

Call centre (Role conflict)



A large high street bank introduced a systematic series of interventions to help employees deal with conflicting roles.

Problem

Following a risk assessment, the organisation identified a lack of clarity in employee role. This mainly arose due to employees:

- working to targets (ie number of calls to take/make) with penalties for not meeting them;
- there were time limits on calls, but employees needed to deal with calls in a thorough, helpful, way: assuring quality often meant compromising quantity;
- the availability of support facilities after difficult, time-consuming situations (eg after dealing with a hostile customer).

Assessing the risks and finding solutions

The bank considered that role conflict was contributing to its high levels of staff turnover. It decided to apply the following interventions after discussion with staff:

- *Targets* - Internal guidance detailing the length of time employees had to deal with calls was removed. This gave employees the discretion to spend more time

dealing with contacts, which helped to reduce pressure of difficult calls and helped staff provide a better quality service.

- *Respite rooms* - Rooms were allocated to enable employees to leave the office environment and compose themselves after tackling a particularly difficult call. When staff use this facility, their line manager is informed so that support can be offered to the employee if needed.

Results

Staff and management report that the relaxation of rules and protocols has helped to clarify job role and reduce the degree of demand placed upon employees. The introduction of respite rooms has contributed to increased job satisfaction and staff retention. Finally, the actions have been good for business, as evidenced by improved customer service.

- *The process of identifying hazards must be followed up with appropriate action to tackle them.*
- *Measures that allow employees discretion in the use of their skills, or in their ability to take a break without fear of reprisals are very effective stress management interventions.*