretation of the different concepts that are often used in the psychosocial setting. The following are the main terms and aspects that were considered essential for this objective:

- **Psychosocial condition.** It includes the aspects of work, referred to its conception, content, organization and arrangement, which can positively and negatively affect the health of the company and the worker. They are also called "stressors".
- **Psychosocial risk factor.** Any working condition that is likely to increase the likelihood of suffering harm. Psychosocial risk factors are therefore those psychosocial conditions relating to the design, content, organization

or order of work that are harmful to the health of the worker or organization.

- **Psychosocial risk.** The potential capacity of certain psychosocial conditions to negatively affect the health of workers. Work-related stress is the psychosocial risk par excellence. Stress as a process must be understood as a risk, it must not be confused with the manifestations that can derive from it, such as anxiety attacks.
- **Pain.** Materialization of psychosocial risk in the health of workers. It manifests itself as an expression of various pathologies, both psychological derived from stress, such as anxiety attacks and depression, and physical, as it can cause musculoskeletal disorders, sleep disturbances or cardiovascular problems, among others. In this regard, the significant damaging effects for the organization due to their repercussions in terms of decreased performance, impaired productivity, worsening of the working environment, increased absenteeism or vulnerability to accidents should not be overlooked.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CONCEPTS APPLIED TO RISK ASSESSMENT

Having clear definitions of psychosocial concepts is essential for understanding risk assessment and taking the resulting measures.

As in the rest of the preventive disciplines, a psychosocial intervention must focus on assessing the risks that cannot be eliminated and on the effective management of the conditions that produce them, to avoid or minimize their consequences.

Therefore, the subject of the psychosocial assessment process refers to psychosocial conditions and risk factors, leaving the assessment of harm out of its scope. The assessment of the damage is the exclusive competence of the clinical or, alternatively, legal field.

Finally, it should be remembered that damage is a useful indicator for risk assessment, whose function is to alert people to the possible risks caused by psychosocial risk factors.

For example, if a high rate of turnover, complaints or absenteeism (harm) is detected in a department, these should be considered as indicators of possible levels of harmful psychosocial risk.

The damages must be considered only as indicators or signals of the need for intervention, not falling within the scope of the preventive action. The absence of damage does NOT in any case exempt from the legal obligation to identify psychosocial risks.

In summary, preventive action should always be aimed at identifying the conditions of the working environment that can cause psychosocial damage, specifically in this manual for managers, stress, determining the level of existing risk.

Therefore, the functions of prevention in applied psychosociology are:

- **Identification** of possible harmful working conditions
- **Elimination** of the same or their evaluation, determining their admissibility with respect to the scope and severity
- **Risk management**: proposal of preventive measures aimed at minimizing the consequences of the risk factors assessed
- **Monitoring** of the measures implemented and evaluation of their effectiveness

Preventive action in the psychosocial field is aimed at assessing the ability that working conditions have to produce malaise, with the ultimate goal of managing them effectively.

The so-called "emerging risks" of occupational psychosociology have always been a reality. Perhaps out of ignorance or the complexity of identifying their direct consequences, these risks have traditionally been relegated to the background in the prevention of occupational hazards.

Although psychological damages are not the only ones produced by psychosocial risks, since physical and organizational damages also occur, they represent an important indicator of the need for intervention in this area.

The significant increase in the number of operators in the hospitality and hospitality professions who are victims of stress, anxious-depressive processes and "burnout" has undergone in recent years, is an evident reality in our sector, as also highlighted by the worrying data previously exposed regarding the use of substances.

Furthermore, many kinds of research highlight how mental and behavioral disorders related to work-related stress are responsible for the loss of thousands of working hours in practically all countries of the world.

In this regard, it should be noted that post-traumatic stress syndrome was included in the "List of occupational diseases of the International Labor Organization" (ILO) revised in 2010.

Psychosocial risks are always present and inevitably related to work, so their assessment is necessary to know to what extent they represent a significant health risk. In this sense, the WHO guidelines on healthy workplaces propose the development of policies aimed at protecting and promoting the health of workers with a global approach in which it acts not only on the physical working environment but also on the conditions psychosocial.

WORK STRESS

Approach to the concept

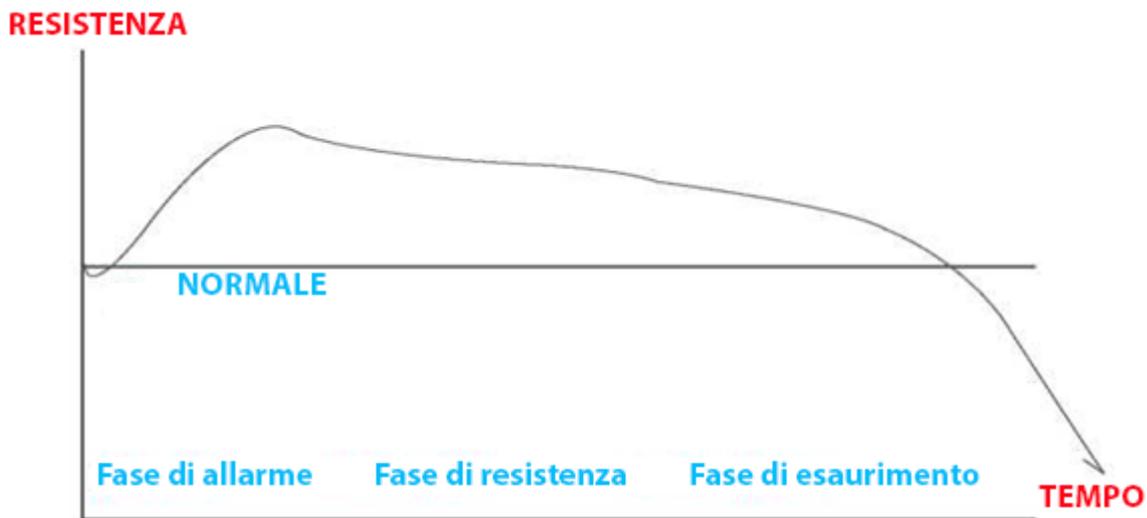
The term "work stress" is currently considered to be a process of imbalance between the demands and the responsiveness of the person facing them. It is a complex concept in which various personal factors come into play, the situation and interpersonal relationships, the perception of the worker with respect to his own resources as sufficient to satisfy the demands that the workplaces.

The same situation can be stressful for one person who feels overwhelmed and goes unnoticed by another.

The stress response is experienced in three phases:

- **Alarm phase.** The person is alerted by the perception of a situation that he believes may exceed his ability to control.

- **Resistance phase.** The situation cannot be changed and the necessary resources are put in place to meet the requests.
- **Exhaustion phase.** Since the previous phase is prolonged over time, resources end up running out and causing damage.



Stress' phases

TYPES OF STRESS

Despite the negative connotation frequently assigned to stress, authors such as Lazarus and Folkman point out that stress also has an important adaptive function. In this sense, stress is a useful activation mechanism so that people can cope with requests that represent a potential threat, fighting or fleeing them, using the necessary resources.

In this process, the perception that the person has of this situation and its resources is, therefore, an essential element in the development of the stress response. In this way, faced with a certain threatening situation, the person weighs the strategies at his disposal (experience, skills, personality, external resources ...) and his ability to deal with it, obtaining as a result of this analysis or activation, stress positive or eustress, or the belief that the available resources are not sufficient, resulting in a response to stress itself, negative stress or distress.

Stress must be considered as a complex phenomenon associated with multiple factors and a wide variety of potentially harmful situations for people.

In addition to the name of positive or negative stress, there are various forms of classification, among which stress can be considered as:

- **Traumatic or post-traumatic.** Traumatic stress is defined as the symptomatic response that occurs immediately after a certain event, while **post-traumatic stress** develops after some time from its occurrence, prolonging its presence over time. There is also a third type of stress called **pre-traumatic**, in which the characteristic stress response manifests itself in the face of the proximity of a situation that the person usually experiences as threatening, frequently triggering anticipatory symptoms.
- **Acute or chronic.** According to its temporal evolution, acute stress refers to a type of stress of high intensity but not of long duration over time, characterized by a response that occurs after a specific life-threatening situation, for example, a reaction that occurs after the experience of a car accident or a robbery. Chronic stress, on the other hand, refers to the type of stress that arises from requests that, although not excessively high, are prolonged over time, not having a well-defined beginning and end.
- **Endogenous or exogenous.** Stress can also be classified according to its origin, such as the characteristics of the person himself (endogenous) or events external to him (exogenous).

Work stress has traditionally been identified with chronic stress, which often develops slowly as a problematic condition and continues in the workplace, lasting over time and generating a series of negative consequences for the person and the organization. However, it can also appear as an acute stress response in certain situations.

Work-related stress can be defined as a process characterized by a set of emotional, cognitive, physiological and behavioral reactions to the perception of certain harmful or negative aspects of work duties, organization or work environment. It is characterized by high levels of arousal or anxiety and a frequent feeling of not being able to cope with demands (DGEAS, European Commission, 1999).

Other types of stress are also considered in the context of work-related stress:

Bullying or harassment in the workplace, as a characteristic form of work stress, derived from interpersonal conflicts that arise in the workplace, often defined as a situation in which a person or group of people exerts extreme psychological pressure, systematically (at least one once a week), for a long time (more than six months) on another person in the workplace.

- **Chrono stress**, such as the type of stress associated with the inadequate distribution of irregular working hours, shift work, night work, etc.
- **Post-traumatic stress syndrome** consists of a psychological disorder characterized by the appearance of specific symptoms after exposure to a life-threatening situation (robbery, assault, violence, etc.).
- **Burnout syndrome**, which is a manifestation of chronic work stress characterized by negative attitudes and feelings towards the people you work with and your professional role, as well as the experience of emotional exhaustion.

THE DEMAND-CONTROL MODEL OF WORK STRESS

Knowing the impact of risk factors is important so that the company can predict, from the point of view of person-position suitability, not only the possible damage to health to which the worker is exposed but also the behaviors and attitudes that will tend to develop.

