

# EXECUTIVE STRESS — AN OUTCOME OF STRATEGIC CHANGE PROCESSES

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## ABSTRACT

The research supporting this paper was focussed on the New Zealand finance sector. The broad research project was designed to answer questions about the preparedness of executives to manage transnational companies. However, what unexpectedly emerged in the course of attempting to answer the research questions, was that a significant level of executive stress was prevalent.

The data were obtained via semi-structured interviews with each company's human resource director and/or with senior managers, from each organisation, who were actively involved in the change process. The questions were designed to test for the presence of variables that represented Adler and Bartholomew's (1992) representation of a transnational manager. However, as a result of the responses of the interviewees to certain questions, research was undertaken to obtain models that could be used to categorise the various groupings. Maslach & Leiter's (1997) model, outlining the factors that may cause organisationally-induced stressed and, to a lesser extent, Robbins et al. (1998) work on employee burnout, appeared to be the most appropriate.

## KEYWORDS

Change; performance; executive stress; leadership; health & safety

## INTRODUCTION

In 1984, the New Zealand finance sector was deregulated and, in response to the newly created competitive environment, underwent a period of strategic change never before experienced in the sector's history.

Since that time, insurance companies have demutualised, new companies have entered the market, banks have entered the insurance market and insurance companies have entered the banking market.

New Zealand has not been immune from the changes impacting upon the finance sector throughout the world. Globalisation, economies of scale, cost reduction and the need to access new markets, especially those of Asia/Pacific, are driving the changes in the environment.

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Global firms, with complex financial and corporate structures, have emerged as dominant players and are now doing business in the New Zealand market.

The resultant increased competition — the mergers, acquisitions and the globalisation of the business — have all resulted in the profit margins within the sector being squeezed. The organisational response throughout the industry has been to de-layer, downsize, restructure, re-engineer and out-source in order to maintain profitability.

Research conducted recently on the New Zealand finance sector investigated human resource issues arising within the new environment and uncovered a number of factors that were affecting management's ability to manage effectively in the new environment. One of these was the high level of executive stress that was being experienced in every company throughout the sector.

### **WHAT IS STRESS?**

Firstly, it must be remembered that stress is a normal part of everyday life. When stress gets out of control and becomes primarily a negative and the predominant feature of an individual's life, then problems arise, both at an individual and organisational level (McNally, 1999).

Selye (1976) made the distinction between two different types of stress:

- *Eu-Stress* — which is pleasant and provides a sense of satisfaction and a sense of achievement. You can be busy at work, working long hours and under a great deal of pressure, but still not experience any of the negative effects often associated with stress.
- *Dis-stress* — which is unpleasant. This can involve such things as losing a job, death of a partner, loss of a friend. This *dis-stress* is responsible for the negative effects on the individual and, if continuing, ultimately upon their ability to function properly.

This impaired ability to function — if allowed to continue — can, in turn, impact upon organisational performance. If a significant number of people within a particular organisation or industry sector are found to be suffering *distress* at a very high level, then profitability and the potential long-term survival of that organisation or sector could be called into question.

