

## **STRESS PROBLEM IN BPO SECTOR**

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### **WHAT IS MEANT BY BPO?**

Business process outsourcing, the most flourishing Indian industry sector has emerged as India's most promising sector, and has been growing at a rate of 40-50 per cent since its inception. BPO is a very fast paced and a high momentum industry. BPO industry is expected to generate one million jobs by the year 2008. Taking advantage from the abundant skills and low cost benefits, large number of BPO companies have mushroomed in India in recent years, many of the well established IT companies have also started their BPO divisions. But, there is another side of the BPO picture too. The side that has already brought the BPO industry in limelight many times. This picture is concerned with the non viability of the BPO and the fact that the young generation of India is actually loosing out in the BPO.

Business process outsourcing organisations, commonly known as call centres – work when rest of the India sleeps! Most of the BPO organisations work according to the international (US and UK) timings, therefore most of the BPO employees work in night shifts starting anywhere from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and ending at 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. There is also a graveyard shift starting at 4 a.m. working in such shifts having odd timings have started showing hazardous results on the health of the Indian youth.

### **REPUTED BPO'S IN INDIA**

With increasing scope of BPO industry, many top-ranking software companies have established their BPO centers in India making a career in the BPO sector lucrative. Some of the well-known BPO companies in India are WNS Group, Convergys, Zenta, Wipro Spectramind, EXL, ICICI Onesource, Daksh e-Service, Tracmail, HCL Technologies, Mphasis, GTL Ltd, Sutherland Technologies, vCustomer, HTMT and 24/7 Customer.

These companies are the top-rankers on providing career in BPO sector on the basis of criteria like employee size, overall satisfaction score, job content/growth, salary and compensation, training, company culture and appraisal system etc.

### **WHAT IS STRESS?**

According to the web, stress is defined as: constraining force or influence: as a: a force exerted when one body or body part presses on, pulls on, pushes against, or tends to compress or twist another body or body part; especially : the intensity of this mutual force commonly expressed in pounds per square inch b: the deformation caused in a body by such a force c: a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation d: a state resulting from a

stress; especially : one of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium .

In another simple definition, stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Common stress reactions include tension, irritability, inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include headache and a fast heartbeat.

### **PROBLEMS IN BPO'S**

#### **Spot the symptoms**

Stress manifests itself in a variety of ways but symptoms may include changes in behaviour... smoking or drinking more, being unable to sleep, a change in eating habits. Or you may become indecisive, lose concentration, become irritable angry or anxious, or start feeling tired and listless. Stress can also be the underlying cause of aching muscles, headaches, stomach problems, high blood pressure and palpitations.

Prolonged working in shifts of odd hour's can have major implications on the physical and mental health of the employees. The physical strains like sleep disorders, depression, odd working shifts, learning foreign accents, constantly handling abusive calls and high stress levels are making the BPO employees more prone to hypertension and heart attacks.

Various surveys and research conducted amongst the call centre employees have shown that depression is the most common problem faced by BPO employees. Frequent headaches, feeling of fatigue, sleeping disorders and frustration have become regular problems for them.

### **WHY BPO EMPLOYEES QUIT THEIR JOBS**

It is true that now day's employees are not working for salary because they want to relaxation in job. Most

youngsters do not like joining the business process outsourcing (BPO) due to stress and health issue. **BPO** employees are quitting BPO job's to get rid of the stress and strain at work place. Employees do not quit due to salary issues alone. They are least bother about the salary. All the companies are giving good salary.

Now companies are providing good services to fresher and experienced employees with openings with good salary. But preference of the employees now goes to the office where they should have some fun and entrainment for getting relaxation. In fact, stress and health weren't even among the 'top three' factors for leaving a company.

Union Health Minister A Ramadoss recently called for a "health policy for the tech sector", stating: "(BPO employees) have a sedentary lifestyle. They smoke, go for late-night parties, and even take drugs. Some get heart attacks in their mid-20s"

Employees are facing stress problem in **BPO** due to that their health is down. If customers are not getting comfort and the full relaxation in BPO companies then they quit the company. The good part is that if the industry is aware to checking indoor air quality to testing food in labs then it will be really.

### **STRESS BUSTING TIPS FOR CALL CENTRE STAFF**

While it is impossible to eradicate stress completely, as an employer it is your legal and moral duty to be pro-active and ensure the negative impact of work-related stress is kept to a minimum.

