

REPORT on MENTAL HEALTH in the ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

(full report available to www.mentalhealthinternational.ca)

SERIES OF RECAPS (6)

**The minds of employees now do the heavy lifting for business;
recognizing the borders between healthy and unhealthy workplaces.**

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Bill is MHI Executive Chairman and McMaster University Industry Professor of International Mental Health and in the mental health field, Wilkerson:

- *Co-Founded and led the Canadian-based Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health (1998-2011).*
- *Chaired a business-led Pan-European campaign targeting depression in the workplace (2013-17).*
- *Founded and chaired a five-city (Washington, Ottawa, Boston, Toronto, Denver) US/Canada Forum on Mental Health and Productivity (2007-13).*

PORT HOPE, ONTARIO, CANADA (June, 2019)- As the revolution in artificial intelligence unfolds, the World Economic Forum highlights the value of what human beings, not machines, offer in the form of *creativity, understanding, handling complexity, adapting to new environments and unscripted encounters requiring instinctual, discrete behaviors.*

Each of these requires healthy cognitive functions, and each demonstrates that the minds, not the backs, of employees do the heavy lifting for business in the 21st century. In turn, this underscores the importance of preventing, containing chronic job stress which attacks these specific skills and qualities.

Deep Stress takes the form of unforeseen and perpetually tight deadlines, excessive worry about tomorrow, isolation from the team or the group, unrelenting peer pressure and job stress encountered “on the margin” – that is, at the end of the day, and taken home – is as big a threat to cardiac health as smoking.

Put another way: AI will be a carrier of man-made stress among working populations and their families. The Chief Scientist of Québec, Canadian neuroscientist, Dr. Rémi Quirion once called the discovery of the detrimental causes of stress the “Holy Grail” of scientific discovery. Stress, he says, is key to human survival but also destructive and damaging on a large scale.

Scientists at Harvard University surveyed a wide range of businesses in a cross-section of industries and found that the strongest predictors of days lost at work are “psychosocial” work climates.

The term “psychosocial” can be taken to mean the emotional whiplash created by gossip, harassment, bad management practices such as micro-managing and uneven work distribution. In effect, how we treat each other.

In an economy that puts a premium on cerebral skillsets, stress is a workplace health and safety hazard as dangerous as unsafe equipment, sloppy work sites and polluted air.

Dismantling these sources of stress means changing attitudes and behaviors among executives, managers and supervisors. Bell Canada and the Government of Canada (as an employer in its own right) have both incorporated fostering mental health in the workforce into the job performance standards of senior executives.

Stress Epidemic Commands CEO Attention

In the face of the stress epidemic, CEOs are being called upon to take on a greater leadership role in reducing the mental health burden among working populations and leadership guidelines for mental health and productivity can be found at www.mentalhealthinternational.ca and www.targetdepression.com.

Describing “unsettled, dangerous times” for employers and employees alike, the Guidelines encourage CEOs “to give your employees every chance to learn about and discuss mental health issues without fear or reluctance.”

The Guidelines set out “work” and set out the “New Hard Skills of Management.” to rid the contemporary workplace of a range of unhealthy management practices including unreasonable demands, withholding employee discretion, rejecting “out of hand” workload concerns, randomly changing priorities, the treadmill effect at work, and perceived unfairness on a perpetuated scale.



The New Hard Skills of Management embody the building blocks of psychological health and safety at work and will be needed to lift up and render “ideas, inclusion, trust, loyalty and motivation as business tangibles in the era of AI and to recognize the border between healthy and unhealthy workplace indicators.

Healthy Workplace: fairness, respect, recognition, appreciation, job clarity, reasonable demands, inclusion, common purpose. **Unhealthy Workplace:** frustration, distrust, anxiety, fear, tension, low morale, low commitment, chronic job stress and, classically bad and obsolete management practices.

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