Today, one of the most used models is the **model of the demands-job control** (Job Demand-Control, JD-C) Karasek 1985.

According to the demand-control theory proposed by Karasek, the effects caused by work appear as the result of the combination of psychological needs and the characteristics of the position, linked to the possibility of making decisions and the use of one's skills. Therefore, work-related stress is predictable due to the combination of both dimensions:

- The size of the requests corresponds to the psychological demands that the job implies for the person, essentially referring to the quantity and type of requirements that the tasks require in terms of workload, time pressure, level of attention...
- Instead, the dimension of control is identified, with the set of structural characteristics of work linked to the possibility of making autonomous decisions and using one's skills. The decision-making process determines the possibility of influencing various aspects of the job while, for its part, the use of one's skills refers to the degree to which the job allows the person to develop learning, creativity and variation of skills, etc.

Summarizing that this theory explains, workload, both psychological and physical demands, interference with private life **are not correlated** with high levels of stress when workers experience autonomy, receive feedback and social support from colleagues and have a good relationship with their bosses. The combination of **high demand** and **low resources** can predict **psychophysical exhaustion** and the development of a cynical attitude. From a **psychological point of view** this effect can be linked to different processes: autonomy is fundamental in managing the demands of work and therefore in satisfying **basic psychological needs**, while **social support** can have a buffer effect on the impact of the request for work as this can be instrumental help and **emotional support** for workers.

If the company's management system integrates these principles into its job, task or position definition processes, it will contribute to the primary prevention of psychosocial risks.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORK STRESS

As for the symptoms caused by work stress, it should be noted that there are no specific symptoms, but rather that these can vary depending on the person concerned. In general terms, the stress response is characterized by high levels of arousal and anxiety, with the frequent feeling of not being able to cope with the situation.

The main stress-related alterations and their main consequences are listed below:

- a) On physical health. These include dysfunctions associated with modifications of the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, mainly, favoring the development of infections and negatively affecting the healing process of various diseases, among which those of an oncological nature stand out. Furthermore, these changes increase the likelihood of suffering from multiple physical problems of the following systems:
 - Respiratory and cardiovascular: breathing difficulties, respiratory rhythm changes, hyperventilation, asthma, tachycardias, arrhythmias, arterial hypertension, acute myocardial infarction, etc.
 - Gastrointestinal: gastric ulcers, gastrointestinal disorders, impaired motility and appetite, exacerbation of symptoms caused by latent diseases such as Crohn's disease ...
 - Skeletal muscle. It is essential to highlight that stress has an important influence on the appearance, development and maintenance of injuries and pains of musculoskeletal origin; especially neck and back pain, causing frequent contractures and muscle overloads, tendon inflammation, joint and muscle pain.
 - Skin: exacerbation of symptoms caused by psoriasis, urticaria, eczema, alopecia, etc.
 - Others: headaches, migraines, tension, chronic fatigue, sleep-wake cycle disturbances, insomnia, hypersomnia, restlessness, menstrual disturbances or sexual dysfunction, among others.

- b) On psychological health. The alterations that cause the development of some cognitive bias or errors in the interpretation of both situations and thoughts themselves stand out; disturbances in attention, decision-making, perception, memory, reduced performance in academic or work contexts, etc. may appear. In addition, the presence of negative emotions that generate frustration, irritability, altered mood, decreased self-esteem, a sense of loneliness, feelings of inferiority, loss and decrease of the ability to concentrate and attention, as well as possible crises of anxiety, panic or images of depression.

- c) In the workplace. The behavioral consequences affecting the workplace are often linked to the modification of habits related to health and the adoption of unhealthy behaviors for it, such as the reduction of rest or physical exercise, the increase of addictive behaviors such as smoking, drinking, overeating, etc. An apparently trivial indicator that can be useful to personnel managers is the variation in the personal care of an employee: for example, a waitress who usually pays a lot of attention to clothing, make-up and her hairstyle who begins to show up on the spot not in his best conditions, or a bartender, usually very punctual, who begins to arrive late and with a tired expression on his face.

All these disorders can have a very damaging impact on the health of the worker and his environment, causing attitudes of separation, disinterest, violation of rules, increased errors and termination of employment contracts. Likewise, work stress is usually associated with a decrease in motivation and involvement in organizational goals, an increased vulnerability to injury, an increase in absenteeism and, ultimately, a decrease in performance and productivity.

As seen in the previous section, work-related stress has significant negative consequences not only on the workers who suffer it, but also on organizations and society in general. It is therefore a potential source of major problems of various kinds and of great personal and social repercussions.

Physical responses:

- neck pain, back pain, contractures and muscle pains ...
- gastrointestinal disturbances (ulcers, appetite disturbances, heartburn, pain)
- sleep disturbances (insomnia, hypersomnia)
- cardiovascular disorders (increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, acute myocardial infarction)
- changes in the skin and immune system (eczema, alopecia, increased psoriasis symptoms, infections, oncological processes)



Psychological responses:

- subjective feeling of discomfort
- negative emotions (fear, anger, depression ...)

Cognitive responses:

- worry
- loss of perceived control
- rejection
- inability to make decisions
- decreased attention and self-esteem, etc.

Behavioral responses:

- maladaptive behavioral states
- decrease in hygiene-oriented behaviors
- addictions, etc.
- disengagement
- loss of motivation
- worsening of the quality of work performance

Risk factors for work-related stress

In the working reality of the hotel and restaurant sector there is a great variety of potentially stressful situations for workers, which includes variables related to the work environment, personal and psychosocial or interpersonal.

The different categories and specific conditions to be evaluated as psychosocial risk factors are described below.

CATEGORY	SPECIFIC CONDITIONS
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical environment• Organization• Position
Inter-individual / psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quantity and quality of relationships with colleagues and superiors
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personality characteristics• Humor• general physical condition• socio-demographic factors, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The physical environment

It includes the physical conditions of the work (characteristics such as ventilation, humidity, temperature, as well as vibrations, noise, lighting ...) which, if they remain outside the established comfort standards, represent an important risk factor affecting the capacity of the worker.

Organization

In turn, this condition includes the following factors:

- Large company size. In general terms and other things being equal, the size of the workplace is a risk factor because as the number of people working increases, so does the potential for conflict between them. Likewise, growth in company size is often associated with a general increase in absenteeism levels.
- Complexity. Two types of risk factors are distinguished: vertical complexity, which refers to the different professional levels into which the company is divided, and horizontal complexity, which refers to the existing degree of specialization. Although both are an important competitive factors, they can also have associated risks due to the disconnection between departments (kitchen, dining room, reception, etc) and the lack of coordination and communication between different colleagues.
- Centralization of power and participation in the decision-making process. Those organizations where power is held by a few people and is practically indisputable and authoritarian, favor the development of some negative effects such as low motivation and worker involvement. Rigid structures lacking in decision-making permeability do not allow the participation of workers, generating discontent, frustration and helplessness.
- High formalization in procedures. The establishment of very strict protocols and working procedures is an important risk factor that reduces the autonomy capacity of workers. Within the firm and clear guidelines, it is essential to allow a certain flexibility of maneuver and autonomy in the design of work processes.
- Limitations in communication. Communication is a fundamental element in organizations because it integrates and coordinates all its parts. It is defined as the process in which a sender transmits a message verbally or non-verbally to a recipient, through a specific channel and with a common code for both, in order to disseminate, exchange or share information,

ideas or feelings. Communication is effective only when the recipient interprets and understands the message, which refers to the bidirectional nature of the process which necessarily implies the aforementioned feedback. In it, human cognition is of great importance, that is, how each person perceives and interprets himself and the world around him. Therefore, perceptions, values and motivations act as a coding filter that conditions the way people interpret and organize all the messages they receive. For communication to be effective, it is also important to identify the possible barriers that can act as obstacles, namely noise. In the area of human resources, communication is essential. Being in constant interaction with all sectors of the hotel, it is essential to develop clear and fluid practices that foster relationships between all, generating feelings of trust and transparency.

- Inadequate styles of supervision. The supervision model proposed in the company is a fundamental element in the organization of work. Supervisors must know how to manage both solutions and people. Empathy, communication, the ability to set affordable goals, knowing how to carry out a reasonable distribution of tasks, in short, managing the team correctly, are undoubtedly fundamental elements not only to improve the quality and performance of the company, but also the emotional well-being of employees. The effects that an inadequate style of supervision can generate are manifold and often at the origin of a multitude of psychosocial problems.
- Non-participatory implementation of new procedures and new technologies. Changes associated with work procedures and the introduction of new technologies are a potential source of stress as they require workers to adapt to them. Think, for example, of the decision to renovate ovens or kitchen stoves, or other machinery. It is necessary to involve the staff and seek the opinion of the people who usually work with this equipment. Although it is a factor that can act as a stressor, if the introduction and modification of procedures take into account the opinion of the staff concerned, they can also become important allied factors.

The characteristics of the job position

As in the previous sections, the characteristics of the employee's position must be analyzed according to the different factors that are described:

- **Role ambiguity.** The role is defined as the set of expectations about the behavior that is expected of an employee in his job position. The concept of role ambiguity encompasses the various problems caused by the uncertainty generated by the lack of precise information on tasks, the limits of skills, the means to perform them and the company's expectations towards workers. When tasks and responsibilities are not well defined, the worker does not know what is expected of him or what his place in the company is.
- **Role conflict.** It occurs as a discrepancy between the person and the functions to be performed and can be between the expectations or values of the individual and those of the other members of the company, or between the role played and the skills of the worker. It can also arise from being employed in the simultaneous performance of two or more incompatible tasks, causing confusion, dissatisfaction and frustration.
- **Inadequate workload.** The pace of work: it is intense. The hotels are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and all activities take place in a context of constant change where, unlike other sectors where work can be planned more in advance, unpredictable needs are very frequent. . Consequently, staff are required to have flexible hours and functions, becoming, in some cases, one of the requirements at the time of hiring. The workload as a source of stress must be considered both quantitatively (excess work or hours of work to be done) and qualitatively (high demands and skill difficulties). Excessive working hours produce physical and mental wear and prevent the professional from coping with stressful situations. For example, a night shift can be longer than the morning or afternoon shift and therefore at the end of the shift the professional will find himself more exhausted and his physical and mental abilities may be diminished. It should be borne in mind that not only has work overload been associated with increased stress, anxiety, job

dissatisfaction and psychosomatic alterations, but that excessive simplicity and scarcity of assigned tasks can also generate stress and low performance (work underload stress).

