

Stresses on Employee Health:

**Top Stresses: Money, Insufficient Exercise, Poor Managers,
Parenting, and Spouses**

**Top Employer Obligations: Improve Managers, Improve Leadership,
Reduce Employee Conflict...Perhaps Install Exercise Facilities or
Fight Alcoholism**

**BDO Dunwoody/Chamber Weekly CEO/Business Leader Poll
by COMPAS in the *Financial Post***

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1.0. Introduction

At a time of increased talk about employee health, the COMPAS panel of CEOs and business leaders was asked about the greatest stresses on employees and the obligations of employers to help mitigate such stresses.

From a long list of stresses presented to the panel, respondents identified five at the top: money, exercise, managers, parenting, and spouses. In response to open-ended questioning, they volunteered workaholism, personal and family health issues, and commuting as additional stresses.

Panelists feel that companies have serious but limited obligations to attenuate such stresses. The major obligations of corporations, in their view, are to improve the quality of managers, improve the quality of corporate executive leadership, and intervene to mitigate employee conflict. Among the remaining sources of stresses, CEOs and business leaders on the panel are most inclined to acknowledge the obligations of companies to provide exercise facilities and to undertake initiatives to combat alcoholism but their support for action on these two issues falls short of a majority position.

These are the principal findings from the weekly business web-survey conducted by COMPAS for the *Financial Post* under sponsorship of BDO Dunwoody LLP.

2.0. Stresses on Employees and Company Obligations

Members of the COMPAS business panel consider as employee stresses a long list of factors ranging from drugs and alcohol to personal financial planning and insufficient exercise, as shown in tables 2A and B. But they do not see companies as having particular obligations to help employees deal with all of these stresses. As one CEO put it, "Businesses must avoid becoming the 'nanny'."



Panelists nonetheless see companies as having some obligations. CEOs and business leaders on the panel are largely united in believing that employers have obligations to improve the quality of managers, improve the quality of corporate executive leadership, and intervene to mitigate employee conflict, as shown in table 2C. A large minority also believe that employers ought to shoulder some responsibility for providing exercise facilities or combating drug and alcohol abuse, as shown in tables 2C and D.

Table 2A: (Q1) As you know there's a lot of talk about potential health stresses on people in the workforce. On a 7 point stress scale where 7 means high stress, and 1 the opposite, how would you score the stress (physical or mental) on employees these days as a result of each of the following factors? RANDOMIZE

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Personal budgetary planning	5.1	7	31	34	17	7	3	0	0
Lack of exercise	5.0	12	30	29	17	9	4	0	0
Bad managers	5.0	12	23	34	19	7	4	0	0
Stress of parenting	5.0	7	32	24	29	6	3	0	0
Marital stress	4.9	7	30	31	19	11	2	1	1
Conflict among employees/workers	4.8	6	28	30	22	11	3	1	0
Bad leadership at the top of the organization	4.7	8	22	26	28	10	7	0	0
Bad food or eating habits	4.7	6	25	29	23	10	4	2	1
Alcohol or drugs	4.3	3	17	28	23	14	14	1	1
Uncertainty in the economy	3.9	5	8	14	32	25	13	3	0
Uncertainty of the world situation	3.4	0	11	13	22	26	20	8	0



Table 2B: (Q2) Have we missed an important source of stress?

	%
Working too hard	26
Health issues – personal or family	24
Commuting	18
Government action or inaction	8
Increased connectivity i.e. e-mails	6
Holidays/shopping	6
Other	14

Table 2C: (Q3) In which of the following areas should employers do more to help employees?

	%
Bad managers	85
Bad leadership at the top of the organization	77
Conflict among employees/workers	76
Lack of exercise	46
Alcohol or drugs	43
Bad food or eating habits	20
Personal budgetary planning	20
Stress of parenting	14
Uncertainty in the economy	14
Marital stress	6
Uncertainty of the world situation	6
None of these	3
Don't know or no opinion	1

Note: This is a multiple response question; as a result, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Table 2D: (Q4) On a 7 point scale, where 7 means high priority, and 1 the opposite, how much of a priority should it be for employers to provide employees with exercise facilities?



Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
3.8	7	16	17	16	12	9	21	3

3.0. Methodology

The *National Post*/COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations and among executives of the local and national Chambers of Commerce was conducted December 20 - 22, 2006. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.

Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys of 124 are deemed accurate to within approximately 8.8 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D and Tamara Gottlieb.

