

## Worker Stress Threatens Economy Productivity suffers

Managers are piling on so much work it's starting to pose a threat to the economic recovery. A new study by ComPsych Corporation found that rising workloads are leading to skyrocketing levels of worker stress. That stress is so consuming, it's keeping many workers from performing at their best.

"While a certain amount of stress can spur productivity, the levels employees are dealing with right now are counterproductive," says Richard A. Chaifetz, CEO of ComPsych. "What we are seeing is a workplace situation that is incongruent with the economic rebound. The recovery has brought more work, yet there are few new hires and fewer pay raises. Employees seem to be at a boiling point."

### Study results:

- \* 63 percent of workers surveyed reported high levels of stress with fatigue and feelings of being out of control. That's up 15 percent from the previous survey taken in the first quarter of 2003.
- \* Only 5 percent report low stress levels, and that's down 9 percent from the first quarter of 2003.
- \* The stress is affecting worker priorities. Just under two-thirds of workers surveyed say accomplishing basic responsibilities is job number-one; 22 percent see just showing up as key, and only 18 percent have the mental energy to consider performance improvement a top priority.
- \* One bit of good news: Interpersonal conflicts are not at the root of worker unhappiness. Nearly 30 percent cited "people issues" as their primary cause of stress~that's down 2 percent from earlier this year. And just 16 percent cite work/family balance as the stressor~that's off a significant 12 percent from the previous survey. Biggest jump in stress creation: job insecurity. 13 percent cite it as a stress producer~that's up 13 percent from the first quarter of 2003.