



Workplace atmosphere

Getting started

Work in small groups. Say whether you agree or disagree with these statements.

- 1 'Paying people at the same level in the company at different rates of pay introduces competitiveness and raises productivity.'
- 2 'Job insecurity encourages people to work harder.'
- 3 'People want to feel their job is important.'
- 4 'Few people are capable of managing themselves. They need firm management from above.'
- 5 'People need continuous praise and encouragement to prevent them from slacking off.'
- 6 'Peer-group recognition means more to people than management recognition.'

Motivating employees

Reading

- 1 Skim the article in two or three minutes. Which of the things in *Getting started* do you think David Sirota would agree with?
- 2 Read the article again and check your comprehension by choosing the best answer, A, B, C or D, for each of these questions.
 - 1 In paragraph 1, what effect of high morale is mentioned?
 - A Employees stay with the company longer.
 - B Employees work harder than their counterparts in other companies.
 - C Companies produce better results than their rivals.
 - D Companies with high morale are more respected.
 - 2 Which of these does Sirota suggest is a good reaction for a company with financial problems?
 - A reducing the workforce
 - B outsourcing to reduce costs
 - C reducing the rewards packages
 - D transferring employees to other jobs



Giving employees what they want:

The returns are huge

David Sirota, co-author of *The Enthusiastic Employee: How Companies Profit by Giving Workers What They Want*, finds that firms where employee morale is high tend to outperform competitors. He told us: "People at work have various basic goals. First, they want to be treated fairly. Employees want to know they are getting what is normally defined as competitive pay. If I feel underpaid, there is not much an organisation can do to boost my morale. Second, employees want a sense of achievement from

- 3 How did Toyota motivate workers on assembly lines?
 - A by asking managers to rotate workers
 - B by letting groups of workers make decisions on their work organisation
 - C by allowing teams to take over the whole process of production
 - D by rewarding them for achieving their production targets
- 4 How should bonuses be awarded, according to Sirota?
 - A They should be decided by people at the same level in the organisation.
 - B They should be given on a monthly basis.
 - C They should be based on routine work.
 - D They should be awarded as a result of evaluation from line managers.
- 5 What, nowadays, is the typical management-worker relationship?
 - A one where workers have to be cared for by their managers
 - B one of hostility
 - C one which is purely economic
 - D one of co-operation on equal terms

work. The key element is to be proud of your job and proud of the organisation for which you are doing it. The third element is camaraderie. This is also not mentioned much in our field, but it's key – not only in the sense of having a friend, but working well together as a team.

And, he says, there are a number of other things companies can do to boost morale: "First, provide security. Laying off people should be the last resort, not the first thing you do. Some companies use a ring of defense. If the business is having difficulties, they retrain workers or bring work inside from subcontractors. There are a number of steps you can take before making people redundant.

"Second, where there are difficulties in getting work done, we suggest self-managed teams. Toyota, which has been an incredibly successful company, is an example. In the 1970s, Toyota wanted to know how to enrich the job of assembly workers and thought about having groups of employees build an entire car. But that would have been so inefficient. Toyota said instead it could have a team of workers manage part of the assembly line. The team could look at quality and at what kind of maintenance and support were needed, and it could decide how to rotate workers. As opposed to the usual top-down management, this approach is tremendously satisfying for workers, and thus reduces the need for bureaucracy because the people essentially are managing themselves.

"Recognition is also important. Employees do not have to be told that you love them, but you want to be appreciative of good work. People need this kind of feedback. A lot of rewards don't

work, including the employee-of-the-month one. Organization-wide awards should be like the Nobel Prize, where peers are involved in the selection of the individuals who receive the award for outstanding achievement, not day-to-day work.

"The traditional merit pay systems with an appraisal and pay increase are quite negative. Workers feel no relation between what they do and their pay increase. A reward has to be felt as such. Research has verified a system such as 'gain sharing', in which a group of workers judges its performance over time. If productivity goes up 20% and the workforce increases 10%, then that means there is greater efficiency. That result should be shared with the workers 50% and management 50%. This has a tremendous impact on productivity and morale.

"In the 1980s and 1990s, we had a reaction to particular forms of management. We talk about four kinds: the first one is paternalism, where workers are treated as children. Then there is adversarial, where workers are the enemy. Then there is transactional, where workers are like ciphers. Management does not know what they are like as individuals. The attitude is, 'We paid you, now we are even. We don't owe you anything.' That's where most companies have gone today. Loyalty is dead.

"The fourth is what we have been talking about, which is the partnership organization. It does not mean that because I paid you, we are now even. You don't treat partners that way because you might need them to help you out sometime, and they might need you. It's more like a relationship between mature adults – not like children or enemies, but allies."

From <http://www.knowledge@wharton>

Talking point

Discuss these questions in small groups.