- **The mental workload.** It is the degree of mobilization of energies and mental abilities that the professional puts into play to carry out the task. Example: having to set up 50 tables in a dining room in a limited time and space.
- **Lack of autonomy** (possibility of control) and opportunity to use one's skills. Perceived subjective control has traditionally been associated with satisfaction, commitment, engagement, and performance, reducing levels of absenteeism and emotional distress. Jobs that do not allow for job control, imposing a strict work rate and limiting participation in decision making, tend to perform worse and lead to health problems in the worker.
- **Fragmented and monotonous content.** Fragmented and meaningless work, as well as few opportunities to use skills, create frustration and alienation. Repetition and absence of variability between tasks also negatively impact worker satisfaction due to lack of flexibility and content. Instead, the perception, the knowledge of the overall process and the purpose of the work, and the periodic alternation of tasks, are aspects that allow counteracting these harmful effects.
- **Social isolation.** The reduction of social contacts and, with them, the possibility of support, is an important element in determining the stress process. As mentioned above, the quality of social relations within and outside the workplace is an important element of moderation. Social isolation implies disconnection and lack of coherence with the company's philosophy, as well as being an important risk factor preventing the possibility of help in the event of certain accidents. Conversely, the possibility of interaction facilitates personal fulfillment and feelings of satisfaction.
- **Establish inadequate schedules, shifts and breaks.** The number of working hours, the existence of unstable shifts that alter normal wake-sleep cycles, the incompatibility of family life with work and the absence

of the necessary breaks, negatively affect the well-being of the worker. Planning working hours without taking into account workers' personal lives and their rest needs increases the detrimental effects on health and productivity. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the lack of formalized breaks and the impossibility of alternating duties tend to increase the performance of informal breaks, reducing the effectiveness of the working time invested.

- **Temporal instability and uncertainty.** This risk factor refers to the criteria of hiring, precariousness, low pay and instability in the position and in the sector. In the current socio-economic context, this is undoubtedly one of the main factors to consider since high turnover, uncertainty related to continuity and job instability are one of the main sources of stress for workers. The contractual methods: part-time, interim and seasonal are widely used. People employed in this way are called in for specific periods to cover specific needs, such as peak occupancy, events, seasonal seasons, or holidays, sick leave or maternity leave. This allows employers to minimize costs, improve planning and maintain the quality of the service provided, while integrating it with overtime pay. However, it makes employees feel unmotivated and they tend to be less busy, because they know that once the specific need for which they were hired is done, they will cease to be part of the company or their chances may be reduced. Not to mention the very high percentage, in the hospitality sector as well as in many others, of the total absence of employment contracts and the use of resources, even highly qualified ones, but without providing them with any protection. Changes are, in general terms, experienced reluctantly by most people, especially if they refer to the job stability necessary to ensure a dignified personal life. The perception of an unstable, changing or unknown future is a source of stress that can distort the perception of the worker about other conditions. Likewise, it should be noted that the bond and commitment are difficult to maintain when the contract between the person and the company is about to expire, with a negative impact on performance and productivity. To compensate for this situation, avoiding frustrated

expectations, it is important to convey clear and accurate information on the possibilities of continuity and to establish other additional channels of involvement and motivation.

- **Lack of recognition of training:** Lack of recognition of the training acquired. In this sense, it is important to note that some collective bargaining agreements (which is not the case with hoteliers and gastronomes) pay additional employees who have qualifications or knowledge considered to qualify for the functions they perform in their work.
- **The possibilities for growth:** they have reduced over time because hotels employ fewer and fewer staff, which is linked to the automation of routine activities thanks to technological development, centralization of functions (hotel chains, for example, usually centralize them several, such as administration and finance, reservations and marketing), economic conditions (salaries, disputes, compensation costs, tax burden) and changes in consumer habits and behavior (many hotels, based on the opinion of their guests, have decided, for example, to eliminate certain positions and allocate those resources to the improvement of other more appreciated aspects, such as Internet access). To this it should be added that human resources are one of the assets that represent the highest expenditure in a hotel and great efforts must be made to maintain paychecks, therefore in crises or with the implementation of economic measures that affect profitability. In the industry, employers see them as a variable on which they can make significant savings by taking measures such as suspensions or layoffs. However, it must be said that one of the main impediments to the latter option is the high cost of compensation.
- **Weak or inadequate criteria for promotion and career advancement.** A clear and transparent employee career plan is essential to avoid frustrating expectations and possible role conflicts. Promotion must be governed by standardized criteria to establish the necessary conditions and requirements to be met, avoiding perceptions of inequality and comparative complaints.

- **Bad recruitment and selection policies:** there is the erroneous perception that specific training is not required to occupy certain positions within the hotel sector, so there are often significant shortcomings in the recruitment and selection processes that subsequently affect the quality of service. On certain occasions and for various reasons, entrepreneurs in the sector tend to opt for unskilled personnel to the detriment of the qualified, without giving the necessary importance to the added value that a trained person brings to the hotel. Add to this the fact that, as hospitality studies represent something relatively new, there are a large number of jobs done by people with little training and knowledge.
- **Lack of vocation:** Many people who choose to work in the sector do so without a vocation and in a circumstantial way, that is, not because they like it or feel comfortable, but because, lacking a formal education, the possibilities to do it in another field are reduced.
- **The conception of human resources:** even though in recent years there have been great progress in this area, there is still a certain priority of the working aspects of management with respect to attention to the needs of collaborators. In this sense, it must also be said that it is very common for organizations, especially small and medium-sized ones, to have very small human resources departments, which means that the few members that make it up cannot adequately manage all the staff. On the other hand, professional studies and discussions on the industry focus, for the most part, on how to meet the needs of guests and retain them. However, it must be remembered that the means of achieving this is to have satisfied, motivated and productive employees who are able to do so, which implies that in the first instance it is on them that the greatest efforts must be focused. Finally, most of the management processes are based on external perceptions and take into account only the opinion of the area managers. Although this is also changing, there are still few times in which processes are examined from the point of view of the operational level, that is, by those who directly receive management instructions and have a greater relationship with customers.

- **Lack of investment in training:** although this aspect is also changing, there is still the tendency of employers not to make significant investments in staff training, both inside and outside the hotel facilities because, for different reasons (turnover, organizational problems to cover timetables, demand, economic situation), they usually see it as an expense and not as a strategic investment, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises.

INTER-INDIVIDUAL / PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

The relationships that are established within a company can be a psychosocial risk factor and the source of a multitude of problems, whether scarce or inadequate. Unsatisfactory relationships, poor social support from colleagues and superiors, perception of inequality or interpersonal conflicts, are transversal elements to all the precedents. Conversely, adequate social support relationships as a positive working condition are a moderating factor in triggering stress.

PERSONAL FACTORS

It is clear that not all people react in the same way to the same situation. Socio-demographic variables (age, sex, marital status, socioeconomic status), personality type, mood, dispositional characteristics of the person or his general physical condition, can undoubtedly influence the generation of the stress response.

These factors can be considered within policies aimed at creating healthy work environments. In this sense, the WHO guidelines call for the development of policies aimed at protecting and promoting the health of workers with a global approach in which not only action is taken on psychosocial conditions and on the physical working environment, but also taking into account the personal resources. In this perspective and by promoting personal resources and healthy behaviors in the worker, a positive impact on work is achieved which implies a social and corporate advantage.

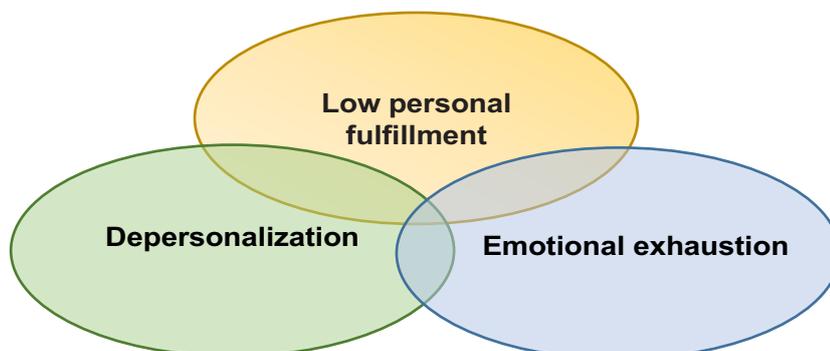
THE "BURNOUT" SYNDROME

The "burnout" syndrome (ie being "burned") is defined as a complex set of symptoms related to the type of work and stress suffered by workers whose object of work is direct contact with the people who assist third parties, as they are exposed to high emotional demands.

It manifests as a response to chronic work stress and is made up of three essential symptoms that are related:

- a) Lack of personal fulfillment, characterized by disappointment at not being able to give meaning to one's life and to fulfill oneself personally. A negative attitude towards oneself and work is evident, which implies a decrease in productivity and self-esteem.
- b) Depersonalization, understood as the development of negative, distant and cold feelings, attitudes and responses towards other people; especially towards the beneficiaries of the work itself (emotional distancing that depersonalizes the clients, "dehumanizes" the user).
- c) Emotional fatigue, defined by the feeling of exhaustion and fatigue in the face of the demands of the task. This symptom can manifest itself physically and psychically.

