

Stressed out but happy

***Stress is a growing problem in event management,
but it's still a great sector to work in***

A Snapshot survey of 128 professionals in the events sector has found that 70% believe the sector is becoming an increasingly stressful place to work.

82% of respondents in the survey conducted on behalf of Regan & Dean, the specialist event management recruiter, said that they were working more than a 'standard' 40 hour week and 58% were working in excess of 44 hours. "Sometime, we just don't have time to step back and reflect on the work we've done," said one event manager, "consequently there are sometimes glitches – the ramp that creaks, arc lights that blink incessantly, smoke bombs that refuse to explode – a music system that's an acoustic nightmare – it can be very stressful but I suppose that's just the nature of the job – we love it really!"

Surprisingly perhaps, over two thirds felt that the additional stress was not necessarily a bad thing – as one production manager put it: "If you don't like the heat get out of the kitchen – the nature of the job demands long hours and stress – it's an every day occurrence – not a pathological disease and most people in the industry that I know thrive on the surge of adrenalin that a certain amount of pressure can give."

Although over half of those taking part said that achieving a good balance between work and home, family and social life could be difficult, almost half of respondents seemed to believe that the rewards on offer make such sacrifices acceptable, "the buzz you get from putting on a successful show outweighs all of the long nights of tearing your hair out," said

one of the respondents, while another added: "events can't be a 9-5 job – it's as simple as that and you know that when You take it on!"

Although the survey gives a picture of an increasingly stressful and competitive environment, we have to remember that the industry attracts high energy people - tough cookies who expect a high demand environment," says Narelle Lester, managing director of Regan and Dean "The events industry has really come of age as companies have realised the benefits of face to face marketing. Consequently, hours can be very long and many event and conference professionals can be putting in 12-14 hour days in the lead up to an event.

"I have to say, however, that most people in the industry accept that this is the norm rather than the exception – you can't have a team of people who are expected to conceptualise, create, innovate, and take care of all the technical details without stress! Additionally, many employers recognise the stresses of the job and are providing benefits such as sabbaticals, gym memberships and even massages!"

While most event management professionals taking part seemed content with their choice of career, there was some evidence of dissatisfaction – albeit small. 5% of respondents said that their choice of career was not living up to their expectations, while 3% said that they actually regretted entering into a career in event management. This compares favourably with a similar survey

undertaken amongst young accountants where just over a quarter regretted their decision to make a career in finance!

As for stress? The last word has to go to one very contented Project Manager in the events sector who says: "Unfortunately today's modern manager often uses high pressure as an 'out clause' – the 'trendy' stress syndrome means that quite often, when the going gets tough, the not so tough get going"

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