



## **“The LIFT Programme”**

### **Beating Stress in the Workplace**

**Case Study from a major Engineering Company**

#### **Executive Summary**

The ChangeWave” LIFT Programme” builds people’s capability to handle stress. Their increased confidence and resilience leads to higher performance in individuals and teams under high pressure. This programme was delivered in an international engineering firm to a group of staff who had experienced very high levels of workplace stress or mental health issues. The personal feedback from the participants and the psychological measurements demonstrate substantial positive changes for those individuals. Having demonstrated these positive benefits in this programme, we look at ways in which the programme could be rolled out to more staff in need.

## Programme Context and Objectives

The objective of this programme was to make a significant positive change for a group of employees who were struggling with workplace stress. This impacted their ability to perform and/or meant that they have had to have time away from the workplace. The aim of this programme was to demonstrate the effectiveness and business value of the ChangeWave LIFT programme. We wanted to show it not only brings individuals back to their high performing selves but gives them a new capability in managing workplace pressures going forward.

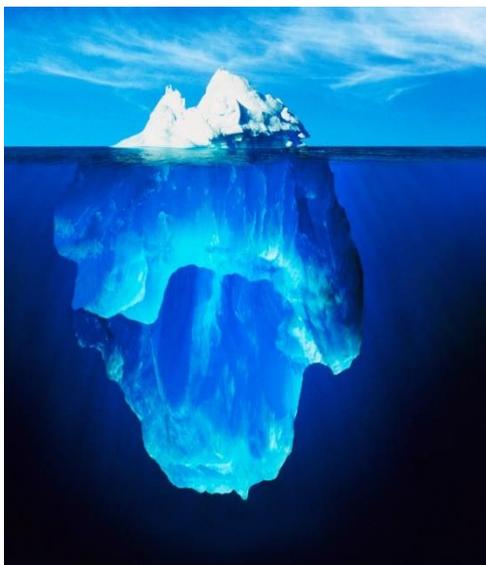
Many of our clients report that workplace stress is an ever-increasing problem. Official statistics for impacts and causes make disturbing reading.

Recent CIPD research found 37% of organisations reported an increase in work-related stress cases and 3 in 10 workers have workloads that are unmanageable.

### Impacts of Stress

Much of the pressure comes from highly competitive markets, digital disruption and the need for constant change. Reducing work-loads is not always easy or the answer.

The cost of stress to both the individual and the business is huge. Even after time off, individuals often return to find no fundamental change in the work environment and in the meantime they may have suffered a substantial loss of confidence. This doesn't set them up for success.

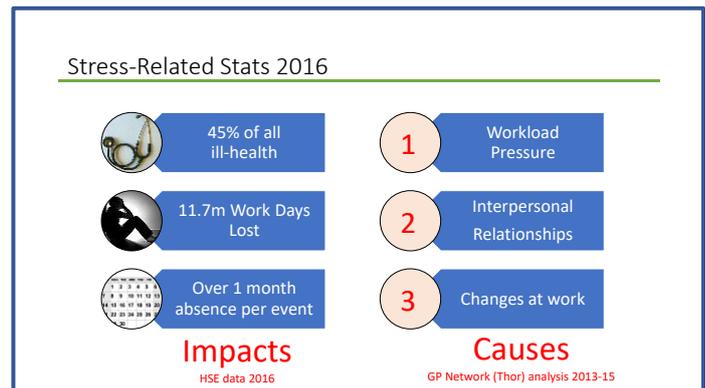


For the company there is the measurable direct cost of the lost time.