The "burnout" syndrome is a response to chronic work stress, made up of negative and devaluing attitudes and feelings towards the people you work with and your professional role, as well as the experience of emotional exhaustion. It usually occurs in healthcare professionals but, in general, it is equally frequent in the hospitality sector, as a commercial sector that thrives on constant and direct contact with the public and customers.



This three-dimensional complex is precisely what differentiates "burnout" from other concepts such as boredom, depression, job dissatisfaction, aspects that often arise as consequences of "burnout". The conjunction of these three symptoms causes this syndrome to end up producing a demotivation in the worker causing a state of apathy and frustration, disengagement from the company, decrease in the efficiency or quality of the dishes prepared, in the case of kitchen employees. The syndrome begins when the worker fails to change a situation that he perceives as unpleasant and which is caused by the combination of high emotional demands and poor ability to cope with them. Over time, and depending on certain conditions, the initial enthusiasm for work deteriorates, generating a state of apathy, monotony and boredom.

In short, a situation is faced that directly affects work commitment, dedication and interest in work, creating in the worker a state of apathy associated with depression and disappointment.

The syndrome of "burnout" develops through a series of successive and non-exhaustive phases, characterized by the appearance of differentiated feelings. These stages are:

- **Initial enthusiasm and dedication**, characteristics of the beginning of the professional activity. There are several factors such as work overload, interpersonal conflicts, lack of resources or role dysfunctions, which make it difficult for the worker to achieve the initial objectives, thus reducing feelings of self-efficacy and his initial motivation.
- **Stagnation**. The worker begins to realize that the recognition and rewards he hoped for are not being achieved, as well as the inability to cope with the high emotional demands placed upon him. At this moment a feeling of frustration arises, which often also infects other colleagues.
- **Apathy and indifference** towards work, generated by dissatisfaction and the mismatch between fatigue and illusions, expectations and expected goals. Normally, those who work in contexts such as hotels and restaurants establish relationships of exchange, participation, often also of self-denial, help, reciprocity, appreciation, gratitude and recognition with colleagues and management, but also with customers. The perception of imbalance arises

when you feel you contribute with a high commitment and involvement and do not receive in return the same appreciation and appreciation of the work done and, failing to adapt to this continuous frustration, feelings of detachment and demotivation develop.

- **Distance and demotivation.** Depersonalization appears as the main coping strategy to avoid emotional problems resulting from excessive emotional involvement.

Despite the remarkable similarity that "burnout" has to stress, the two concepts have significant differences. While stress is usually characterized by an excessive involvement in problems that mainly cause physical damage, exhaustion and emotional hyperactivity, in "burnout" we refer to a problem that generates lack of involvement, emotional exhaustion and demotivation. loss of physical energy. Furthermore, the consequences of stress can have positive effects in moderate exposures (eustress), which do not exist in burnout. It should be noted that stress appears as a response to potentially stressful stimuli such as excessive hours or workload, while "burnout" can be produced by a non-stressful but highly demotivating job, which inhibits the subject's abilities.

STRESS	BURNOUT SYNDROME
Excessive involvement in problems	Lack of involvement and disengagement
Emotional hyperactivity	Emotional dullness
Depression as a symptom for maintaining physical energy	Depression is similar to a loss of ideals of reference, sadness
Physiological damage is primary	Emotional damage is the main one
Can have positive effects on moderate exposures (eustress)	It only produces negative effects
Exhaustion or lack of physical energy	Exhaustion affects motivation and psychic energy

Since the "burnout" syndrome is a manifestation of chronic work stress that develops in activities that see workers engaged in inconstant contact with the public, in order to evaluate it as a psychosocial risk, the various risk factors mentioned for work stress and especially those of welfare activities: attention to the public, lack of autonomy and exposure to high emotional demands.

Main psychosocial risk factors for burnout syndrome:

STRESS	BURNOUT SYNDROME
Levels of physical agents outside the established comfort limits	High emotional demands (dealing with disadvantaged people)
Large company size	Attention of the public
Complexity (horizontal and vertical)	Lack of autonomy and use of skills
Centralization of power and decision making	Inadequate promotion systems
High formalization in procedures	Ambiguity and role conflict
Low participation / communication	Inadequate workload
Inadequate styles of supervision	Lack of autonomy and use of skills
Non-participatory implementation of new procedures and technologies	Fragmented and monotonous content

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT.

Aspects to consider:

Since psychosocial intervention and stress management are aimed at determining actions that affect organizational conditions, it is essential that management has clear and precise information about the subject, content and scope, thus avoiding false expectations and claims. Likewise, the different actors involved (managers, workers, managers, workers' representatives, health surveillance services, human resources, quality or prevention) must be informed of the need to be part of this process, asking for their collaboration and active participation.

Psychosocial risk assessment cannot be based solely on direct observation of working conditions. For its development it is necessary to analyze the information relating to the perceptions that the different organizational spheres involved have of it. Due to this particularity and to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected, it is essential to avoid the introduction of prejudices in the information collection process, for example the aforementioned actors must not be present at certain moments of the session or have evidence of the data collected on an individual level.

Likewise, it must be clear what the origin of the evaluation request is, i.e. who carries it out, what place is included in the organization's organizational chart, if this is the first time this type of action is requested and what are its antecedents in preventive matters in this sector. These are key elements in creating a framework of the context to guide the evaluation.

It should also be noted that the assessment makes it possible to identify those working conditions that not only cause damage to the health of workers, but are also likely to produce dysfunctions in the performance and quality of the company. In this way, improvements in working conditions can be implemented from a broader perspective, in a conflict-free environment. For this reason, and as it is an additional part of the risk assessment process that all organizations must carry out on a mandatory basis, psychosocial risk assessment must be considered from a proactive perspective.

Evaluation is not an evaluation of opinions but of conditions, nor does it consist in the simple application of a questionnaire. The application of the questionnaire is part of

the assessment and the way to obtain the workers' perception of the conditions to be assessed, but the diagnostic process is much broader than the mere obtaining of subjective impressions and its final objective focuses on the causes or conditions of risk.

The evaluation does not end with the determination of the existing risk level, but rather the process must continue with the proposal of preventive measures and their subsequent monitoring.

The involvement of the Management is absolutely essential to guarantee a rigorous and effective action since psychosocial analysis and intervention are processes related to organizational systems.

At the beginning of the evaluation process, high expectations for individual intervention (education, information, training ...) are generally common. It is essential to clarify from the outset that these actions are necessary but not sufficient, having to favor organizational interventions (modification of processes, organization of the same, etc.).

The primary objective of a stress assessment action is to detect psychosocial factors that are likely to have harmful effects on the organization and workers. It starts with the collection of information on the organizational conditions, the contents of the work and the performance of the task, to arrive at an initial approach to psychosocial risk factors. In addition, data is collected on the overall functioning of the organization and its context.

Stress cannot be studied in isolation from the subject's perception, since it directly depends on it. To assess the working conditions that are likely to produce stress, it is necessary to inquire with the workers. Since this is a personal and subjective perception, in order to avoid distortions due to personal interpretations, it is essential to compare this information with the objective data available.

It should be noted that the psychosocial evaluation is an evaluation of the objective working conditions and not of the subjective opinions that one has about them, expressed through surveys and interviews. Therefore, the information to be collected must include:

- **Objective information** consists in the collection of data relating to the organization, in terms of structure, contradictions, participation and operating systems, as well as in the analysis of various indicators relating to the injury rate, the health of workers, quality and performance. These data must be requested from the various departments involved (Health Surveillance, Human Resources, etc.) and, in a complementary way, the real functioning of the work system must be observed to see any discrepancies between the actual work and the prescribed one.
- **The subjective information** tries to obtain the perception that the employees of the various departments have of the working conditions. In this regard, it is important to indicate that the confidentiality and anonymity of the information received will always be guaranteed. Ultimately, privacy will be respected and access to individual data will be prevented except for the competent technicians who deal with the evaluation.

Quantitative techniques can be used using questionnaires or numerical tests framed in the well-known psychosocial assessment methodologies that evaluate the perception of workers or **qualitative techniques** that are, instead, carried out through individual interviews and discussion groups. More detailed information is obtained through open questions at an individual or collective level.

*The collection of information must be planned in time, and workers must be informed, having foreseen the place and time of its realization.
Likewise, both objective and subjective data must be considered, guaranteeing their anonymity and confidentiality.*

The different requirements for obtaining information are mentioned below:

Objective information	Subjective information
Indicators:	Information provided by:
General company data (official organization chart, timetables, promotion systems, etc.)	Direction
Socio-demographic characteristics of the workforce (gender, age, socio-cultural level, seniority in the company)	Prevention service
Damage to health (absenteeism, sick leave, job turnover rates, declarations of disability, accidents, job changes ...)	Medical service, if any
Damage to productivity (performance and quality aspects)	Human resources office
Minutes of Health and Safety Committee meetings, previous prevention reports, etc.	Intermediate managers
Inadequate styles of supervision	Workers
Non-participatory implementation of new procedures and technologies	Other departments considered relevant
Information collection techniques to be used:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation of positions and job development - differences between actual and prescribed procedure • Quantitative (psychosocial assessment methods) • Qualitative (personal interviews, discussion groups) 	

In low-complexity organizations, if no significant risks are detected during the analysis of objective information and the application of direct assessment questionnaires, the assessment can be completed without the need for a systematic subjective analysis. In these cases, based on the results of these questionnaires, the application of the preventive actions that can be specified will be determined either by

finalizing the risk assessment, or failing that, by determining the need to continue it by collecting more detailed subjective information.

Implementation of the measures

After determining the preventive measures to be implemented, a series of parameters will be defined in order to obtain an effective introduction of the same. This involves the **development of an action plan** which must consider the different aspects:

- Persons in charge and definition of responsibilities
- When each activity is considered complete
- Means assigned for their implementation
- Form for communicating the measures to workers

Measurement monitoring

In the psychosocial field, it must be taken into account that the modification of organizational conditions can lead to unforeseen consequences such as situations of refusal or conflict. For this reason, the consequences must be monitored over time: in the short, medium and long term. In this way, not only is it possible to evaluate the scope and impact of the established guidelines, but it is also possible to introduce the necessary changes in order to adapt them to the needs of the context and avoid the additional generation of risk conditions or aggravation of the same.

