



Review Paper

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Productivity of Software Professionals

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Abstract

Majority of the young crowd in India are attracted to work in the software field today primarily due to high wages compared to many other industries. Software Professionals are undergoing lot of stress in their day to day work. The deadline factor, high demand, cross cultural dealings, flexible work hours, SLA-Service Level Agreements and penalty clauses are all ingredients to increase the pressure. The peer pressure, high goals and ever increasing performance levels also puts a heavy toll on their health. The marriage and family life are at cross roads to many. Globalization, competition, quality, make it right at the first time, bringing to market quickly, etc would ultimately putting pressure on the human resources, making them tense and hence affecting the productivity. In any situation, the pressure, the tension and the stress affects in all forms of our life; be it work, family, friends and any other social interactions. Attempt made here is to analytically evaluate how this affects our lives and what are those emotional intelligence best practices by which it can be controlled to give a positive outcome in one's personal and professional life.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, stress, software professional, service level agreements, productivity.

Introduction

Working with a software firm is a dream for many young resources. It is primarily due to the high compensation package compared to other industry domains. The white color job, corporate setup and air-conditioning are other factors that bring resources to the corporate culture. The opportunity to travel to different countries attracts more and more resources to IT (Information Technology). For many, a distant dream is to settle abroad.

The high paid corporate job comes with unrealistic deadlines that require huge commitments. Any deviation would attract escalations and penalties. SLA-Service Level Agreement is one such tool to measure the efficiency of the deliverables. The work would be allotted to the team. The team as a whole has to perform to complete the tasks. Most of the time, half of the team would comprise of resources with less experience and less productivity. Even in this diluted form, the team has to deliver on agreed commitments. This would put pressure on senior resources. Pressure would be slowly converted to stress, depression and low productivity.

Some of the typical escalation points in IT are: i. Unclear requirements, ii. Missed delivery, iii. Poor quality, iv. Halt in business functioning, v. Attrition, vi. Poor business knowledge, vii. No value adds, viii. High cost estimates, ix. Unavailability of resources, x. Inflexible management / communication.

Tension is an emotional state that occurs due to unacceptable mental, nervous or unhealthy relationship with people or groups. Even thinking of such an occurrence of an event would trigger tension.

Stress would upset and emotionally disrupt the mental and physical nature of the person which could lead to depression, heart diseases, blood pressure issues, muscular issues, irritation, etc.

It is clear from definition that the tension occurs first and then it is converted to stress which is harmful to the health of a person. Tasks or activities performed under stress could go wrong or take more time. Generally, tension is an outcome of a panic situation that is going to happen. Once the situation occurs it becomes stress.

Be familiar with Indian Software Industry an overview

As depicted in figure-1, Indian IT and BPO business, both exports and domestic, crossed 100B USD in 2012. It all started as low cost, quality IT services export business 3 decades ago¹. The biggest asset was the English speaking, technology savvy human resources. The time saved on fixing an issue was 12 to 14 hours due to the time difference of USA and India. The total output was up due to the 24 hour working day due to the hybrid working model. Indian human resources would put extra efforts to solve any issues at any time of the day.

The software industry follows the SDLC-Software Development Life Cycle and methodologies such as Waterfall, Agile, Rapid, etc. for software development and maintenance. The Indians were very quick to adapt and learn the process, quality, innovation and speed of execution required for the software development. But we still lack in business knowledge. SDLC discusses much in detail about requirement gathering, requirement analysis, design, development, testing, implementation and maintenance of a product or service.

Three decade ago it was the IT services companies who were calling the shots in how the system should look like, how the system should behave and function. The systems were developed not as per the user needs; rather, the users were forced to use the systems that were created. The profits were high due to low wages and other related tax savings. But today, the operational cost is high, the resource cost is high and the customer is asking for more in less cost. The only way to increase the profits is by increasing the productivity. The deadlines, the over commitments, higher expectations were started putting pressure on the resources. The pressure would slowly turn as stress and depression and in turn would affect the productivity and the personal life.