But often hidden from view are other costs:

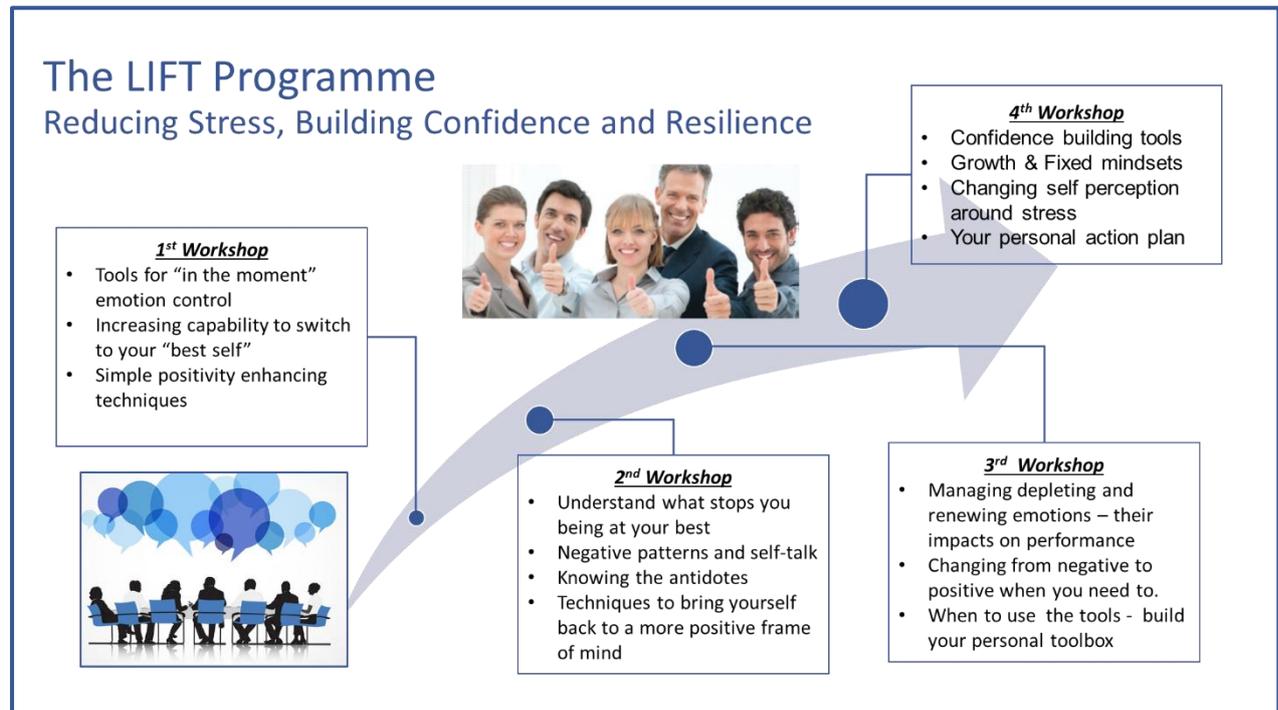
- the operational and delivery impact of the person not being able to do their job
- for the team around the individual, the impact of covering for and supporting them
- the management disruption and overhead when dealing with both the work challenge and providing the best duty of care for the employee
- the individual may lose their confidence and engagement

Clearly, it is preferable to provide the right support to individuals early to maintain performance and engagement. The alternative is already common in the workplace - the situation is allowed to deteriorate to the point where they have to take time off.



## Programme Delivery

The company's Employee Relations organised for a group of 11 people to enter the programme. These were drawn from a number of business units. Roles ranged from professional individual contributors to senior managers. There was a mixture of people who had been experiencing high levels of workplace stress and/or had recently returned to work after an absence relating to mental health issues.



The programme was delivered in 4 modules. Each was designed to provide a set of practical tools and techniques to build confidence and the capability to manage stress.

The Programme brings carefully selected, proven, high impact tools and techniques from positive psychology, neuroscience research. All of these have been tested and demonstrated in previous ChangeWave programmes.

Dr Rosie Miller and Eddie Maguire, both directors of ChangeWave, delivered the programme. To measure the effectiveness of the programme, participants completed a range of established and validated psychological assessments before the course and at the end. Participants also gave written, subjective assessments of the course. Data collection was anonymous to encourage honesty.

