



Why organisations don't work: Stress and organisational performance are inextricably linked. Avoid the pitfalls and create a vibrant, highly productive work culture.

Jeremy Old

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This book is a must-have, if you work in an organisation and ever find yourself asking questions such as: why is it such a struggle to achieve anything worthwhile here; why am I so exhausted; why can't people seem to work well together; why do different operational functions seem to work against the common purpose; why do people resist change and improvement; why do the most unsuitable individuals seem to rise to the top; why is the place riddled with political intrigue; why do we so often lose the plot from the customer's point of view?

Jeremy Old answers these perennial questions by applying systems thinking to modern psychotherapy and practical neuroscience. Be warned, this may not be a comfortable read for a lot of senior managers. This powerful analysis demolishes the case for top down command and control management and the prevailing target culture in the public sector and many large corporations.

An underlying theme is that the root cause of business failure and organisational dysfunction is the sub-conscious stress response. Stress is the precursor to crass decision-making, operational mistakes and an array of sub-optimum behaviours found at every level of organisational life. Unfortunately, the stress response is often triggered by the thinking, behaviour, attitude and actions of managers themselves. This new understanding explains why so much of what managers do for a living unwittingly stifles innovation, disrupts flow, trashes teamwork, demotivates staff and works against organisational objectives.

Using research evidence and a rich catalogue of real life case examples from both the public and private sectors you will see how organisational stress reduces our capacity to think coherently and how it harms our ability to work productively, creatively and compassionately. You will discover the practical impact that thirty different 'stressors' have on employees' psychological needs as well as how to identify and measure the likely cost of them to the organisation. Most importantly, you will discover simple practical remedies for each stressor, most of which are essentially cost free.

Using his 'thirty-stressor' model of organisational stress, Jeremy Old recommends that the easiest and quickest way to motivate people is to avoid demotivating them in the first place. Enthusiasm, creativity, collaborative working and creative problem solving are instinctive survival traits that healthy human beings have in abundance, but only when they are not stressed. The thirty-stressor model can help you avoid these classic thirty mind traps so prevalent in organisational life today.

These new insights into the stress response and its harmful consequences are challenging accepted norms about leadership and the management function. For a new generation of managers, who possess the right attitude, these insights are set to provide a distinct competitive advantage and so transform business growth and organisational competence.

The fundamental reason for this transformation is that a powerful antidote to organisational stress is collaborative leadership. Deep within our DNA is the key human attribute that we are highly socialised,

collaborative, problem-solving mammals. When, in the usual top down command and control environment, we are prevented from collaborative problem solving on behalf of our own group we become stressed. When we become stressed we start underperforming in random ways and so does the organisation around us.

On the other hand, when managers facilitate this innate collaborative faculty by appropriately addressing the structure, function and style of their leadership, they free up information flows and mobilize the intelligence, energy, focus and problem-solving ability of the entire organisation. The result is vastly higher productivity, and growth and a much happier and healthier workforce.

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