Work-related stress in hotel, restaurants and catering

According to the European Agreement on work-related stress of 2004, stress is "a condition that can be accompanied by physical, psychological or social disorders or dysfunctions and is a consequence of the fact that some individuals do not feel able to meet the demands or to the expectations placed in them".

Work-related stress can therefore potentially affect every workplace and every worker as it is caused by different aspects closely related to the organization and the work environment.

The term "stress" does not necessarily indicate something negative but, sometimes, the natural response of an organism that is confronted with a source of pressure. In fact, stress is divided into positive stress (eustress), when it solicits the organism to motivate, to perform and to succeed in activities, while the negative one (distress) is activated when there is a negative response to an internal or external stimulus.

Work stress is determined by the interaction between the person and the organizational and social context in which they work and is the result of a distorted relationship between the stresses imposed by the task and role and the operator's ability to cope with them. It is determined by a situation that, limited to the workplace, requires the worker to be able to deal with a particular event, such as the daily management of work commitments or relating to one's bosses and colleagues.

Psychosocial risk of work stress

Psychosocial risks arise from inadequate ways of designing, organizing and managing work and a socially mediocre work environment and can have negative psychological, physical and social consequences, such as work-related stress, exhaustion or depression. Some examples of working conditions involving psychosocial risks are:

- excessive workloads;
- conflicting requests and lack of clarity on roles;
- lack of involvement in decision-making processes affecting workers and lack of influence on the way work is done;
- inadequate management of organizational changes, job insecurity;
- ineffective communication, lack of support from colleagues or superiors;
- psychological and sexual harassment, violence by third parties.

Research by Robyn D. Petree, Kirk M. Broome and Joel B. Bennett in 2012 shows that young adult restaurant workers face the double stressors of adapting to work and managing personal responsibilities.

Psychosocial risks in general, such as burn-out and bullying, are also among the causal roots of stress.

The term burn-out, translated from English, literally means "burned", "burst", "exhausted". Burn-out is a syndrome that essentially consists in the wearing out of stimuli and emotions, in a tiredness and a mistrust that lead to the reduction of personal motivations and abilities. The subjects most exposed to this form of emotional exhaustion are above all workers who take care of people by profession.

The causes that can produce burn-out are: overload of work, lack of control, conflicting values, low remuneration, lack of equity and insufficient gratification.

The phenomenon of mobbing is linked to stress, but of a different nature. Bullying can consist of attacks aimed both at the person (from sexual harassment, humiliation, the dissemination of false information about him, to isolation) and against the person's work activity, therefore to the detriment of his career (lack of recognition of work, excessive control, threats of dismissal, reduction of work tasks or overload of work with impossible deadlines). These abusive and oppressive behaviors cause damage to the physical integrity and moral personality of the worker.

Workers suffer from stress when the demands of their business are excessive and greater than their ability to cope.

In addition to mental health problems, workers under prolonged stress can develop severe physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease or musculoskeletal disorders.

Work related stress in accommodation structures

The Hazards and Risks Associated with Manual Handling in the Workplace states that hotel, restaurant and restaurant workers (HORECA) endure a lot of unfavorable working conditions such as long, irregular and non-standard hours.

Worse still, working conditions deteriorated over the course of the last decade, involving a serious risk of work-related stress. Consequently, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has identified HORECA as a sector at risk.

Employee stress proves to be a significant problem in the hospitality industry and is costly for both employers and employees. While addressing and reducing stress is a noble goal and can lead to cost reductions for employers, the nature and extent of hospitality employee stress are not fully understood.

A study by John W O'Neill and Kelly Davis identified common occupational stressors in a sample of 164 managerial and hourly workers employed in 65 different hotels who were each surveyed for eight consecutive days. It turns out that the two most common stressors are interpersonal tensions at work and overloads. Interpersonal tensions at work were linked to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. Hotel managers reported significantly more stressors than hourly employees. On the other hand, there are no significant differences by gender or marital status.

As we all know, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused enormous instability both from a health point of view and from an economic / political point of view. The damaged sectors were many, among these the repercussions were also abundant in the tourism, hospitality and catering sectors. Many restaurateurs and cocktail bar managers, as well as the large hotel sector, have had to adopt measures, philosophies, limitations, constraints, but also compromises with their way of thinking, approaching work, relating to their customers and with their service staff.

The collapse of the HoReCa (Hotellerie-Restaurant-Café) has caused and still is affecting numerous sectors: take that of soft drinks which, with a market of 4.9 billion euros and 80 thousand workers, is unable to compensate for losses through the distribution channel. If in food, in some limited cases, the coronavirus emergency has had an even positive impact, it is with the collapse of the Horeca that the destabilization of an entire supply chain is produced. To pay the heaviest bill is the Beverage sector, for which institutions will have to seriously implement ad hoc measures with the aim of saving an entire economy. According to IWSR data, to return to pre-crisis levels it will be necessary to wait until 2024.

On a psychological level, both customers and restaurateurs have suffered very heavy consequences; on the part of the accommodation facilities, the fear of failing with the activity, the attention to new and rigorous rules, protocols and sanctions, the restructuring with the work team and the need to hide one's welcome at a paraverbal level behind safety devices has certainly limited and triggered a real work stress. On the other hand, the customers' fear of frequenting crowded places, the attention to hygiene rules and the provisions for reducing the total availability of the structures creates a sort of withdrawal from the attendance of the present structures.

To restore balance and reduce work stress in accommodation facilities, it is necessary to photograph the phenomenon and produce interventions that aim at resilience and adaptability; two fundamental characteristics for a rebirth and restart of the hospitality and tourism sector.

Recognize and assess work-related stress

Stress can affect employees' physical and mental health, their performance and their relationships with coworkers. For these reasons, employers should be alert for the first signs of stress amongst their staff, in order to act quickly and reduce the likelihood that employees develop work-related stress.

Stress can manifest itself in a number of ways, but managers can recognize the first signs by paying attention to the changes in employees' behaviour, habits or emotional state. Here are common symptoms of stress at emotional and working levels:

Emotional level	Working level
Irritability	Arriving late to work
Anxiety and depression	Loss of commitment
Discouragement	Uncharacteristic errors
Pessimism	Absenteeism

Feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope	Diminished initiative
Cognitive difficulties, such as a reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions	A general drop in work performance

In some countries like Italy or the UK, managers also have a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of their employees at work, and this includes preventing work-related stress. To be specific, in these countries the law lays down that employers must protect employees from work-related stress by carrying out an accurate risk assessment.

A risk assessment generally involves identifying hazards, evaluating risks, recording findings and reviewing the results. Unfortunately, stress risks are not always obvious from observation, consequently the assessment can be more challenging. So, how can managers carry out a valid assessment?

Many approaches to work-related stress assessment suggest integrating an objective assessment, where objective data are collected and analyzed, with a subjective phase, where the results of data are compared with personal information coming from the workers (their emotions and thoughts).

First phase: the objective assessment	Second phase: the subjective assessment
In this phase, objective data are collected: number of accidents and injuries, absence, turnover, etc.	In this phase, subjective data are collected by administering to all employees an assessment questionnaire about the subjective perception of stress.

The use of an assessment questionnaire has just been mentioned, but which questionnaire can managers use to accurately assess work-related stress? The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the UK government agency responsible for the regulation

of workplace health, offers one of the most effective surveys for assessing stress in employees: the **HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool**.

HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool

The HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool is a survey tool that managers of various productive sectors, like restaurants and lodging businesses, can distribute to all employees. This survey consists of 35 items concerning working conditions that could be potential causes of work-related stress. According to the HSE, these “working conditions” correspond to the six main causes of stress in the workplace. These are known as the **Management Standards**:

- **Control**: this standard refers to how much power and responsibilities people have. If employees feel a lack of control over their work, they could feel stressed.
- **Demands**: employees may not be able to cope with their workload or the work environment and it follows they feel overwhelmed.
- **Support**: employees can also feel stressed because they are not supported by their managers or colleagues. A lack of support can make people feel undervalued.
- **Relationships**: this standard refers to the way people interact on a personal and professional level in the workplace: if good relationships promote positive working and allows to avoid conflicts, the negative ones can lead to stress.
- **Role**: people get stressed when they do not understand their role and what is expected from them.
- **Change**: this standard concerns the way managers communicate the organizational changes. Changes can cause feelings of uncertainty and stress, especially when employees are not involved in decision making changes and when these changes are not even communicated in advance.

These Management Standards can help managers to identify the major risks of stress; in this way, managers can protect employees by facing the main causes of stress and malaise.

Here are the 35 items of the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool. Keep in mind that the scores are based on the Likert scale from 1 to 5 points (from “Never” to “Always”).

HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool
1. I am clear what is expected of me at work
2. I can decide when to take a break
3. Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine
4. I know how to go about getting my job done
5. I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour
6. I have unachievable deadlines
7. If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me
8. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do
9. I have to work very intensively
10. I have a say in my own work speed
11. I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are
12. I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do
13. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department
14. There is friction or anger between colleagues
15. I have a choice in deciding how I do my work

16. I am unable to take sufficient breaks
17. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organization
18. I am pressured to work long hours
19. I have a choice in deciding what I do at work
20. I have to work very fast
21. I am subject to bullying at work
22. I have unrealistic time pressures
23. I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem
24. I get help and support I need from colleagues
25. I have some say over the way I work
26. I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work
27. I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues
28. Staff are always consulted about change at work
29. I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work
30. My working time can be flexible
31. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems
32. When changes are made at work, I am clear how they

will work out in practice
33. I am supported through emotionally demanding work
34. Relationships at work are strained
35. My line manager encourages me at work

As regards to other specific instructions, please click the link:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/downloads.htm>

Once managers have analyzed the employees' surveys it is important that they communicate the findings to their staff. In fact, this survey is only intended to be a starting point: it can be a useful guide for future actions and it can form the basis of discussions between employers and employees.