## Results – Measurements and Feedback

Participants were universally positive about the experience and the outcomes for them in terms of their outlook and ability to manage pressure and stress both at work and elsewhere.



"The most useful things for me were: techniques to cope better - in fact thrive, belief that you can change for the better thanks to relatively simple steps and the evidence / research demonstrating effects of positive psychology"

"Whilst initially wasn't sure about it helping, I can say that my mental state / thought process has improved greatly. I now feel in a better place to deal with challenges in my team and with my manager."

"Being someone who is coping with mental health issues through work-related stress this course is invaluable and I cannot recommend it highly enough"

"It makes you stop and re-evaluate. There are always ways to do and think differently."

"My take-aways from the course ..... I'm not alone in my struggle with confidence, pressure and stress.... Obtained realistic tools to deal with day to day issues ... The people and atmosphere were fantastic"

"I think many people would benefit from this, whether they are struggling or not."

"Three useful things from the course:  

- Techniques to cope with stress
- See positivity in things – and the 3Cs technique
- Not allowing other peoples issues to affect me or my confidence "

"Anyone struggling mentally would gain tools to reduce their difficulties and even become more positive and confident."

"Line managers would benefit from this course to be able to deal with their own stress but also being able to spot the signs of stress in their people"

The psychological tests provide a quantitative set of measurements to sit alongside reports of how participants felt afterwards. Together, these measurements provide a picture of a group of people who are now very much better equipped to deal with the pressures and stresses in their lives. Stress, anxiety and negativity in the group is lower, Psychological Capital, resilience, positivity and wellbeing of the group all increased. The Psychological Capital result is particularly interesting as it's often used as an indicator for effectiveness at work.

The measures, results and some guide to interpretation are included in the appendix. This was a single programme with limited numbers. Although the group shows good improvement in all the psychological measures, a single example does not constitute “scientific proof”. Strong confidence comes from the fact that these results are similar to other cohorts in previous ChangeWave programmes where rigorous statistical analysis has been undertaken. (Results of our pro-bono programmes were presented at the International Positive Psychology World Congress in July 2017)

## Conclusions

ChangeWave has been running similar courses for four years for individuals and teams looking to sustain performance in high pressure environments. Our pro-bono community work has included groups of people who are experiencing high levels of challenge and stress. The quantitative results and the verbal feedback from this programme are very similar to our previous programmes. This programme has demonstrated that the same stress management, confidence and resilience techniques are effective for individuals experiencing high levels of stress at work including those who have had stress-related absences and need to reintegrate successfully into their role.

## Looking forward

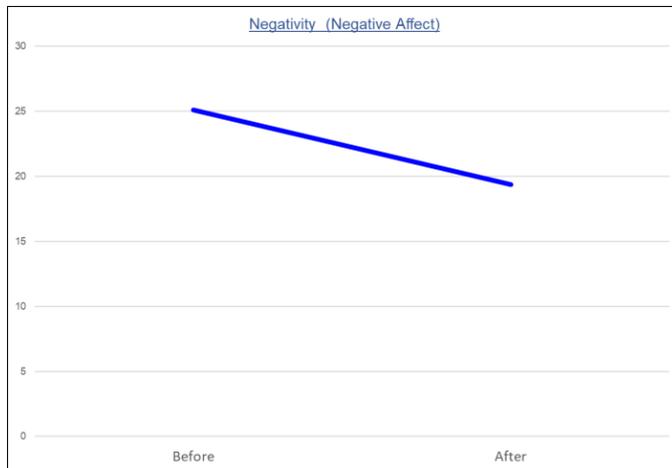
The ideal candidates for this programme are:

- employees who recognise they are experiencing unusually high levels of stress and want to build their capability to handle stress in different, more effective ways
- employees returning from stress-related absence who are looking for new ways to handle challenges and pressure.

The programme can be run in groups of up to 20 people at a time with two coaches or small groups of up to 8 people with one coach.