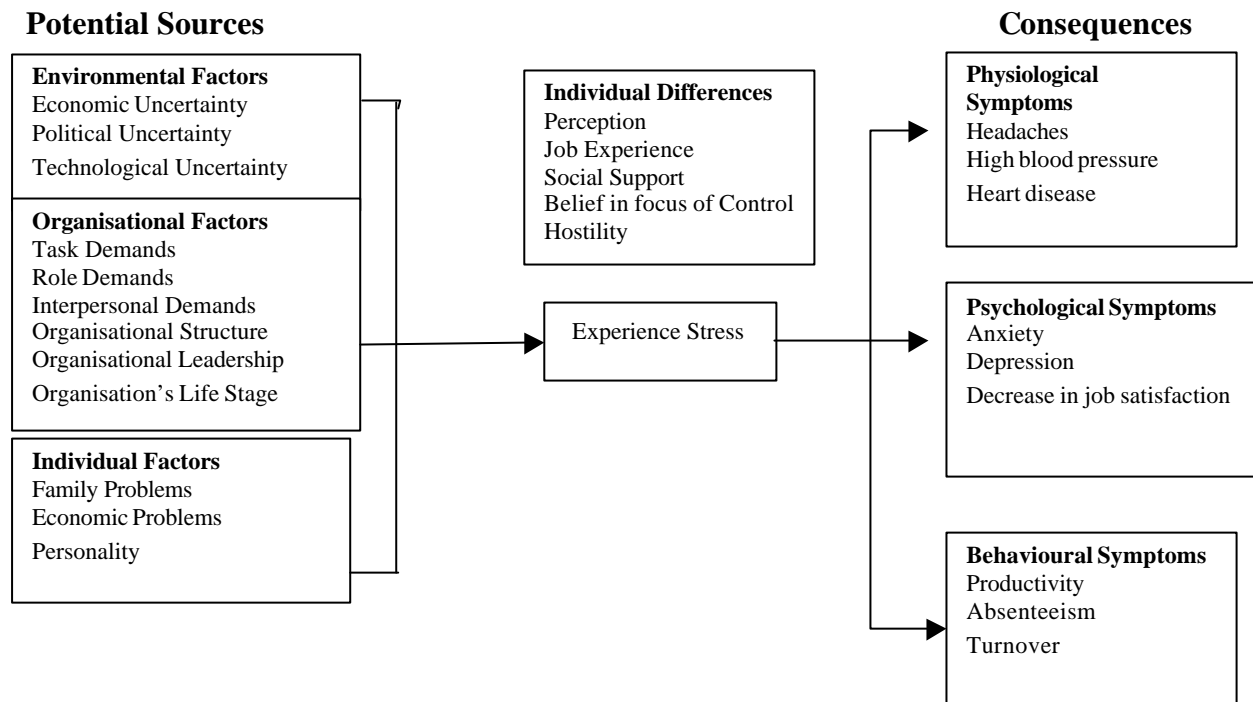
At the same time, it is widely recognised that many executives thrive on the high levels of *eu-stress*, which result from challenge, demanding projects, fast-paced work environments and the ability to make a difference.

What is at question is: when does *eu-stress* cease to be a positive factor and become *dis-stress*? Another question is: 'what are the organisational contributors to this change within the turbulent finance sector in New Zealand'?

Robbins, Millett, Cacioppe & Waters-Marsh (1998) developed the model below to detail the three major categories of potential stressors:

- Environmental
- Organisational
- Individual

**Figure 1: Categories and Consequences of Stress**



Source: Robbins et al. 1998, p 279

Anecdotal comments from professionals working in this area, i.e. psychologists and medical practitioners, observed that this model does have some shortcomings with regard to the consequences. In particular, behavioural aspects such as substance abuse, i.e. nicotine and/or alcohol, eating disorders, relationship breakdowns, family violence and even in some cases, suicides, can be directly attributable to workplace stress. These behaviours are not included in the list of behavioural symptoms listed in Figure 1.

### ***Organisational Factors***

The organisational factors listed in Figure 1 are of most concern to the present research. Each organisational factor as it relates to the New Zealand finance sector, is now considered in turn.

***Task Demands:*** are factors related to a person's job. High-level projects being imposed, in addition to usual workloads, have been a feature within the finance sector. Examples include merger and integration projects, implementing reporting requirements for new shareholders, and reconciling the demands of multiple stakeholders that are often in conflict.

***Role Demands:*** relate to pressure placed on a person as a function of the particular role they play in the organisation. Role demands of executives in the New Zealand finance sector have increased markedly from all directions. Examples include the demands of staff for communication, vision, and direction and from boards and shareholders for return on

investment. These demands can create a great deal of conflict for those in leadership roles. Pressures such as making people redundant, whilst attempting to ensure survival in their own roles, also cause stress.

***Interpersonal Demands:*** do other employees create pressures? Lack of social support from colleagues and poor interpersonal relationships can cause considerable stress. An individual's ability to perform is dependent upon someone else having done his or her bit. A "You feel pressured by me and I feel stressed by you" syndrome arises, that contributes to the feelings of stress. This is particularly so when executives are dependent upon many people within the organisation to produce results that are being demanded by others such as shareholders.

