

Managing Stress at Work Cardinus

Content ★★★★★ Usability ★★★★★ Presentation ★★★★★

CARDINUS has a three-pronged approach to helping you tackle stress at work. The first two elements are part of the Managing Stress at Work course, consisting of an e-learning module and a risk assessment aimed at helping managers to understand how to recognise stress in others and what to do about it. The third element is the Stress Indicator Tool, which lets employees measure their stress susceptibility.

The e-learning course covers understanding and recognising stress, the legal and moral duty of care, and dealing with the causes of stress.

Though there are some universal factors, the right approach to dealing with stress depends on the individual. Cardinus takes account of this by asking the user to create a virtual team. If they treat a team member well, the employee's stress level (reported as a percentage) decreases. If the user selects the wrong answer, the team member's stress level increases, and if it reaches 100%, they go home sick.

The course asks questions about team management and stress. I was asked to order 10 life events in order of stressfulness, with no reference to the context. Personally, I think having a new family member is more stressful than getting married, yet I was told this was not the "right" solution. The great feature of the Cardinus training is its individual-specific approach, but here I think it lost a little of the advantage.

The final test consists of 10 multiple-choice questions. The training takes between 30 minutes and an hour to complete, depending on whether you read all the text, and the risk assessment took me less than five minutes.

Provided the training administrator has configured the risk assessment correctly in PACE (the learning management system), the manager will receive a User Action Report (UAR) identifying problems and suggesting possible remedial action.

Cardinus' Stress Indicator Tool is based on the HSE Indicator Tool

(see www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards). But while the HSE has deliberately mixed up the questions, Cardinus has grouped them by stress management standard area. The scoring system is also different, as the HSE uses 1 for high risk to 5 for low risk, but the Cardinus tool uses 0 for low risk to 10 for high risk.



Learning curve: a graph shows team stress levels

The PACE system manages the results from all Cardinus training and assessment modules. Before users work through the risk assessment and Stress Indicator Tool, the administrator (with help from Cardinus) sets up remedial tasks for each non-conformant answer. Where users indicate they don't know about a company policy, for example, it can give directions on where to find that policy.

Once the user has worked through Managing Stress at Work and the Stress Indicator Tool, the administrator has a chance to review both statistical information and more detailed answers from the virtual team exercises.

Overall usability is good, with well labelled screens and clear navigation at each stage. Cardinus provides a novel approach to stress training, allowing users to think about managing individual stress rather than the stress of employees as a uniform group. Combined with PACE, this helps employers to fulfil their stress management obligations.

Bridget Leathley

Managing Stress at Work costs from £20 per user. For more information, see www.cardinus.com or visit www.sme.cardinus.com (for companies with up to 200 employees).