## Appendix – Psychological Measurements and Scores

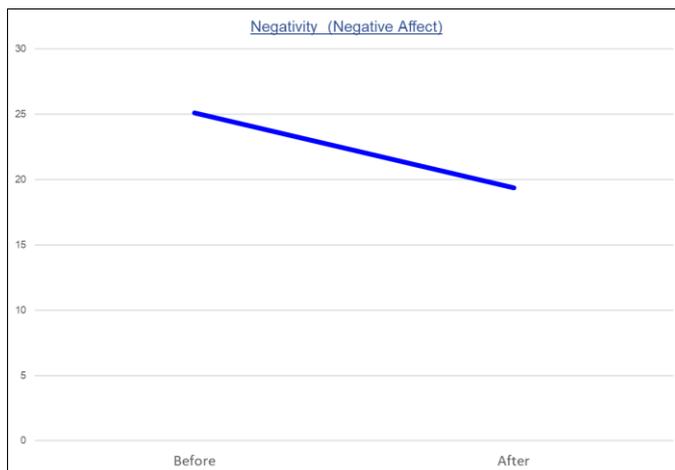
### Negativity



The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) is a self-report measure that is made up of two mood scales, one measuring positivity (Positive Affect) and the other measuring negativity (Negative Affect).

Typical populations score on average 14 for Negative Affect (SD approx 8). So, for this group, Negative Affect scores were very high at the start of the programme and moving towards more typical values at the end.

### Anxiety



State Anxiety (S-anxiety) can be defined as fear, nervousness, discomfort, etc. and the arousal of the autonomic nervous system induced by different situations that are perceived as dangerous. This type of anxiety refers more to how a person is feeling at the time of a perceived threat and is considered temporary. Again, there was a reduction in State Anxiety scores between the start and end of the programme.

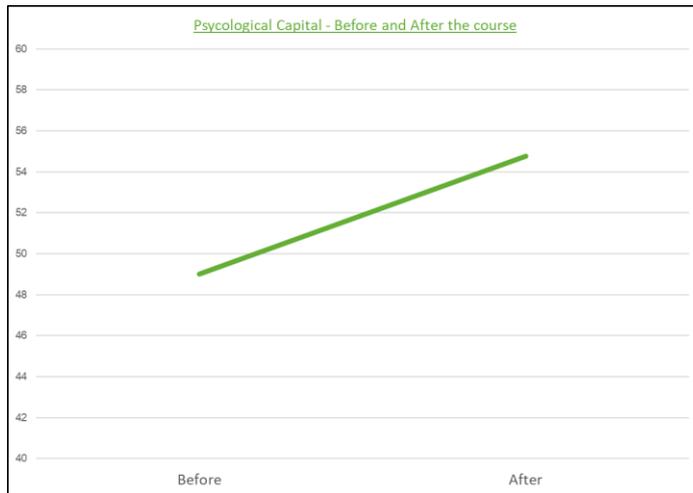
### Perceived Stress



The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. The scale is designed to evaluate how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives.

A typical population has a mean of approx. 12.5 to 13 with a Standard Deviation of 6. This indicates (understandably) that the group was highly stressed at the start of the course and moved substantially towards “typical” levels over the period.

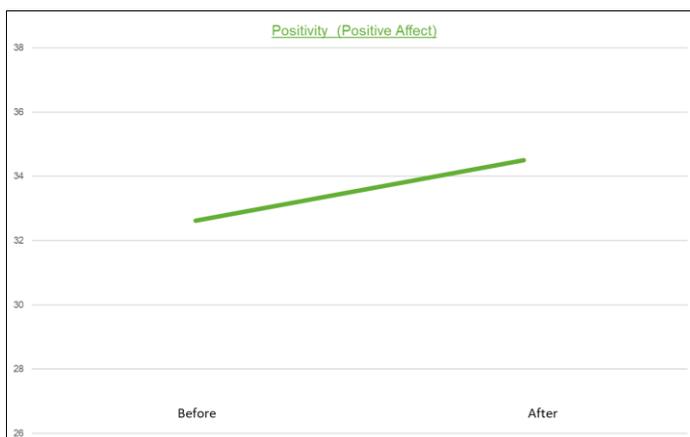
## Psychological Capital (PsyCap)



PsyCap is an umbrella measure of the four elements of Hope, Self-Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism. Studies have shown that high levels of PsyCap are positively related to employee performance and job satisfaction.