***Organisational Structure:*** defines the level of differentiation in the organisation. Recent trends include the flattening of structures, the loss of autonomy over decision-making, and the loss of staff that may have provided support for these leaders in the past. All can affect the level of stress experienced. When some, or all, of the above are experienced the potential for high levels of stress is exacerbated.

***Organisational Leadership:*** represents the managerial style of the organisation's senior executives. In the case of these senior executives, the board of directors they report to, or the major shareholders, create the organisational climate. Learning to cope with the demands of these people, in particular those from different cultural backgrounds, can be a major contributor to stress. The 'leaner, meaner' organisation has meant that frequently fewer people are doing the same amount of work. 'Leaner, meaner' has become 'anorexic' in an effort to reduce costs in many finance sector organisations (McNally 1999).

***Organisational Life Stage:*** in the case of the New Zealand finance sector the majority of firms were at the end of the maturity cycle or in the decline cycle. Many of the changes have been forced upon the companies in order for them to survive. In many cases, more than one change strategy has been imposed within a short period of time. For example, one company alone had — within a two-year period — a restructuring of the sales and distribution system, a demutualisation, a strategic alliance/take-over, an internal restructuring and two downsizing exercises.

Robbins et al. (1998) made the very important point that stressors are cumulative. Stress builds up. Each new and persistent stressor adds to an individual's stress level. Each single stressor in and of itself may seem unimportant, but when added to an already high level of stress, it can be the one thing that pushes someone to complete breakdown. Therefore, it follows that if an individual executive has to cope with all of the organisational factors as outlined above, the potential for an individual to experience the negative consequences of stress is extremely high indeed.

Maslach and Leiter's (1997) employee burnout model outlined the aspects of organisational life that, taken in conjunction with those identified by Robbins et al. (1998), identified the causes of the stress impacting upon these executives. Maslach & Leiter (1997) believed that organisations should act to prevent burnout. For organisations to create environments that enable people to do their best work Maslach & Leiter (1997) believed that a goal oriented organisational approach was necessary to minimise stress-induced burnout.

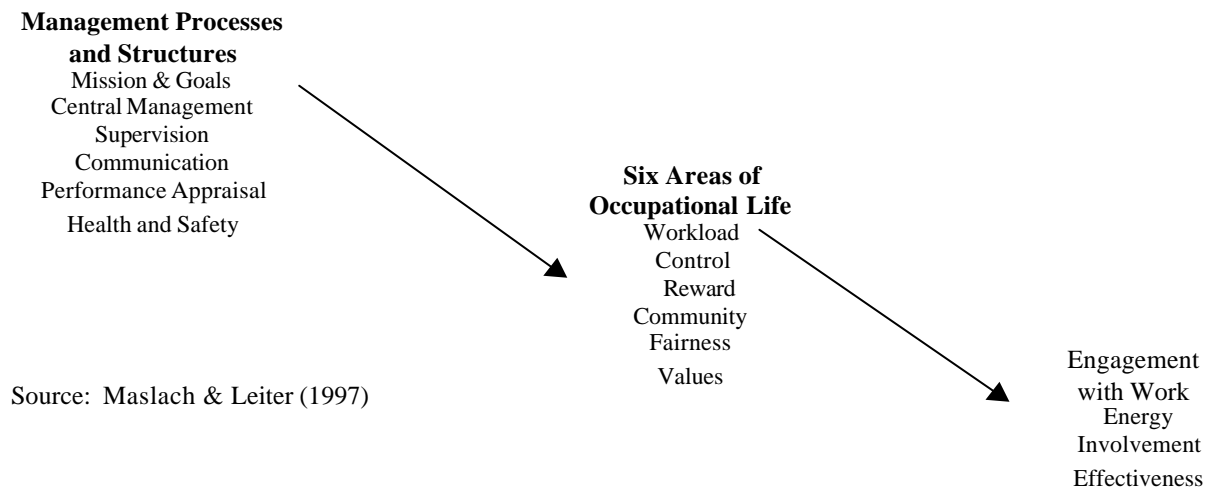
Rather than focus upon the individual as having responsibility for the management of stress, an organisational approach gives stress a workplace focus. Therefore, Maslach & Leiter (1997) analysed organisational life and found that six areas held the key to identifying sources of stress related burnout in employees. These six areas are:

