

## **Managing Change in the Workplace**

Change... it is said that the only thing that is constant is change. Yet, for many it is unwelcome and difficult. Life is a series of transitions, adjustments, and changes; some are expected and anticipated others are not, and can be disruptive and stressful. Typically, employees are not equipped to adapt to changes in the work force. When companies restructure, employees live in constant fear of the next management directive; working conditions often become unstable and volatile and piercing stress levels are experienced by employees.

The elevated level of stress can be minimized, if not avoided. Strategies that include anticipating and addressing organizational change will help keep the productivity level up and the stress level down. Furthermore, it has been shown that employees can actually thrive during corporate change.

Employees that are easily able to adjust to change have the following qualities:

- a. They possess a sense of control over their lives
- b. They view change as a challenge, not a blockage
- c. They retain interests outside of work

Preventative strategies that are implemented in advance of new company policies must be designed to enable employees to anticipate new corporate direction. Thus, employees will have a sense of control and will notice that the employer considers the employees' well-being to be important. In addition, stress is minimized and morale among employees is increased.

### **Coping Strategies:**

#### *Minimize Stress*

- Talk with a trusted friend. Discuss your worst fears and best hopes. Talk about how you might cope with the change.
- Find a physical activity you like and do it regularly. Exercise is a wonderful stress reliever. It is important that the exercise is something you like- otherwise you will not do it for long.
- Don't increase your use of alcohol or cigarettes. These items only relieve tension temporarily. At best, they only help you to sweep things under the rug.

#### *Emphasize Opportunity*

- Don't fight change – deal with it. Make it work to your advantage.
- Be realistic. Don't expect the worst; it often does not happen. On the other hand, don't have unreasonably high expectations.
- Develop skills in areas you see as having value in the future. Increased emphasis is placed on "transferable skills" – skills that can be used in many different jobs.
- Maintain your relationships on the job. Good working relationships can help minimize the effects of change and help all concerned make successful adjustments.

One of the most valuable life skills you can have is the ability to manage change effectively. You can not stop change, but you can do something about its effects on you. **For more information, please contact your Employee Assistance Program at 800-862-3398.**