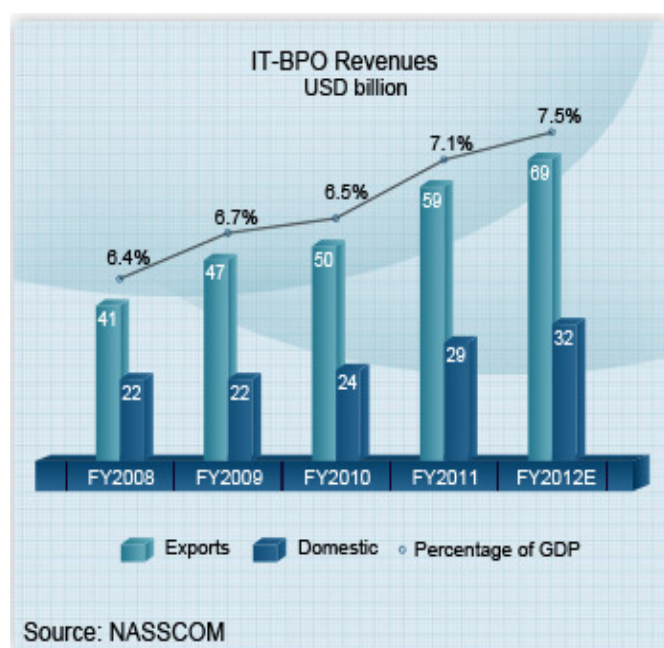


Figure-1

Be familiar with Emotional Intelligence an overview

We deal with people on every transaction. One transaction generates interest and it leads to another². This can be connected to the game of tennis ball. A hit gets a response. Sometimes it might be harder and at other times it will be softer. The business continuity and long term relationship would depend on how long the ball is in play. If you are a better EI person you will have long

rallies. Shorter rally people would have low EI. Winning business and confidence would require longer and continuous transactions³.

EI requires that, a person should understand self-emotions, know others emotions, manage self and others emotions and should be able to control the outcome with a timely response such that the transactions stays alive⁴. Others' interest on us depends on the kind of response that we provide. If that response is in line with their thoughts, then, the conversation or transaction would progress and finally reach the desired destination. This is a win-win situation, which means, both parties win.

This experience that others feel from us goes in deep and stays in their minds and it creates a soft corner for us and they become our supporters at every forum⁵. We cannot change their perspective or belief in one or two conversations. It has to be built slowly. For that, we need to understand the way they think, behave and prepare our responses accordingly. EI aims at converting a detracting customer to a neutral and then to a supporter. The supportive customer can help us improve our business, brings more revenue and make more profit. In the process, EI would help reduce stress and improve productivity⁶.

How our body reacts to stress can be established by the important contribution in Human physiology, GAS-General Adaptation Syndrome by Hans Selye.

When a person responds to stress through general adaptation, his/her body activates certain physiologic responses. From these activated responses, it can appreciate the signs of General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). It is important to note that GAS do not have specific signs or symptoms, but the presence of certain responses and the duration of these responses may indicate the person is indeed in that state of physiologic response to stress.

Some important symptoms or signs of GAS⁷ include: i. Increase blood pressure and heart rate, ii. Alertness and increased mental acuity, iii. Pupil dilation, Increased level of blood glucose, iv. Increase muscle tone, v. Increased rate of breathing, vi. Increased blood coagulation.

This indicates how much influence stress has on our body and how significant it is to reduce stress especially for the professionals.

Data Analysis and interpretation

Productivity is the ratio of output to inputs in production; it is a measure of the efficiency of production. Labor productivity is the value of goods and services produced in a period of time, divided by the hours of labor used to produce them. In other words labor productivity measures output produced per unit of labor, usually reported as output per hour worked or output per employed person.