- workload
- reward
- control
- community
- fairness
- values

However, if any or all of Maslach & Leiter's (1997) six areas of organisational life are disrupted, then employee burnout is more likely to occur. If organisational strategy has as its goal the building of processes and structures that promote engagement with work, then Maslach & Leiter (1997) believe management can take a proactive role in the control of job related stress.

Figure 2 shows how the goal of organisational strategy is to build a form of organisational life that promotes engagement with work, and this engagement contributes toward preventing burnout.

**Figure 2: Maslach & Leiter's Framework for Employee Burnout**



Each of Maslach & Leiter's six areas of occupation life was examined within the context of the responses of interviewees in this case.

### **Workloads**

{(Maslach & Leiter (1997))} believe that workload is a key dimension of organisational life. From the organisational point of view, workload means productivity: from the individual's point of view workload means time and energy. Finding the balance between the two is the challenge facing most workplaces. Major organisational transitions associated with downsizing and restructuring, target workload first in order to increase productivity.

### ***Control***

The level of control a person has over their work is another important factor in the contribution to work related stress. According to Maslach & Leiter (1997) people want the opportunity to make choices and decisions, to be able to use their ability to think and to solve problems, and to have some input into the process of achieving the outcomes for which they will be accountable. Failure to feel a sense of control over one's work could lead to a lack of motivation and job satisfaction and, ultimately, to a sense of powerlessness.

### ***Rewards***

The challenges in the workplace reduce the capacity of organisations to reward people in meaningful ways. Maslach and Leiter (1997) defined rewards as being both internal and external, for example:

- money
- prestige
- security

What appears to be most devastating for workers is the loss of the internal reward that comes when a person takes pride in doing something of importance and value to others, and doing that job well.

### ***Community***

Maslach & Leiter (1997) identified the fourth impact as being the breakdown of the community at work. Community is a sense of belonging that exists when people work together and is undermined by loss of job security resulting from repeated downsizing and mergers and acquisitions and an excessive focus on short-term profit that excludes consideration of people. Consequently, with the fragmenting of personal relationships, the sense of belonging disappears.

### ***Fairness***

A workplace is perceived to be fair when three key elements are present:

- trust
- openness
- respect

When an organisation achieves community, people trust one another to fulfil their roles in shared projects, to communicate openly about their intentions and to show mutual respect (Maslach & Leiter 1997).

