



April 2010

9 Ways to Lower the Stress in Your Office

For many brokers, the tough economy has created higher stress in the office—longer days, less business, and complicated deals. Here are 9 techniques for creating a more relaxed and focused workplace.

1. Be a leader. You can't change the market, but you can provide strong leadership. That includes having a vision for future success and a plan to get there, says Kelly Sweeney, CEO of Birmingham, Mich.–based Coldwell Banker Weir Manuel. "You'll need to make changes in your business model and you must present those changes in a positive way, so that sales associates will be confident about your leadership and the company," he says.

2. Don't be a downer. Stay optimistic about the future. "If you've had exposure to previous market corrections, share your experiences with sales associates and staff," says Gea Erika, ABR®, founder and principal broker at Erika Associates in New York. "Let them know it may get worse before it gets better—but that it will get better. Remind sales associates that people will always need a place to live, so they're in the right business."

3. Show your support. Show sales associates what your company is doing to support them. "Discuss every pitch for exclusive representation [at a development] and where it stands," says Rick Wohlfarth, president of Wohlfarth & Associates in New York. "Involve them in marketing programs."

4. Teach them how to plan. Urge sales associates to treat their career as a business, not a job. "Have them develop a budget, a written marketing and business plan, and a time-management plan," says Rajia Ackley, CCIM, CRB, president and CEO of Coldwell Banker Ackley Realty in Kissimmee, Fla.

"Proper time blocking will give them more time for both their business and personal lives." A sales associate who has a concise, written plan and a clear direction of what to focus on will be happier, says Ackley, and usually will become much more productive in a shorter amount of time.

5. Encourage teamwork. Anthony Vulin, broker-manager at Keller Williams Los Feliz in Los Angeles, hosts monthly "Mastermind" sessions for his sales associates—one for new associates and another for experienced associates.

"It's a time for them to ask other sales associates for help or advice and to find out from other associates what's working and what's not," explains Vulin. "Sales associates leave feeling less stressed because they realize their problems and frustrations are similar to those of many other associates. They leave with solutions to their problems."

6. Recommend outside help. Encourage sales associates to take educational courses so they have a better understanding of the market, recommends Scott Caballero, ABR®, GRI, broker at Caballero & Associates Realty in San Antonio.

Also encourage the use of other experts. "Sales associates who have a life coach seem to be more at ease in their personal life, and that positive energy extends into their professional lives," says Ackley. "They also seem to be much more passionate about their job, which translates to success without the stress."

7. Encourage volunteerism and pursuit of passions. Clark stresses the importance of civic and community involvement.

"Everyone likes knowing they're making a difference in others' lives," she says. Clark also encourages her sales associates to pursue what they love, whether it's playing golf, working out at the gym, or attending religious services.

"Anything that brings you joy," she tells associates, "is something you should be doing regularly."

8. Be there. Be accessible when your associates need you. "No good sales associate should have to be babied, but it's important to be supportive," says Travis John, owner of RE/MAX Gold Partners in Apopka, Fla. "Make time to meet with associates in the office daily. Hire an office manager to assist associates if you're not in there every day."

9. Lighten up. Have fun! "We understand we need to work, but we also have a great team that gets along with each other and can relax," John says. "I believe that starts at the top." So does Vulin: "I make our weekly sales meetings fun. I have bubble guns to celebrate successes, I play inspirational videos, and we talk about all the positive things going on in the market."