David Sirota talks about four types of management-employee relationship: paternalistic, adversarial, transactional and partnership. Which:

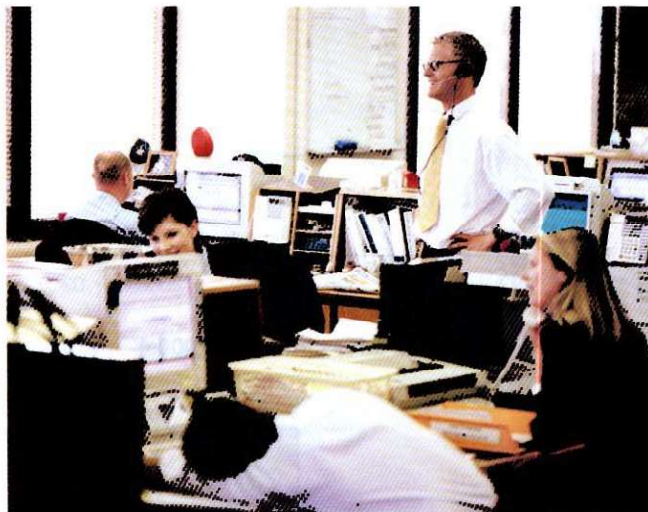
- is typical of the organisation where you work (or one you know well)?
- would you feel most comfortable with?
- would you find least comfortable?
- is most likely to cause conflict, and which is least conflictive in your opinion?

Grammar workshop

Reference devices

1 Study these two extracts from the text. What do the underlined words refer to?

- 1 The third element is camaraderie. This is also not mentioned much in our field, but it's key – not only in the sense of having a friend, but working well together as a team.
- 2 Some companies use a ring of defense. If the business is having difficulties, they retrain workers or bring work inside from subcontractors.



- 2 Work in pairs. Read the text on pages 82–83 again and say what each of the underlined words or phrases refers to.
- 3 Which of the underlined reference devices in the text is/are:
- 1 relative pronouns?
 - 2 pronouns referring to something in the previous sentence?
 - 3 a verb referring to an action mentioned previously?
 - 4 a pronoun referring to something which occurred in the past?
 - 5 a noun phrase which refers to a way of doing things mentioned previously?
 - 6 a word which means 'in this way'?
 - 7 words and phrases which are reference devices within a list?
 - 8 a way of avoiding repetition of the same noun in the same sentence?

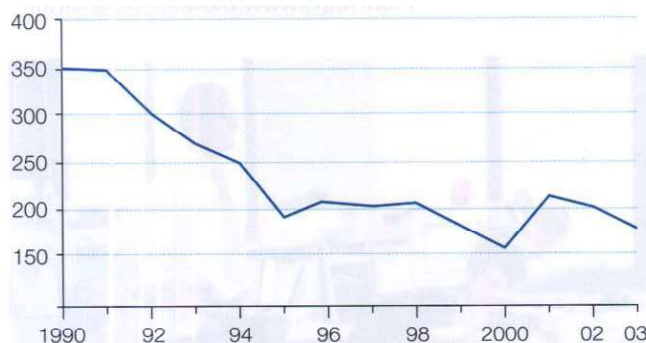
➤ page 98 (Reference devices)

Stress in the workplace

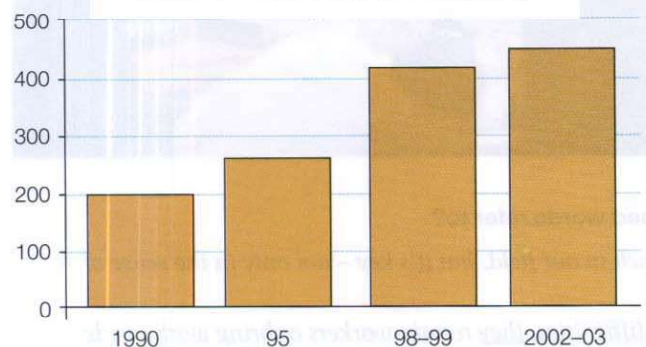
Reading

- 1 Work in pairs. Study the charts below and discuss what they show.

Fatal accidents at work in the UK



Work-related stress in the UK (000s)



- 2 Complete this report using the reference devices from the box.

the following the former the same
themselves they this

This report summarises trends in fatal workplace accidents and work-related stress during the period 1990–2003; while **1** fell in Britain from 350 in 1990 to 180 in 2003, the latter rose during **2** period from 200,000 cases in 1990 to 450,000 in 2003. The most pronounced decrease in accidents occurred between 1990 and 1995, when only 190 took place. During **3** years until 1998, they underwent a slight increase to reach 205, before falling to an all-time low of just 160 deaths in 2000. **4** then rose to 210 in 2001, before decreasing to 180 in 2003.

