

How to manage business stress before it manages you

Description

Hans Selye famously said that itâ??s not stress that kills us, but itâ??s our reaction to it. We know from science that stress causes a fight or flight response, which leads to actual physical effects. Over a long enough time, these symptoms can become chronic.

Karla Akpinar, a small business owner with 20 years of experience from Denver, CO, has weathered recessions and pandemics. However, today, stressful tariffs are hitting her business hard.

Facing so many challenges, it wouldnâ??t be surprising if owners like Akpinar needed a back and neck pain chiropractor in Denver soon. Business owners owe it to themselves to ensure that stress doesnâ??t become their boss.

In this article, letâ??s explore some ways that you can put a leash on stress and keep your business thriving.

Step 1: Understand the True Cost of Stress on Business Owners

The first step in handling business stress is seeing it for what it really costs. Stress itself isnâ??t always bad. In short bursts, it can very much sharpen focus, increase alertness, and help you push through challenges. The problem starts when it is constant and unmanaged. This can push you toward burnout, which can be devastating if you run a business.

Alum Brankele Frank, a neurobiologist, reveals some interesting insights to the McKinsey Health Institute. According to Frank, when you face severe burnout, brain volume starts to shrink. The neurons in areas responsible for cognition start to decline.

Likewise, Governorâ??s Park Chiropractic points out that the brain communicates via the spine. When stress is accumulated, the spine can become misaligned, which affects the brainâ??s ability to send signals to the body.

As you can imagine, if left unmanaged, this type of stress will chip away at your innovation and strategic clarity. Thus, your first objective is to create an internal stress barometer where you try to differentiate between good stress and bad stress.

Step 2: Recognize that Stress Affects Everyone in the Business

Stress is not contained to the corner office. If employees feel the weight of uncertainty, it eventually finds its way back to the owner in the form of turnover, disengagement, or poor performance.

According to recent findings by Gallup, employee stress levels have been rising over the last 10 years. Today, 44% of employees around the world say they are stressed. Unsurprisingly, North America and East Asia had the highest levels of stress at 52%. Australia and New Zealand came second at 47%.

The good news is that the same Gallup study found that engaged employees were less likely to feel stress. What does that mean? Well, when employees are engaged, theyâ??re not just showing up for a paycheck. They feel connected to their work, their team, and the organizationâ??s mission.

As a leader, you play a critical role in creating that sense of purpose in the kind of environment you create. You can invest in quiet work zones, flexible scheduling, and shorter team meetings after intense projects. Of course, there is one strategy that is still unbeaten when it comes to recovering from stress.

Step 3: Take Advantage of Strategic Retreats

Sometimes the only way to regain control of stress is to **create intentional distance** from the stress. Business Insider highlights the experience of Jennifer Billock, an entrepreneur who fought her burnout with a business retreat. The time spent alone gave her mind time to consider the sources of her stress. Billock soon realized that she had to fire a difficult employee and cut relations with a client who constantly changed work requirements.

When youâ??re in the middle of things, itâ??s hard to really recognize what needs to be done. Billock claims that when she returned to work, she felt rejuvenated and thrilled with her work.

Even if you canâ??t afford a full-fledged retreat, both micro and macro rest can help. Micro resets include small daily rituals: a quiet walk before calls, a moment of stillness after a heavy meeting, or setting aside five minutes to recalibrate focus. Macro resets are similar to what Billock experienced. Both types of resets serve the same purpose of breaking the cycle of reactive thinking.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is having a business so stressful?

Running a business means juggling endless responsibilities â?? money, customers, employees, and competition. Youâ??re constantly making decisions that can make or break things. Add uncertainty about the future, and itâ??s no wonder business owners often feel like theyâ??re carrying the world on their shoulders.

2. Do CEOs have high stress?

Yes, CEOs often face extreme stress. Theyâ??re under pressure to keep the company profitable, manage crises, and satisfy investors while leading a team. The constant responsibility, long hours, and isolation at the top can weigh heavily, which is why burnout is a real risk for them.

3. What are the five causes of stress in a business?

Common stressors include financial pressure, unrealistic deadlines, employee conflicts, constant uncertainty, and work-life imbalance. Each one affects your focus and energy. Combined, they create the nonstop pressure cooker environment that many entrepreneurs and leaders find themselves in while running a business.

Ultimately, some amount of business stress is inevitable, especially when external factors like tariffs and market downturns occur. Let us remember once more Selyeâ??s advice that what matters most is not the presence of stress but the way we engage with it.

Remember, your leadership shouldnâ??t just be focused on strategy and numbers. Instead, remember to consider the human energy required to work toward your business goals. Stress will always find its way into business, but with the right mindset, it does not have to define the outcome.

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