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Noise in the Workplace

By Chris Hampton

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by: **Chris Hampton**

The Cause:

Machinery, people and the environment all contribute to noise in the workplace.

Machinery, such as copiers, printers, fax machines, fans, air conditioner, computers, phones and many other types of specialized equipment are a source of noise in the workplace.

People, added to the above by talking, typing, moving around and moving things around in doing their work are another cause of noise in the workplace.

The environment also contributes to the noise by reflecting and amplifying noise off of hard surfaces like walls, windows or ceilings. Vehicular traffic noise and other worksites nearby also add to the din.

The Facts:

Machinery noise is low frequency. Low frequency noise can cause reduced efficiency and even make us sick. Over time, it can do damage to internal organs, if the amplitude is high enough. Sometimes, noise problems in air conditioning or air conditioning ductwork can cause the sickness rate to soar.

People noise is usually a higher frequency. Depending on the volume and pitch, this can sometimes be extremely annoying. The louder others get, the louder we get – setting off an out of control spiral of noise.

Add to this the environment – box like walls, ceilings and windows. The sounds just get louder and louder by reflecting off the hard surfaces. This creates more sickness, annoyance and reduced efficiency.

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The Solution:

Reduce or eliminate the noise, either at the source or after the fact.

It would be hard to eliminate people and still run a business. Usually, there is little we can do to reduce the noise that machines make.

There are many ways to accomplish noise reduction. The best, of course, is to build the structure with noise reduction in mind. Short of that, we can do a lot to make it better.

Methods:

There are three major methods of sound reduction and control.

Masking is the use of sound to cover up the unwanted or annoying noise.

Absorption is the use of sound absorbing or sound energy conversion material to lessen noise.

Deflection is the use of sound reflective material to direct the excessive noise away.

Find out more at:

Arizona Acoustic Art

Gilbert, Arizona

Chris Hampton has 25 years experience in the sound and vibration industry and being hearing impaired knows the importance of sound and noise control and conditioning.

Dealing with Workplace Stress

By Trevor Dumbleton

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One of the hardest forms of stress to avoid is workplace stress. After all, you need to go to work and there are plenty of things to worry about once you get there. However, that does not mean that workplace stress is unavoidable. Just like other kinds of stress, there are ways to manage workplace stress and there are ways to avoid it. Maybe you cannot avoid it entirely, but that is no reason not to try.

Workplace stress usually takes the form of everything needing to get done right now. You know the situation, there are a dozen things on your plate and they all need attention, but there are only so many hours in the day and you cannot attend to everything all at once. On top of that, the boss is breathing

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down your neck, asking you where the report/plan/program is and he also has a pile of other tasks for you once you finish that. It is a never-ending cycle, but it can be managed.

The first thing you need to do to avoid workplace stress is to focus on one task at a time. Do not try to multi-task, as it jars your system. Switching gears between projects does make demands on your brain and it takes a moment to change your thoughts from one place to another. Instead, if you focus on one project, you can keep your thoughts and energy in one place, preventing you from having to shift gears too often.

However, the big problem with trying to keep your focus is your coworkers. They will always be asking you for a quick minute or they will want you to answer their question, or they will want you to come over and help them on something. Try to deflect these as much as possible, as these can distract your focus. Thus, you must learn to say, "no." This is a highly effective word, though you may want to change it to, "No, not right now," or, "As soon as I am done with this." These little phrases can at least buy you some time to finish what you are doing, then switch comfortably to the needs of your coworkers.

There is another cause of workplace stress that can also cause you all manner of difficulty and that is when your concentration runs out. Oftentimes, you may find yourself focusing on the same page or the same computer screen for minutes at a time and you still have no idea what it is supposed to mean. This is not good, as it means that you are not being effective, your brain has shut down and the deadline is looming over you and you just need to get through this. Your best plan at this point is to walk away from your desk. Get up, get a cup of coffee (but not too often, as caffeine can heighten stress), go to the bathroom, anything. Walk the corridors for a minute or two and clear the cobwebs. This is highly effective both for ensuring that you are getting work done and for keeping workplace stress to a minimum.

Another way to prevent workplace stress is to learn some desk exercises. These can be simply squeezing a stress ball, or performing a few stretches while you are at your desk. By working your muscles at your desk, you can improve your circulation and help you keep alert and aware at work. Obviously, you are not going to get a full body workout while you are pecking at a keyboard, but it can help you at least keep your mind focused.

Finally, while you are at work you should examine your environment to see if it is right for you. How is the noise level? Is your desk set up properly? Are you comfortable? Is everything set up so that it is ergonomically correct? Your body needs to be comfortable if you want to work without distraction and distractions can lead to workplace stress. Thus, your work area needs to be set up for you. Take care of the little things around you and you will be able to work confidently and work well.

Workplace stress is, in many ways, part of working. However, by managing workplace stress properly, you can at least keep it to a minimum. And by doing that, work will be much more pleasant and you will be much more productive. So take care of yourself and the area around you and workplace stress will not control your day.

Trevor Dumbleton is the owner of <http://www.LowerYourStress.com/> a categorized resource directory

for everything to do with stress.

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