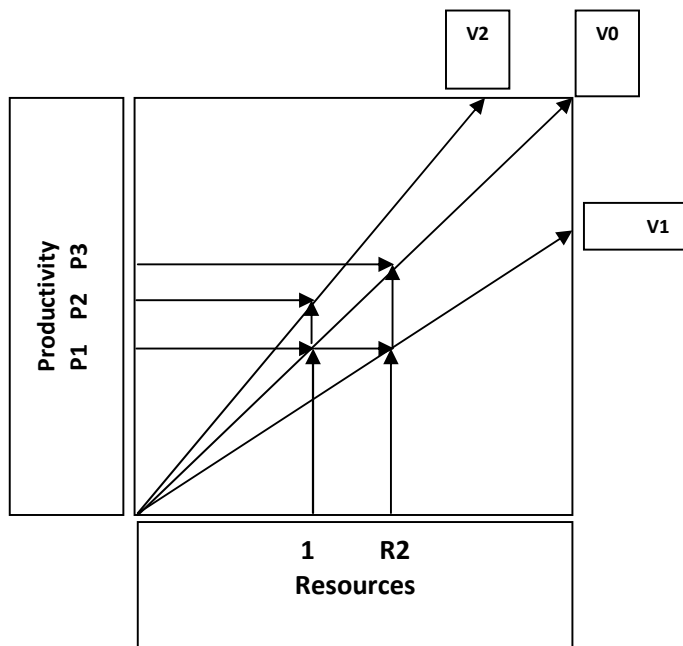


Figure-2

In the above figure-2, P1R1 is the productivity by R1 resources, P2R1 is the productivity improvement by R1 resources, P3R2 is the productivity by R2 resources and P1R2 is the productivity decline by R2 resources. V0 is the normal value produced, V1 is the decline in value and V2 is the improved value of the resources. The decline in value is due to the overwork and stress.

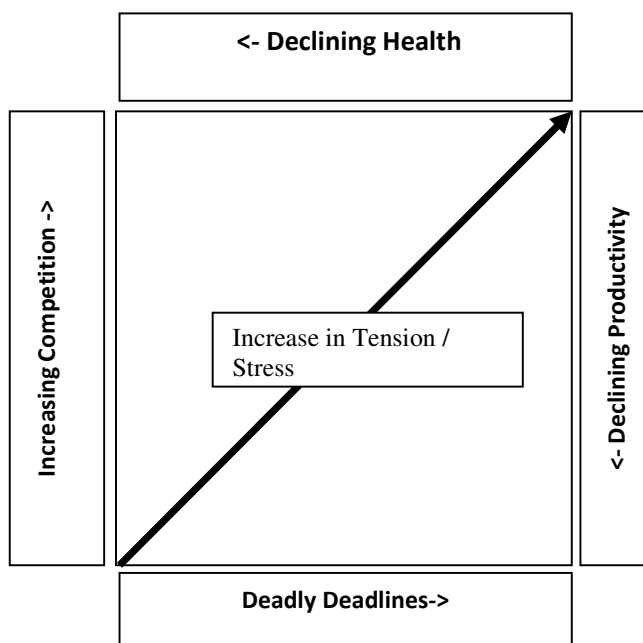


Figure-3

The above figure-3 depicts how the tension and stress increase as the competition and deadlines increase. Due to the increase in stress, the health and productivity decreases.

Practice Emotional Intelligence: EI can help adjust our emotions to reduce the stress and help control the depression⁸.

Understand and control self: Every individual has their positive and negative side. Each one of us would have the strength and weaknesses and that need to be identified⁹. Seek help from counseling professionals if unable to identify.

Understand and manage others: Why others are behaving like this? It might be because they have been under stress. They have been going thru a bad time¹⁰. Understanding emotions of others would help respond with empathy.

Respond than react: Reaction often is spontaneous action based on others actions or comments¹¹. Prepare ourselves to respond with facts, figures and compassion. Always prepare yourself to respond than react.

Manage Situations: Understand the situations of yourself and others to ensure that you are in control of your emotions¹². This can save a lot of energy and make our life stress free.

Conclusion

The fact is that stress is very bad. Stress is a major factor in almost all diseases today. Often, the hard earned money by putting the extra effort was drained out to balance the health. This is not a healthy sign at all. Understand and manage you and your surroundings very well such that you have the liberty of having a better job, better health and better family. Good Luck!!!

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