In conclusion, stress should not be a reason for employers to be afraid to manage. Managers have to remember that carrying out a well-planned stress risk assessment is crucial for preventing burnout, absenteeism and even long-term mental health issues.

By taking action in advance to face the potential causes of stress, employers can prevent the impact of these problems on their organisation. For this reason, it is always best to take a proactive approach to controlling stress, rather than reacting when people are already stressed.

But if employers are already stressed, what can managers do to reduce their stress and malaise?

How managers can reduce employee stress

Stress is, of course, a critical issue within contemporary organizations and society and is a complex phenomenon. It means there are many external – environment - and internal - coping, cognition - factors contributing to the levels of stress one is experiencing.

In evaluating the causes and effects of workplace stress, it is important to note that there are many hidden factors in how one responds, experiences and manages stress. According to the transactional theory of stress, the level of stress depends not only on environmental factors but also on individual variables such as cognition and personality, and ways of coping. Therefore the levels and effects of stress vary depending on multiple factors. By understanding the causes and effects of workplace stress, a positive change can occur in terms of reducing workplace stress.

Today's workplace undergoes many changes. There are new technologies, changing the way we work and perform tasks. If an employee lacks skills to complete such tasks effectively then they experience pressures from the employer. This pressure creates stress that can adversely affect performance and well-being. There is competition to survive, and thus the organization continues to demand more and more from his employees. Spending long hours at work disrupts a work-life balance, leading to over-worked employees missing out on social life and family events. Because of the economic crisis, many companies are downsizing or merging. The ambiguity caused by such drastic business changes, leaves employees without control as of what is going to happen with their employment. All of these four environmental changes in the workplace can become main stressors for employees; from those on the high executive positions, to those from lowest in ranks.

So we can see that stress can arise from a variety of sources. It may result from issues within an individual's personal or family life, but stress may be caused by issues that develop in the workplace.

There are some management practices which create stress in the life of the individual employee. While contemporary leadership and management courses foster effective management techniques, some managers, often trained in the "old school" or perhaps

more interested in their own advancement, forget their own actions can create a stressful work environment and impact the success and organizational health of a work unit.

There are different kinds of managers who can influence negatively the work environment:

- Managers who confuse urgency with crisis. many assignments and responsibilities must carry a sense of urgency; they are important, necessary, and must be completed in a timely manner. Yet, particularly on the administrative side of an agency, not every action is a crisis. For many managers, however, all assignments that have an early deadline, are seen as a crisis. So it can happen that employees are forced to labor under unnecessary deadlines and under stressful conditions for assignments which should be considered routine.

- Managers who micro-manage. These kind of managers are the ones that control and structure the subordinate's workday, and pretend only one way to do the assigned tasks. At the same time, they don't focus on developing the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for subordinates to work independently and achieve their success.

- Managers who give incomplete assignments. These managers to maintain control over their employees assign small incomplete tasks. In this way employees are forced to ask additional information before the assignment can be completed.

- Managers who are inflexible. This is pretty self-explanatory, managers need to adopt a flexible approach to the changing demands placed upon them and their resources.

There are a lot more actions that managers can take to influence badly the employees' work, but the ones mentioned are the least known ones.

How can they become more effective and really reduce stress?

Aside from understanding the impact of their actions on employees and continue to learn leadership and effective management skills, there are different steps that a manager can take. Communication is a key factor if a manager wants to implement an effective leadership. In many organizations, the breakdown in relations between labor and management occurs when there is a breakdown in communication. The failure of a manager to communicate with his or her employees or to encourage reciprocal communication with the manager produces negative results. Effective leadership within an agency and management of its human resources require effective and on-going communication at all levels.

In dealing with subordinates the manager must be viewed as fair, open and honest. From the beginning, employees should understand the expectations of the manager, particularly in regards to the way they should approach their job and in the way he or she conducts discipline and performance evaluation.

Times of great stress are, of course, emotional times for the employees. One of the important roles played by a manager during such times is that of safety valve, an emotional outlet through which employees can appropriately vent their anger, fear, frustration, and concerns. At the same time, it is equally important that the manager learn how to successfully buffer subordinates from the stress produced by those higher up in the chain of "command".

Employees look forward to the manager who takes a direct interest in their performance and is involved in the activities of the organization. It is therefore critical that the manager realize the importance of their support of subordinates, especially when those personnel are the ones impacted by crisis. Such a role becomes particularly necessary when the negative issues occur within the organization itself

and managers are charged with maintaining the morale of the agency. It is essential that managers themselves maintain an outwardly positive attitude, especially in the presence of their subordinates; for the health of the organization and its mission, managers can't afford to be viewed as negative and anti-administration.

In all different kind of jobs – important ones like law enforcement but also normal agencies – it requires that, for their own mental health, personnel search for the “brightside,” accepting that the seriousness of job tasks can be alleviated. Managers who not only take their jobs but also themselves too seriously risk damage to the emotional well-being of their personnel and themselves.

Part of the maturation process for organizational leaders and managers is the realization that they must be willing to accept responsibility for the actions of their subordinates, actions which are not always under the manager's direct control, as well as for their own actions. It is, of course, easy to throw a subordinate “under the bus”. It may be more appropriate for the manager to accept some of the responsibility when a subordinate fails to accomplish what is desired and use the situation as a learning experience for all.

Managers and personnel alike should realize that effective job performance requires a balance of professional demands, family responsibilities, and personal issues. Failure to acknowledge and accept the relationship between each can too frequently result in conflict, frustration, and anger which spillover throughout all the parts of one's life. To be effective on the job means simply that one learns to balance its demands with those of the other elements of one's life. For managers, this also means that they not only learn to apply such balance in their own lives, but that they also accept it as a necessity for the healthy work and personal lives of their employees.

If a manager want a effective workplace he need to focus on two main areas:

- The first is to know the people he works with: their strengths, their weaknesses, their families, and their career aspirations. Armed with

that knowledge, a successful manager can both appropriately assign tasks and responsibilities and assure that employees perceive their work as both meaningful and valuable.

- The second is to work at the development of the people who serve his organization, helping them do their jobs more effectively and with fewer distractions through programs in stress management, time management, and personal finance, for instance. Such development should be viewed as an investment in the future of the agency.

In order to reduce stress in the workplace, it's important that managers lead by example. As a leader it's critical to keep a lid on emotions. Negativity, anger or stress shouldn't rub on employees.

The manager needs enough time to destress at the end of the working day. One innovative idea is to have walking meetings rather than meetings in the boardroom. The managers need to exercise and have a healthy lifestyle. This is extremely important when it comes to combating workplace related stress. Employee wellness schemes is a good way to help employees unwind and feel better about themselves. Social activity also is good for reducing stress, boosting morale and team building. At least once a week the manager should set aside an hour to bring his team together in a fun environment.

One of the supervisors role is in ensuring workplace safety, that if is no there, it's going to cause a stressful environment.

According to Dessler, supervisors are key members of the company's safety program. They should maintain a safe and healthful workplace away from hazards. As assurance, they are responsible in monitoring their workplaces frequently to identify unsafe or unhealthful conditions. It is important to get involve and investigate workplace accidents and encourage employees to report unsafe or unhealthful conditions. It is also vital to institute actions to prevent recurrence of accidents and

make sure that all employees are adequately trained to perform the work safely. Employees must also be informed of the hazards associated with the work they are to perform prior to beginning the work. Informing them with the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency, how to report unsafe or unhealthful conditions and how to take in the event of a work related injury is important too. Supervisors must also monitor employee behavior to ensure that work is being performed and take prompt action to correct any unsafe or unhealthful actions or behavior.

Despite limited research, there is some evidence that coaching interventions can help in reducing workplace stress, both directly and indirectly. Direct influence of coaching on workplace stress happens when the client experiences high levels of stress, and a coaching intervention is initiated and targeted specifically to reduce stress levels. Indirect influences of coaching on workplace stress can be witnessed if the client's goal is to improve performance and by doing so he can become less stressed or pressured. The section that follows will involve a summary and critique of existing literature on the effects of coaching on reducing workplace stress.

As stress stems from so many dynamic and fluid external and internal factors, I believe that eliminating it in the workplace entirely, is impossible. Neither do I believe that it is realistic to think that we can recommend one solitary or singular method to combat and cure workplace stress. A combination of methods and applications are needed to help clients manage and cope with their stress.

Looking closer at the causes of workplace stress, it is possible to find solutions that may reduce it. For example, possible solutions to problems threatened by environmental (or organizational) factors could be initiated and implemented by the organization - either proactively or reactively. The organization could re-design jobs descriptions and expectations, improve leadership strategies, raise working conditions or provide relevant training for employees. The advantage of following such reflective policies is to both for the employer and the employee - hopefully the elimination significant causes of workplace stress. These solutions, however, are beyond the control of the employees; only management can implement such policies and initiate these changes. Such problem-focused strategies, if suggested but then not accepted and implemented by the organization, can however be very disadvantageous. When

employees are expecting and encouraged by promised change, and the change is not delivered, then stress levels will return and increase even more.

Organizations can implement innovative occupational health practices like stress management and wellness programs. They can start coaching to help employees reduce and manage stress levels. The main goal of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), those that incorporate stress management and wellness techniques, is to minimize employees' adverse reactions to stress so that employees can be healthier, happier, more productive and less likely absent. Stress management and wellness programs involve training employees in meditation and relaxation techniques, and in general promote a healthier and more relaxed lifestyle. This solution has a payoff to both workplace parties; specifically as it improves the participants' resilience and coping skills. It has to be said, however, while these progressive programs look to tackle the symptoms of stress by minimizing adverse reactions to it, they don't get to the core of the problem; the variable factor of the individual employee's perception and interpretation of stressful situations.