Work-related stress, on the other hand, underwent a constant increase during **5** period and shows no signs of peaking. The largest increase occurred between 1995 and 1998–9, when the number of cases climbed from 260,000 to 420,000.

In conclusion, the two charts show that, while British workplaces are becoming safer, employees feel **6** to be under greater pressure.

- 3 Find words or phrases in the text which mean the following.

- 1 general developments or changes
- 2 very noticeable
- 3 experienced
- 4 small
- 5 the lowest it has ever been
- 6 reaching its highest point

Talking point 1

Discuss these questions in small groups.

- 1 Are the trends in accidents and stress similar in your country, do you think?
- 2 What do you think are the main causes of work-related stress, and what can employers do to reduce it?
- 3 How do you think stress affects business performance?

Listening

You will hear a television programme in which an occupational psychologist, Mariella Kinsky, is interviewed about work-related stress.

- 6 1 Listen to the interview and take notes on what she says in answer to Question 2 in Talking point 1 above.

2 Listen again and check your understanding of the details by choosing the best answer, A, B or C, for questions 1–8.

- 1 Which workers are most likely to suffer from stress?
 - A shopfloor workers
 - B non-managerial white-collar workers
 - C managerial staff
- 2 According to Mariella, what is the principal problem doctors have with stress?
 - A It's hard to diagnose.
 - B It's hard to treat.
 - C It's hard to cure.
- 3 What indicator of stress has been increasing in recent years?
 - A staff turnover
 - B absenteeism
 - C workplace sabotage
- 4 According to Mariella, what is the principal cause of the increase in stress?
 - A longer hours in the office
 - B increased management supervision
 - C increased workloads
- 5 According to Mariella, which of the following was the main reason why people suffered less from stress in the past?
 - A a friendlier working atmosphere
 - B a better work–life balance
 - C stronger unions
- 6 What contemporary social circumstance has probably increased stress levels?
 - A richer lifestyles
 - B reduced family sizes
 - C higher expectations
- 7 According to the speaker, why has stress become 'respectable'?
 - A It doesn't reflect on your ability to do your job.
 - B It doesn't show you have a weak character.
 - C It reflects the importance of the work you do.
- 8 According to the government, what is the most effective way for employers to reduce stress?
 - A by offering counselling
 - B by involving employees in decisions affecting their working lives
 - C by organising employees in teams

Talking point 2

Work in small groups. Which of Mariella's statements (1–3) do you agree/disagree with? Why?

- 1 Negative stress comes ... from a perception one has of lack of control over one's life.

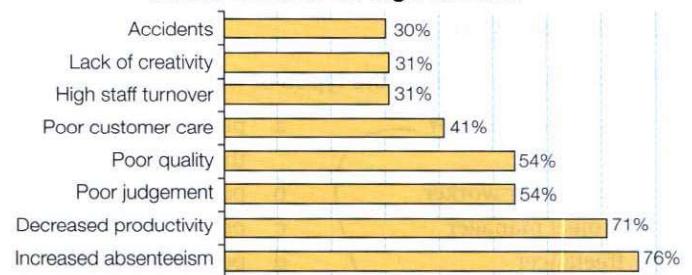
- 2 ... work-related stress has become an acceptable, even a respectable thing to complain about.
- 3 ... we have more time to worry ...

Writing

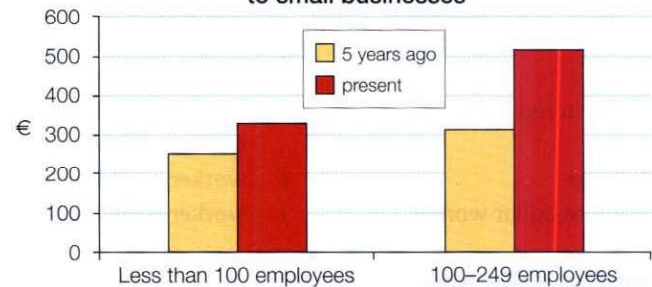
A recent survey of managers revealed the following information.

- 1 Work in pairs. Study the charts and say what they show. Are there any statistics which surprise you?

Effects of stress on organisations



Annual cost of absenteeism per employee to small businesses



- 2 Your human resources director has asked you to write a brief report (120–140 words) based on these statistics. Before you write, study the Useful language box and discuss with your partner how you should structure your report.
- 3 Work alone to write your report.

Useful language

Expressing causes and results

- X causes + noun/pronoun + infinitive:
Excessive stress causes employees to make poor decisions.
- X leads to / gives rise to Y:
Excessive stress leads to / gives rise to poor decision-making.
- Y (often) arise(s) as a result of X:
Wrong decisions often arise as a result of excessive stress.
- Y is/are a frequent consequence of X:
Wrong decisions are a frequent consequence of excessive stress.