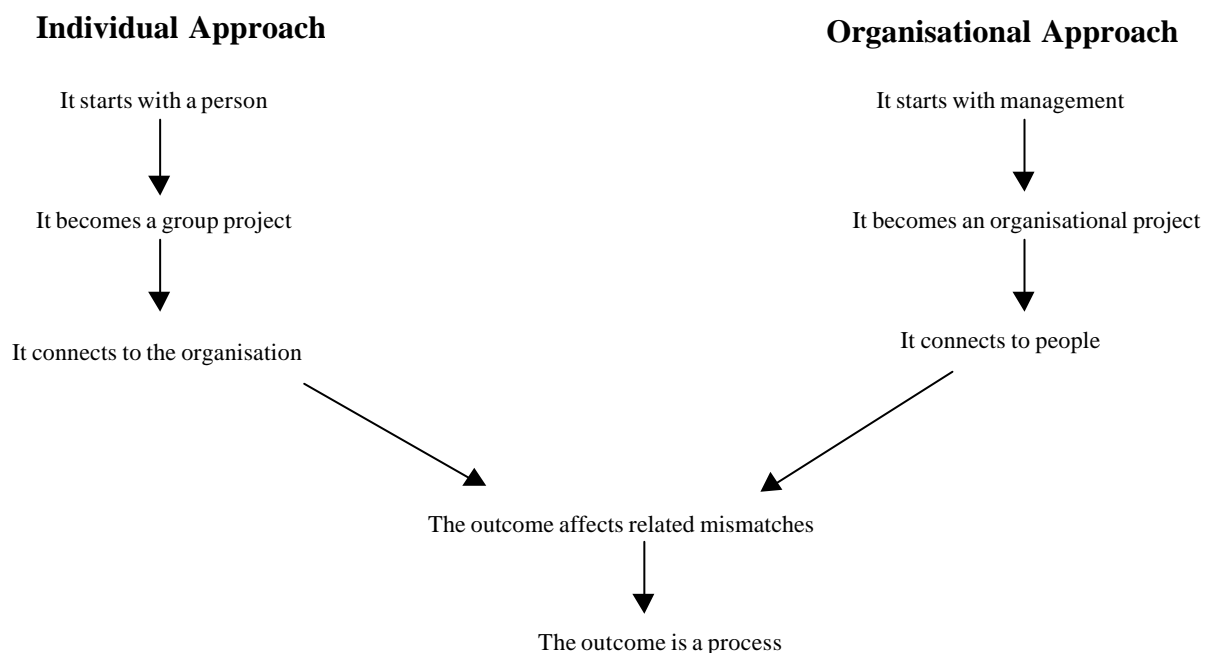
## Values

Values influence everything about one's relationship with work. The current work environment has created considerable conflict of values for many. Maslach and Leiter (1997) stated that one of the most frustrating things regarding working in organisations is where there is an emphasis upon excellent service, yet at the same time actions are taken that damage the quality of work.

Inancevich & Power (1987) found those employees at risk concentrated on surviving, maintaining status, prestige, power and careers. This, in turn, created destructive competition among employees and greatly detracted from achieving the organisational goals and requirements.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) developed the two-stage model (see Figure 3) to illustrate the two approaches that may be taken in the problem solving process. This model may provide an insight into a practical remedy to this problem in the finance sector. There is a synergy that an organisation can create in solving the problem that individuals cannot.

**Figure 3: Two Approaches to the Problem Solving Process**



Source: Maslach & Leiter (1997)

The research methodology for this study is now outlined. The results of this research included the emergence of stress as a strongly explanatory phenomenon. Consequently, the nature of stress, couched in terms of the extant literature on that topic, dominates the discussion about the results of this research.

## RESEARCH

### Methodology

The research was conducted in early 1999, and was exploratory research designed to answer the following questions:

- How prepared are executives to manage transnational companies?
- How capable are firms' human resource systems of recruiting, developing, retaining and using transnationally competent managers and executives?

An attempt was made to focus upon those companies that had undergone a significant change process. For the sake of this study, a significant change process is defined as a merger, acquisition, demutualisation or global restructuring.

The data were obtained via semi-structured interviews with the human resource director and/or senior managers, from each organisation. Each interviewee was actively involved in the change process.

### Sample

A sample of managers from companies in the New Zealand finance sector was obtained. 'Finance sector' was given a broad definition. It encompassed firms engaging in banking, insurance and financing or lending. In the reality of the contemporary environment the differences between these three operations are difficult to define. In six companies, two managers were interviewed in order to obtain a more representative sample. In addition, two human resource consultants, who were actively involved in the recruitment of executives at the top two levels of management, were interviewed. This was done in order to obtain an impartial third party view of the organisations involved. The interviews with the consultants did not contribute to the reported data. They merely assisted with enhancing the reliability of the emerging findings. A total of eight companies participated in the study giving a total of fourteen interviews. These eight companies comprised the major institutions remaining, following the merger and acquisition activity. All but one of the companies were foreign owned and had their corporate headquarters offshore.

The duration of the interviews varied from one to two hours. During each interview information was sought on the reasons for the merger and acquisition or change process, the integration planning, the involvement of the HRM department and the skills, experience and training received by the executives involved in the programme. Underlying all the questions was an attempt to ascertain the level of transnational knowledge, skills and abilities of the managers who were to operate in the new organisation.

Analysis of the demographic data identified the following profiles.