The levels of stress can be modified by the individual's cognitive perception, and according to some psychologists, the individuals affected by workplace stress have a control on how their strain is managed. Cognitive perspective on stress shows that stress lies in the eye of the beholder (Lazarus, 1966). Therefore, if stress is partially caused by undesirable perceptions, thoughts and emotions, then the solution is in altering these perceptions, thoughts and emotions. Stress management and wellness programs don't address the cognitive side of stress and therefore they only partially tackle the problem of workplace stress.

How to break down the boss-employee concept to get as close as possible to the team concept

In the business environment, we hear more and more often discussing the meaning of "team leader". Many, to simplify the translation, associate the meaning of team leader with that of "boss", and this has a whole series of negative consequences for the meaning of team leader, which is a very important company resource, in many cases even vital, for the company or organization in which it operates. It is important to clarify that being a team leader does not mean command their employees and standardize the various company aspects to their personality. The real team leader is a guide of the work group, a ferryman towards the success or failure of the company.

Despite this, there are many situations in which this does not happen, where we are faced with a real boss, in the negative sense of the term, who does not feel any kind of empathy towards his own employees. And almost forgetting that they are the ones running his business.

These behaviors are completely harmful to their employees. These "leaders" remember the relationships that existed in feudal systems. They are people who have an autocratic conception of power and who do not care about negative repercussions of their behavior. They perceive the company or organization as a machine that must work perfectly and in which subordinate employees are just pieces of the gear.

A toxic boss focuses more on results than on processes.

Positive leadership has been shown to generate greater efficiency. Democratic and horizontal relations, over time, get more respect from workers. Above all, a true leader has moral authority on others. It does not need sanctions or punishments for its employees to commit to achieving the goals of the company, but motivates and rewards to increase their sense of belonging and their commitment. A toxic boss, instead, uses fear as a weapon. This is the tool he uses to get employees to pursue the goals of the company. While this method may work in the short term, in the medium to long term it ditches the company: employees, in fact, will feel frustrated and stressed, and will take the first opportunity to leave the company. For this reason, it is a leader who is harmful to the whole company.

All studies on work psychology indicate that a healthy relationship between the various members of a team leads to increased productivity and improved results. For these reasons listed above, every company should have the concept of “team” rather than the concept "Boss-employee", where they are all equal, even if each with his job.

The so-called team work is a popular and widespread way of managing work. The team shares objectives and workload according to a shared vision of roles and rules to be respected, with the ultimate goal of collaborating and working in synergy to achieve business objectives and improve productivity. This is why knowing how to work as a team is now a fundamental skill to acquire in every career path: this is why, among the most requested skills to find a job, it is evaluated often also the attitude to work in a team.

How to work effectively in a team

Each team, however close-knit, is managed by a project manager able to create an efficient collaboration among group members, managing to manage internal conflicts and enforce procedures. From this passes the possibility of creating a winning team that knows how to implement the skills of working as a team.

Because of this reason, the quality that every good project manager must possess is a good dose of leadership, that is that set of skills that allow you to interact with team members: logical ability, ability to negotiation, organization, ability to make group members grow professionally, as well as obviously a good dialectics and tangible skills.

What does it mean to work in team

Working in a team means gaining trust in other collaborators and, specifically for the project manager, it means being able to delegate work, entrusting responsibilities according to the personal skills of each one. The individual thus has the opportunity to grow professionally. Teamworking, therefore, does not hide any secrets either magic formula: it is only through the consistent management of resources that a good leader is able to convey their skills in order to obtain the best results. But working in a team

also means allowing the circularity of communication and guarantee the well-being of individuals, who have a clear and shared vision in common of the goal to be achieved.

To achieve this, we suggest a group activity, brainstorming, in which organize the team and become familiar with this corporate structure. Brainstorming is a creative technique for researching ideas which is used in the educational field and especially in the business/corporate field. The free flow of ideas does not only encourage the creation of innovative solutions, but proves to be a fundamental team activity building to create synergy between collaborators. Brainstorming is the first phase of any business project of success: the union of a large number of thoughts improves associative communication, favoring identification of new original strategies.

Problem Resolution

Brainstorming can also prove to be a winning tool for companies going through a particular period of crisis. The ideas shared by all company collaborators are essential elements to help the entrepreneur identify your problem and try to devise adequate and innovative solutions.

Refine business projects

The business project is usually conceived by the entrepreneur or by members of the management: considering the opinions of each collaborator carrying out brainstorming activities can prove to be the most appropriate solution to create new effective projects and new promotional strategies.

Encourage problem solving

Using a brainstorming diagram is a very important activity for creating new solutions within of the company: the brainstorming technique encourages company collaborators in the analysis of problems and in identifying suitable solutions. The union and comparison of different ideas coming from different collaborators can create original and creative projects capable of solving business problems particularly complicated.

Create a close-knit and winning team

The brainstorming activity requires commitment and cooperation by each company employee: everyone can express their ideas in total freedom to identify innovative

solutions. Brainstorming is therefore an activity particularly effective from a Team Building perspective as teamwork is an indispensable prerequisite for success of every project.

Collect everyone's opinions

Knowing the opinions of all the components of a company is essential to be able to significantly renew the own services. More people's ideas can give life to new and original projects that can overturn the market logic. Considering everyone's opinions is also a particularly effective activity from a Team building perspective as it gives importance to every member of the company.

After thinking about the team idea through brainstorming, you have to put everything into practice through the Team Building. It literally means "building a team". In fact it means the set of activities and procedures that serve to make a group of people interact in order to improve their ability to work in squad.

How it works

The ways in which a team can be built can be divided into two categories:

"Passive" tactics, focused on the development of communication protocols, on the use of project management, etc.

"Active" or specific tactics such as participation in teambuilding games and activities.

Team building activities work on the functioning of the team in an "underground" and implicit way. The trainer and the classroom are possibly present only at the time of the initial briefing and in the final debriefing, when the activity is presented and when the results and consequences are then summarized. For all the rest of the time the team finds itself in a deliberately different context and far from the business routine.

What to do

- Define a single goal: having multiple goals during a brainstorming session is never a good idea. The first rule to follow when embarking on a brainstorming process is to define a single goal to reach. Only in this way can we be sure not to waste energy on useless projects and we will be able to focus on priorities.

-Stop to judgments, yes to ideas: another important rule to follow to ensure a brainstorming session of success means participating with a proactive and inclusive spirit. Brainstorming means putting around a table many people each with their own head. If you want to make the path of brainstorming and achieve the set goal, you never need to judge who is in front of us, nor have preconceptions. While it is important to suggest the ideas that come to our mind, even if they may seem of little use to us either wrong.

- Define a periodic meeting plan: as with all projects, also to achieve the set goal through a brainstorming process, it is necessary to have a well-defined and organized periodic meeting plan. Establishing a time frame with a maximum time limit to be respected is essential to make the brainstorming session. Consistency and commitment to respecting working times and methods are the golden rule, the key to success.

- Choose the right personalities: having the right personalities at the table is another important rule to follow in order not to waste time chasing unclear or unattainable goals. In fact, with brainstorming the ideas produced can be really many and you need to be able to synthesize them and make them useful for business purposes. The background professional of those taking part in the brainstorming process must be as varied as possible, while doing attention in choosing only people capable of generating ideas and highlighting problems without bringing discontent within the group. Key figure within the group is that of the moderator, who must be able to mediate and coordinate the flow of ideas by bringing the team back to focus on the final goal when needed.

- Create a favorable work environment: an often underestimated brainstorming rule is the choice of the environment of work. Being in a bright and healthy place serves to stimulate creativity and a good mood, which is an important condition to increase the chances of success in achieving the set goal.

- Small external help: having tools to support brainstorming is a rule to be applied not only in

this context but in all those contexts where it is important to keep track of what it is spoken aloud. The type of tool to use has to be chosen according to the type of context:

slates erasable and colored post-it stickers are among the most used tools for their ease of use and their multifunctionality.

- Do not interrupt the flow of ideas: another brainstorming rule that is often mentioned in books on the subject is the following: never interrupt the flow of ideas for any reason. The reason is simple, brainstorming works good only if the correct mixing of different ideas takes place in a single flow. However, there is always an exception to the rule: if you realize that there is too much disproportion between the ideas proposed by the people in the group, the moderator will have to intervene by interrupting the flow and giving everyone the opportunity to intervene.

- No devices: a brainstorming rule that could arouse some resistance is the following: no an old or new generation smartphones, computers, tablets and mobile phones. In short, when you enter the room of work to start brainstorming you have to do a little like you do when you enter the cinema or theater: switch off cell phones and focus on what you are doing at the moment.

- Use a graphical mapping tool: finally a useful brainstorming rule to conclude successfully a session and take with you a starting point to work on in subsequent sessions: graphically map the ideas and concepts emerged through software, if we do not have these tools, with old-fashioned pen and paper.

How long it lasts

Team building can have very different durations depending on the purpose. It ranges from a few minutes to several days of activity.

- 15-60 minutes: short icebreaking intervention between sessions of a convention for example, to break the ice and make the participants "wake up".

- 2-4 hours: training activity inserted within a conference to work on the functioning of the team and develop more effective ways of communicating.

- 1-2 days: corporate event that takes the participants to a context far from business normality, to integrate new people into the team and work in-depth on solving business problems.

- Periodic intervention within a six-monthly or annual company training course.

The figure of the coach

The team is accompanied throughout the course of the event by professional trainers and coaches. Thanks to their great experience, these are able to constantly monitor the progress of the team, to stimulate creativity and the fantasy, to ensure everyone's involvement in the common work. Sometimes in the role of the coach you may need specialized help. Other times the role of the team builder, however, does not require specific knowledges but strong motivational and organizational skills. Often the coach or trainer also acts as an evaluator of the group that has been assigned to him. Observes carefully the communicative dynamics and emotional reactions expressed by the participants throughout the course of the activity, and as it ends draws a psychological profile of each team member and an overall one of the team taken as a whole. This profile will be useful to the organizer and main trainer involved in the event for the final debriefing. But it can also be acquired by the company, which will thus better know what happens in teamwork within the team.