We can see that there is a strong growth in PsyCap for the group.

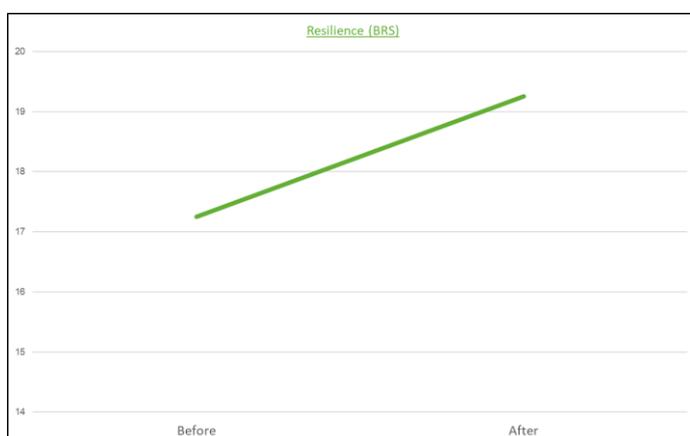
## Positivity (PANAS)



The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a self-report measure that is made up of two mood scales, one measuring Positive Affect and the other measuring Negative Affect.

Typical populations score on average 32 for Positive Affect (SD approx 6). So the group results were broadly in line with the typical score and showed slight increase over the programme.

## Resilience



The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) assesses the ability to bounce back or recover from stress. The group score increased over the programme, but remained in the Average range.

Score Interpretation: 6-18 Low resilience, 18-26 Average, 26-30 High resilience

## Satisfaction with Life

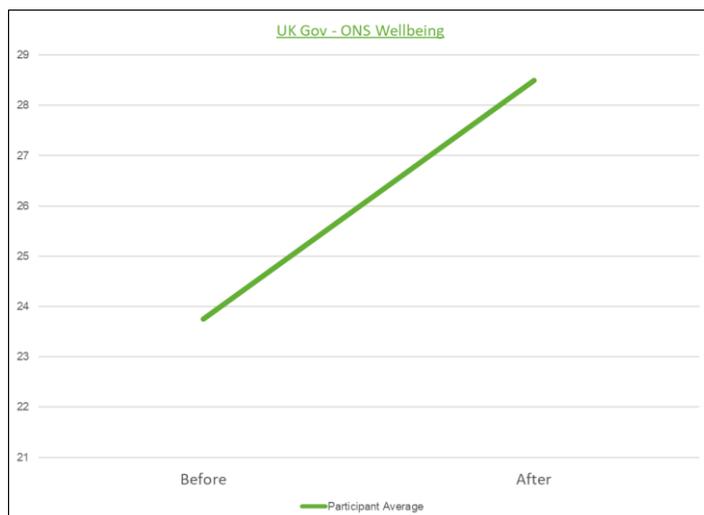


The Satisfaction with Life (SWL) scale has been shown to be a valid and reliable measure of life satisfaction, suited for use with a wide range of age groups and applications. There was no substantial change for this cohort, which is atypical for this programme.

A general guideline for interpretation of scoring is:

26 - 30 Satisfied, 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied, 15 - 20 Neutral, 10 - 14 Dissatisfied

## UK-Gov Well-being



The Office of National Statistics (ONS) conducts surveys of the UK population as a whole, covering every aspect of individual social, financial and health states. A part of the survey seeks to measure wellbeing. These questions have been used in surveys across government the academic, private and third sectors.

We present here the aggregated score across the four aspects of well-being measured by the ONS - life-satisfaction, feeling that life is worthwhile, happiness and anxiety.