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May
2011

7:47am, EDT

The reorg is stressing us out

By Allison Linn

Managers, take note: That reorganization or other big change you're planning may well end up stressing your employees out.

That makes sense intuitively, and now here's proof.

Researcher [Michael S. Dahl](#) looked at the medical histories of nearly 93,000 Danish employees at more than 1,500 of the largest companies in that country. He found that when companies made organizational changes, the company's employees had a significantly higher risk of developing stress conditions such as insomnia, anxiety and depression that required prescription medication.

"In general, I find that change increases the probability of heightened stress for employees," Dahl wrote in an article published in the February issue of Management Science.

That was especially true at companies undergoing several broad changes at the same time, he found.

For the study, Dahl looked at the Danish employees over an eight-year period between 1995 and 2003. He found that there was an increase in employees taking prescription medication to treat stress-related conditions at both companies with lots of organizational change and those without much change, reflecting an overall increase in that type of drug usage.

Still, at the companies where there was lots of change, a larger proportion of employees received one or more prescriptions for stress-related conditions.

Dahl, a professor at Aalborg University in Denmark, noted that stress can hurt productivity and work satisfaction – something that shouldn't come as a surprise to stressed out workers.

Tip of the hat to the Harvard Business Review's The Daily Stat for [first reporting the study](#).

Do reorganizations and other big changes at work stress you out?