

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Client: Monster.com

Industry: Employment and Recruitment Services

Project: SEO-Optimized Long-Form Article

- Wrote SEO-optimized articles based on keyword research for Monster's B2B content marketing team.
- The goal of the articles was to provide information, resources, and tools for small business owners, recruiters, and hiring managers in order to position Monster as the go-to source for posting job openings and finding top talent.
- As of October 2021, the article ranked in the top five search results for its priority key phrase (workplace stress in retail industry).

WRITING SAMPLE

How to Manage Employee Stress in Retail Work

American workers across all industries report work-related issues as their top stressors. For employers, the cost of hiring and training a new employee makes avoiding excessive employee turnover a top priority. This makes employee stress a top concern for employers as they strive to ensure productivity, retention, and (ultimately) profits.

With more than one in four American jobs supported by the retail industry, retail employers have a particularly daunting challenge in maintaining a healthy, productive workforce. The following is an overview of workplace stress in the retail industry and how employers can manage the prevalence and impacts of work-related stress in their workforce.

Employee Stress in Retail Impacts Lives at Work and At Home

Long-term stress and the psychological effects of working retail go beyond their

time on the job. The severity largely depends on the sense of control an employee feels they have over their time and activities. Studies based on this model confirm that workers who perceive they are subjected to high demands but have little control are at increased risk for illnesses like cardiovascular disease.

Retail workers are far too familiar with the “high demand/low control model” of work. They’re often met with circumstances outside of their control, such as frequently variable work schedules (irregular and extended shifts), long periods of standing, and reduced staffing. Also, since the vast majority of retail workers are paid hourly, an unstable schedule means frequent fluctuations in their income.

Retail workers’ lack of control over their schedules and paychecks, paired with the high demands of serving customers, making sales, and working well with team members, reduces their overall stability in the workplace. It is this instability that leads to problems inside and outside of the workplace, including:

- Absenteeism, arriving late, leaving early
- High anxiety about finances (lack of predictable pay due to variable work hours)
- Elevated blood pressure and anxiety, increased risk of coronary heart disease, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders
- Decreased work output, increased errors, and more accidents
- Memory loss, over-reacting with customers and teammates, and increased irritability
- Improper eating habits (over-eating or under-eating) and sleeplessness
- Chronic health problems including immune deficiency disorders, musculoskeletal disorders (like chronic back pain), and gastrointestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome.
- Increased number of days taken off work for doctor visits, and increased healthcare costs incurred by employers

Retail workers also suffer from more systemic reasons for stress in the workplace. For example, women make up 56.5 percent of retail workers, while Blacks and Hispanics comprise 12.5 percent and 18.7 percent of the retail workforce (respectively).

These three groups also tend to earn lower pay than other demographic groups. This gender and racial pay gap contribute to



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other economic disparities, with 10.1 percent of retail workers having lived in poverty during employment and 5.3 percent of retail workers using Medicaid (a government program that provides health coverage for low-income people).

So, how can employers help their workers decrease and manage their work-related stress?

How to Combat Employee Stress in Retail Work Environments

There's no silver bullet or quick fix for managing stress at work. Business owners and managers must commit to taking steps—continuously evaluating their effectiveness—that build and support a healthy and productive work environment.

Here are five ways to help reduce stress in your retail business.

1. Give Employees a Voice in Decision-Making

Retail work environments are more volatile than many others because of their vulnerability to consumer buying trends and seasonality. When navigating the inevitable changes that accompany running a retail business, involve employees in the decisions that have a direct impact on their lives.

For example, if you need to send two waiters home because of a slow dinner shift, or need additional workers to cover a weekend shift, consider asking for volunteers and allowing co-workers to decide amongst themselves. This will help employees feel less reactive to mandates and more empowered.

2. Create an Environment That Encourages Rest and Self-Care

Long hours, unrealistic job expectations, and low wages make up three of the top five employee stress factors. Workers in grocery stores and general retailers face additional challenges that include a fast pace and high customer service demands, which typically lead to employee burnout.

One way to stave off stress caused by these factors is to encourage (or even mandate) breaks throughout the workday. When possible, break areas should be clean, quiet (away from customers), well-lit, and amenable to relaxation. Healthy, free, or low-cost snack options also help encourage employees to refuel with food that supports better health.

Also, keep track of employees who don't use vacation days or who work excessive overtime hours. These are employees who may be susceptible to physical and mental illnesses associated with extended bouts of workplace stress. Conversely, if employees routinely take off more time than allotted by company policy, or are habitually late, use it as an opportunity to decrease employee stress by evaluating leave policies or flexible scheduling options to help employees balance personal and family obligations.

3. Allow Greater Independence and Autonomy

Micromanagement wreaks havoc on workplace morale, increases employee dissatisfaction, and decreases productivity regardless of the industry. And, while you may be well-intentioned by keeping close tabs on employees or instructing them on how to complete tasks, micromanaging your employees only increases their stress levels.

Show your employees that you trust them to make the right decisions by giving them the freedom to complete tasks in a way that best suits them and meets business needs. An easy strategy: if you require frequent updates on a project or key business indicator (like sales volume), give employees a deadline to report to you instead of asking for updates randomly throughout the day.

4. Show Appreciation Through Compensation

With low wages as a top factor for employee stress, it's no surprise that retailers who pay well above minimum wage enjoy higher employee retention. The correlation between low wages and high stress means that all retail employers should consider increasing pay or offering other financial incentives to help combat job-related stress. If your business is operating on a tight budget and you're unable to provide raises, consider performance-related bonuses, extra paid time off, transportation allowances, or even free meals as ways to offer monetary compensation.

5. Encourage Open Communication

Employees cite fear of retaliation, lack of access, or an appearance of apathy on the part of management as reasons cited by employees for



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not proactively communicating dissatisfaction at work. Employees who don't feel seen, heard, or regarded face higher rates of job-related stress.

Retail business owners can solve this problem by creating a culture that values consistent, open communication with employees. Regularly scheduled team meetings, employee-led committees, and anonymous surveys and feedback are all tools for encouraging two-way communication with your retail staff. If your business employs managers across various departments, conduct management training that emphasizes a uniform process for handling employee feedback and reporting complaints.

Stay Informed About How to Better Help Your Employees

Don't let managing employee stress fall to the bottom of your business owner to-do list! Get valuable information and tips delivered to your inbox and stay informed about the best practices for reducing stress in the workplace.