Although working in a call centre can be highly pressured, trade unions have suggested some ways call centre staff can combat stress. Here are some of their ideas:

- Take breaks as frequently as you can to reduce eye strain, voice loss and general stress. The European Working Time Directive entitles workers to a minimum of a 20 minute break after six hours – but this really is a minimum.
- Frequent, short breaks are thought to be better than fewer, longer breaks.
- Stretching exercises help reduce muscle tension and other problems.
- When you can get a proper break, get right away from your work station – don't take lunch at your desk – and do something different. Take a walk outside, do some exercises, chat to colleagues.
- If you have to move frequently to different work stations – called 'hot desking' – check your chair and VDU is adjusted to suit you each time.
- Take frequent drinks of water to avoid voice problems and dehydration. Tea or coffee can exacerbate stress levels. A healthy diet – snacks of fruit or raw vegetables rather than crisps and fizzy drinks – helps combat tiredness.
- You should have your own headset, to avoid catching infections, with volume control, to reduce hearing difficulties.
- If you have an abusive or distressing call, take a breather and – if you can – get support from someone else. Your supervisors should take action against the caller if this is a regular customer.
- Having a variety of tasks – moving from one kind of call to a different sort or to paperwork – helps reduce monotony.
- If conditions are oppressive, you can lobby for change by joining a trade union.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

All said and done I believe and realized that stress is not always something negative. It can be something positive and constructive as well. Since the BPOs mostly have relatively younger age group of employees, their energy and ideas can be put to

better use by identifying their competencies and matching the same with the business goal.

- Organizations can organize something like “Young Leader” wherein a team of two or three people would work on a project and let the management decide the best idea and recognize new talent. I believe interaction with the leadership would do well because most of the employees working in BPOs in India are in an age group when they are highly impressionable and what better way to create that impression than seeking a mentor beyond the immediate supervisor. The whole idea is to let the young minds think.

- It is a fact that in India BPOs are not taken as serious career options and that is one of the reasons why young people joining it but leaving it all the more soon. The most important thing therefore is for the industry to promote the same as a viable career option. NASSCOM, the governing body for the industry is off late making an attempt towards that direction. Such efforts should be done on a larger scale so as to promote the industry further. The key to this I believe is to create awareness among the general public because in India even now family/ parents are actively involved in taking decisions in respect of their children. So, it is important for them to have this awareness. Most of the stress which these youngsters face is on account of the pressure they face at home with respect to their jobs at the BPOs and it is this stress which culminates into bigger dimensions and leads to disillusionment among the young.

- The BPO industry as a whole should come together and address the stress problem by conducting seminars and workshops for their employees.
- All organizations should have a Counseling Desk

wherein an in-house counselor counsels the employees on their career needs, problems in adjustment which may arise on account of the fact that most of the employees who work in the BPOs leave their home towns and come to various cities to work. This may act as an effective way to curb emotional stress.

- Redefining the career paths and making the employees aware of the same. Trainings should be conducted which would enhance their skill sets beyond taking calls and develop their competencies to match the same against organizational goals.
- There should be some fun at work activities conducted every month to keep the employees peeped-up.
- Tie-ups with different health clubs for the benefit of the employees.
- Small trips should be given as incentives to the employees.

## **CONCLUSION**

Stress adds flavor, challenge and opportunity to life. Without stress, life would be dull and unexciting. However, too much stress can seriously affect one's physical and mental well-being. Recurrent physical and psychological stress can diminish self-esteem, decrease interpersonal and academic effectiveness and create a cycle of self blame and self-doubt. It is important for one's health that one should find the optimal level of stress that one can learn to manage effectively.

Stress is unique and personal to each of us. What is relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. One person may find "taking it easy" at the beach relaxing while another may find it boring. The key to stress reduction is identifying strategies that fit one as

an individual.

The best way to cope with unhealthy stress is to recognize when one's stress levels are building. While we often think of stress as the result of external events, the events themselves are not necessarily stressful. It is the way in which each individual interprets and reacts to an event that produces stress. People vary significantly in the type of events they experience as stressful and the way that they respond to these events. Public speaking is a good example: while some people see it as routine, others experience it as highly stressful. Call centers have become one of the largest and most vital components in the contemporary business world. The stress related problems are acute and existant. Only thing we have to see it is how actively the problem can be solved by effective dealing. Acknowledging stress and having positive attitudes towards it in the workplace ensures an open and positive response to it. It gives people 'permission' to be stressed. All too frequently employees are too afraid to mention the 'S' word in case it is treated as a sign of weakness. By taking the initiative, introducing a few simple ideas and leading by example you can start the attitude adjustment from the ground up. The advice may be obvious, and you may well have heard it all before but it can't be stressed enough!

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