**Table 1**

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
25 – 35	2
35 - 40	6
40 – 45	3
45 – 50	2
50 - 60	1

**Table 2**

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
9	5

**Table 3**

<b>Identified Ethnic Background</b>	
<b>NZ European/European</b>	<b>NZ European/NZ Maori</b>
13	1

All positions reported directly to the New Zealand chief executive, except in one case where the respondents reported directly to the general manager responsible for their particular business line.

Only one manager of those interviewed spoke a language other than English. This manager was the only person to have had what could be considered international experience and the language was that of the country of posting. The highest level of qualification held was at Masters level. The younger respondents had the higher levels of educational qualification. Only one respondent, the eldest and longest serving, held industry specific qualifications.

## **DATA**

All the semi-structured interviews were taped and care was taken to avoid leading questions. The interviews were fully transcribed initially. As the categories became saturated, the interviews were taped only and notes taken from these tapes were combined with the field notes taken throughout the interview and used as a record. All written memos and notes were written up at the time of the interview or immediately thereafter.

## **Data Analysis**

Interview transcriptions were then analysed qualitatively and thematically. In conjunction with memos made throughout the interview, the transcriptions were used to identify the categories that emerged from the content of the interviews.

Initial stages of grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967) were undertaken in an effort to identify the trends. These stages are:

- initial data collection
- open coding
- theoretical sampling and selection sampling
- comparison of categories
- saturation of categories.

The full grounded theory method goes on to undertake theoretical coding with the aim of generating high order categories, basic social processes and integrative theory. However, the aim of the research was theory testing, not theory development, so it was not necessary to pursue data analysis with such a high level of rigour, complexity or depth. The key questions are contained in Appendix A.

## RESULTS

In the course of attempting to answer the research questions, it unexpectedly emerged from the responses of the interviewees that a significant level of executive stress was prevalent.

Whilst attempting to determine HR system compatibility within restructuring organisations, a key question in the interview was “What were the key challenges facing executives during the change process?” This question was an attempt to elicit information regarding the challenges of merger and acquisition integration or globalisation. Identified challenges included the speed of integration, culture difficulties, and communication difficulties.

When the above question was asked, a number of interviewees answered without hesitation, “Stress” or “Keeping your marriage together”. One senior executive with in excess of 35 years experience in the industry said, “It has been the hardest year of my working life”.

Stress was a factor that was volunteered by the majority of interviewees without probing. The remaining interviewees spoke of the levels of stress after an initial probing question. However, no executive identified strategies or programmes, either individually or organisationally, that were available to enable executives to manage this stress.

A second question whilst engaging in an unstructured interview was “What training and support was available for executives at this time?” Once again, an attempt was being made to elicit information regarding the preparation for the change processes.

General comments from most of the respondents were, “None”; “we did a bit of team building for half a day”; “Generally nothing”; “They are paid enough — they should just get on and do it”. The conclusion being that very little was done to support executives throughout this time.

As a result of these responses research was undertaken to obtain models that could be used to categorise the various groupings. Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) and, to a lesser extent, Robbins et al.’s (1998) work on employee burnout appeared to be the most appropriate.

### **Workloads**

From the responses of executives it became apparent that the current business environment is putting increasing pressure on the individual to survive and to do more with less, and in a shorter period of time.

When asked to expand on a comment regarding stress, one senior executive said, *“Stress the burnout syndrome I suppose, they (senior managers) are being asked to work continually at very high levels of intellectual power. They are being asked to do it with a lot less resources.”*

One interviewee spoke of the pressure of having to make major decisions and frequently having little time and incomplete information. *“The days of having 24 hours to make a decision are gone ... It’s good if you get it right (the decision). Get it wrong and the fallout can be immense.”*

### **Control**

The globalisation of the New Zealand finance sector has brought with it a loss of control. Previously, executives were relatively autonomous and had responsibility and accountability for their own businesses. Increasingly, the control of the business and the strategic decisions is held some distance from New Zealand.

Not only do executives have to cope with the loss of autonomy over strategic direction, but also the freedom of staff to work outside the usual hierarchical structures. There was recognition of how e-mail and the Internet have contributed to this loss of control and broken down a number of hierarchical structures and allowed staff to communicate with people who, in the old environments, would have been inaccessible.

