

Long Island Business NEWS

Where Business Gets Down to Business

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Large or small, business bosses looking for balance

By Adina Genn

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Executives at small firms typically wear many hats – but they’re less likely to feel burdened by a heavy workload, as opposed to their peers at large organizations.

According to a new study, 71 percent of senior executives and managers say the sheer volume of work in their organization or department is too heavy, 25 percent say it’s about right and nearly 2 percent say it’s too light. Of the respondents who find the workload too heavy, 38 percent are from large organizations, 20 percent are from medium-sized organizations and 15 percent are from small firms. Conducted in September by NFI Research, a New Hampshire-based company that studies workplace issues, the survey polled 245 senior executives and managers worldwide.

“Businesspeople can only do so much, and at times too much is being piled on them,” Chuck Martin, chief executive of New Hampshire-based NFI Research, said in a statement.

When asked about the effect of technology on his workload, one respondent complained of “information overload” and “real-time communication expectations” that add to an “already heavy workload.” Another spoke of “putting in extra time, deferring vacations, leaving aside training” and other sacrifices required to “meet the unreasonable demands of the job.”

That performance level “becomes the expectation” and is “impossible to sustain,” according to the executive.

Local leaders were not surprised by the findings.

“There is so much pressure on senior executives (at large firms) to produce more with less, but it isn’t just a one-shot deal – it’s the new normal,” said Andrea Kantor, president of Great Neck-based Bond Street Coaching. The result is “perpetual multitasking,” she added, where even solid top performers can lose focus.

Smaller companies face similar challenges. “We try to automate systems and work more efficiently,” said Evan Bloom, a principal of Sir Speedy of Westbury.

But as a small business owner, Bloom feels he has an advantage. “We can be nimble and make adjustments

quicker," he said. "Everyone is crossed-trained and can jump from department to department. People might be pulled from a skilled position to an unskilled position in a crunch."

Employees at large firms are also burdened by required meetings that can curtail productivity, a scenario that's less prevalent at small companies, according to Paul Facella, who heads Lynbrook-based Inside Management.

And because of their fewer layers, small businesses may be faster to retain consultants, Kantor said. Large corporations typically require "layers of decision making," a time-consuming measure that can exacerbate workloads.

Huntington Station architect Frank Relf stays mindful of staff pressures. "I'm in the trenches with them," Relf said, noting employees can't maintain a concentrated intensity of output for a "sustained level of time" without burning out.

So Relf outsources and hires temps when it's evident that a busy period will last longer than six months.

Balancing employee workloads is essential "to keep the firm healthy," Relf added, especially On Long Island, where employers struggle to hire and retain talent.

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