Other health issues common in the HORECA sector workforce

The hotel, restaurant and catering sector (Horeca) is made up of hotels, bars, pubs, restaurants, catering services, takeaway, fast food, cafes and bistros, etc. Characteristics of the sector: mainly made up of small businesses with less than 10 employees. Its workforce is made up mostly of young people: according to an European statistic (EU-25, Eurostat 2005) around 48% of employees are under the age of 35, while people aged 55 or over amount to fewer than 10% of the workforce (although this percentage is increasing due to demographic change). The women, who make up about 54% of the workforce, outnumber male workers. This sector comes to be considered as a good opportunity to enter the world of work, both for young people and for people less qualified. The educational level of this workforce is low: 40% of employees are qualified at a relatively low level; only 1 out of 10 employees have a high level of education.

In the HORECA sector, working conditions are often particularly demanding: considerable workloads and excessive and/or irregular working hours often lead to a serious risk of health problems, including musculoskeletal disorders.

What are musculoskeletal disorders?

Musculoskeletal disorders (one of the most common work-related disorders) are impairments of body structures such as muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones, and the local circulatory system, caused or aggravated essentially by the effects of the work and the environment in which it is carried out.

Most work-related DMSs develop over time: the cause, consequently, is not just one, various risk factors contribute, including organizational and psychosocial factors; physical and biomechanical.

Let's see some data together: 34% of employees in the HORECA sector (European Union) suffer for back pain, lower percentage only to the agricultural sector (54%), construction (47.7%), transport and communication (36.8%), manufacturing (34.4%). In 2000, almost 55% of workers in the Union of 15 reported that the work carried out involved painful positions or fatiguing, compared to an overall 45% for all sectors. About 43% said the job involved transportation or the handling of heavy loads (compared to a total of 36%) and 64% emphasized the repetitiveness of the movements of hands and arms (compared to an overall 56%).

The most significant occupational risks in this sector are the following:

- work that requires physical exertion due to standing and static postures for long periods, carrying and lifting, repeated movements, often associated with other unfavorable working conditions, such as inadequate design of the workplace;
- exposure to high levels of noise: about 29% of workers in the sector are exposed to noise and over 4% believe that it puts their health at risk;
- hot or cold work environments, in particular high temperatures combined with drafts and open doors, and the alternation between work done in the heat, in humid conditions and in cold environments, such as warehouses;
- cuts and burns;
- stumbles, slips and falls caused by damp and slippery floors, obstacles and falls from above;

- dangerous substances; for example, the extensive use of cleaning agents and biological agents in food.

The most important psychosocial risk factors are:

- long and overtime working hours: the sector is characterized by long shifts and irregular and unusual working hours; a large part of the work is done when other people are not at work;
- difficulty in maintaining work-life balance, in particular considering the unpredictability of working hours, the length of working days and the lack of control at work;
- heavy workloads and rhythms: about 75% of workers complain about the high pace of work; 66% have to work with tight deadlines, while 48% say they do not have enough time to complete their work;
- poor control over work: monotonous work that leaves no room for creativity and requires little initiative is very widespread;
- contact with colleagues and superiors: lack of support can aggravate stress at work; about 70% of the workforce feels free to ask for support from colleagues, while only 53% from their supervisors;
- continuous contact with customers which can be a source of stress or, in the worst cases, can lead to harassment and even violence; lack of training and education: some of these occupations do not require formal education and can be carried out by those with a low level of training and experience; people are not always sufficiently trained for their jobs, which can be a source of stress.

Preventive measures can concern the following areas:

- configuration of the workplace: creating adaptations to improve working postures;
- equipment: make sure it is ergonomically designed and suitable for the tasks that have to be performed;
- skills: change working methods or tools;
- management: planning the work in order to avoid repetitive or prolonged work with incorrect postures. Plan breaks, take turns in carrying out duties or reassign work;
- organizational factors: define a policy on DMS to improve work organization.

At European level, workers' rights are protected by the framework directive 89/391 / EEC, which requires employers to carry out risk assessments as well as the general obligation to ensure the health and safety of workers in the workplace. Some risks associated with DMS are addressed by specific directives, in particular the manual handling directive and the vibration directive. The directive on the use of work equipment, on the other hand, concerns the positions adopted by workers when using such equipment and clarifies that employers must take into account ergonomic principles to comply with the minimum OSH requirements.

Manual handling directive:

The objective of the directive is to ensure that workers within the European Union (EU) are protected from the risks associated with the manual handling of loads. Employers should do everything possible to avoid the need for workers to manually handle loads. If it is not possible to avoid manual handling, the employer modifies the way work is organized or provides workers with the appropriate means to reduce the risk, ensuring adequate training.

You risk a back injury if the load:

- it is too heavy or too big; it is bulky or difficult to grasp; it is in unstable or its content is in danger of shifting; it is placed in such a position that it must be held or handled at some distance from the trunk, or with a twist or tilt of the trunk.

Physical exertion can present a risk of injury if:

- it is excessive; it can only be done with a twisting movement of the trunk; it can involve a sudden movement; it is done with the body in an unstable position.

The work environment can increase the chances of risk if:

- there is not enough space to carry out the activity; the floor is uneven, or unstable, or slippery; the conditions of the workplace prevent the handling of loads at a safe height or in a good position; the temperature, humidity or ventilation are inadequate.

The activity may involve a risk if it involves:

- excessive efforts that particularly stress the spinal column; insufficient rest or recovery periods; excessive lifting, lowering or transport distances; a pace imposed by a process that cannot be modulated by the worker.

The worker can take a risk if:

- is not physically fit to perform the task; wears inappropriate clothing; has inadequate knowledge or training.

Vibration directive:

It aims to ensure the protection of the safety and health of workers from the risks associated with mechanical vibrations. Employers undertake to evaluate and, if necessary, quantify the mechanical vibration levels to which workers are exposed; employ appropriate means and methods to quantify the impact of vibrations; keep a record of the results for any future consultations; identify the measures necessary to reduce risks; introduce technical and organizational changes in case the vibration limits are exceeded.

Directive on the use of work equipment

It establishes minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment in the workplace. Employers must take every possible measure to ensure the safety of the work equipment made available to workers. Where it is not possible to completely eliminate risks during the operation of work equipment, employers must take appropriate measures to minimize them.

Employers have a responsibility to ensure that work equipment is:

- regularly maintained to remain compliant with legal requirements;
- properly installed and functioning correctly, ensuring the inspection / verification of work equipment by suitably qualified persons. The results of the verifications must be recorded and kept.

Employers must also take full account of ergonomic principles and aspects of occupational health for workers when using work equipment.

Employers must provide workers with adequate and clear information (if necessary in written form) on the work equipment, regarding:

- the conditions of use;
- the conclusions drawn from the experience acquired.

Employers must ensure that workers are adequately trained, in particular with regard to specific risk equipment, and are aware of the risks that the use of equipment can entail.

Ergonomics in the kitchens:

Ergonomics generally means the optimal mutual adaptation between a person and their working conditions. Ergonomics in the workplace aims to create better conditions for the worker by optimizing the workstation and equipment (machines, tools, etc.). In concrete terms this means that the working conditions, the work processes, the arrangement of the objects to be grasped, etc. are optimized in terms of space and time. In practice, creating an ergonomic kitchen means designing a perfectly functional space, where operations are carried out with minimal effort. An ergonomic kitchen, in fact, allows you to eliminate some unnecessary movements and operations. Ergonomics is an important factor to be absolutely taken into consideration when designing a professional kitchen, not only to protect the health of employees, but also to ensure maximum efficiency of the working environment. Much can be done, however, even in existing professional kitchens: the simple change of a machine can have important consequences on the well-being of kitchen workers and on productivity.

Some advice for prevention:

-Maintain correct posture We assume a position that causes lordosis too often, strain the spine by lifting weights incorrectly and carry too heavy loads. It is good to stand and sit with your back straight. When lifting heavy objects, it is good to squat and stand up keeping your back straight (not bent forward!), Using your legs and keeping the object to be lifted close to the trunk. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen and train all the muscles of the trunk (back, abdomen, etc.) and legs.

- Take ergonomics into account

An ergonomically well-equipped workplace in the restaurant industry can help improve employee satisfaction and health, as well as efficiency. The topic of ergonomics should be taken into consideration right from the design stage. In concrete terms, this means that the working conditions, the work processes and the arrangement of the objects to be grasped should be optimized in terms of space and time.

- The right shoes

Wearing good shoes is important especially for employees in the restaurant business! Let's try to imagine having to stand up most of the time. A good shoe must therefore not only be comfortable (without heels or with flat heels), but also support and cushion the foot, protect the joints and give support. Thus leg pain, burning sensation in the feet and back pain are a thing of the past.

- Do physical activity

Even if you are on your feet a lot due to work, it is good to engage in a dynamic activity in your spare time. On the one hand, exercising outdoors keeps us mentally and physically fit - on the other hand, exercise in fresh air reduces stress and can improve mood. Sports such as Nordic walking, cycling, swimming, jogging and hiking are also suitable for beginners!

- Improve work-life balance

Having healthy and motivated employees is a great advantage for companies in the catering sector. For this reason, today's employers should improve the work-life balance of their employees. In addition to flexible working hours, time to devote to further education and family, the promotion of sports activities (e.g. membership in a gym that offers targeted back courses) is one of the aspects that can retain an employee.

-More serenity!

This advice applies to both professional and private life: you shouldn't always try to please others. It is good to take time for yourself and take breaks. Only those who occasionally take time for themselves, take care of their family and friends, keep themselves healthy and fit in the medium term and will also do their job well.

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