For example, one executive said, *“Normally you would never talk (e-mail) to someone so senior – you would go through your M.D. and they manage how “my company” interacts within the country or offshore with others. But that type of view is archaic amid people from all sorts of levels going off all round the world”.*

This loss of executive control was recognised on a number of occasions by statements such as the following: *“The role has changed, with what they have autonomy over and what they don’t. They were the GODS — they still are to some extent but their power has been reduced.”*

### **Rewards**

The research indicated that the extrinsic rewards of money, prestige and security have diminished significantly in the New Zealand finance sector as a result of the strategic changes of the past ten years. Salaries are not as competitive as those that could be obtained internationally, creating inequity with counterparts offshore. At the same time, many senior managers are dealing with the loss of prestige that comes from being a small part of a much larger global company. Overriding this is decreased job security, resulting not only from a short-term profit performance focus, but also the potential for yet another merger or acquisition to swallow up their roles.

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One senior executive said, “*Yea the (XXX) hearts and minds are not won over yet cause we are not really sure if we have a job or not*”.

Even the intrinsic rewards such as building expertise or working with respected colleagues are less evident.

### **Community**

The lack of community as defined by Maslach & Leiter (1997) was particularly evident during this research. It was things as simple as: “*Last year we were in the Dragonboat team for one company and then this year for another, yet in some ways we don’t belong, because we have not changed, the names around us have changed. It takes some getting used to*”.

There is also the sense of loss that comes from saying farewell to people with whom they have worked for many years. In New Zealand there are work-groups that not only work together as a team, but also socialise together. Making one or more people redundant often affects more than the immediate work-group. It affects an extended community within the organisation. Making someone redundant cannot only remove his or her work group identity, but also can remove a large part of an individual’s social group as well. People remaining within the organisation also grieve for the loss of a colleague. This is where survivor syndrome comes in.

### **Fairness**

One feature of major change processes is that they frequently put individuals into conflict with each other. In many instances not only are executives faced with having to make people redundant, but also they must do so while confronting uncertainty regarding their own position.

Frequently during the mergers in the sector, executives were forced into competition for positions. “*Oh we are not sure if we are in or we are out ... as a result the (XXX) G.M.’s are probably working harder than the others.*”

The situation in which these executives find themselves creates a competitive situation where trust, openness and respect often have difficulty thriving. Instead, the environment becomes highly individualistic and focused on survival of the fittest. Companies in the study displayed evidence of individual political manoeuvring in order to maintain career or position. In the majority of interviews there was an explicitly expressed sense of unfairness with regard to various situations occurring. Organisations also suffer, as there is not a willingness among members to share knowledge.

### **Values**

All companies taking part in the research showed evidence of changing their value set from one of a sense of community to one of focusing on short-term return to the shareholder. While there was a professed focus on the client — the client being the person purchasing the product — in reality the focus in all companies was on *appeasing the shareholder*.

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This apparent contradiction in values is exemplified in the statement of one executive, *“I think it is also because the service provider is so far away. They are almost not in touch at all, they can let the service drop because you (the client) can’t wander in and confront them face-to-face. The accountability factor is missing”*.

*Another executive said, “ High stress – I guess the bank is restructuring the hell out of these people and trying to implement a new culture. People are not stupid – they see through things. Things like selling more electronic products. I think that the bank has been very successful in getting people to do that — that’s basically what we are doing — getting people to get rid of their own jobs.”*

People are making decisions about what is really important to them. They will tolerate a conflict of values for a certain period of time, but eventually in order to prevent burnout they must make decisions about their future within the organisation.

As a result of this type of value conflict, executives made statements like, *“That’s what comes through from both the mergers I have been involved in, the long hours, sheer hard work and the strain on families. What you have to manage most is people saying, “I have had enough” and leaving the corporate world. This is happening at many levels and in particular, unfortunately, at top levels ... people that have been involved in companies that are merging and acquiring are saying ‘ oh stuff it (I am going)’ ”*.

All respondents in the study admitted their company lost key people that they could ill afford to lose.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Robbins et al.’s (1998) point that stressors are cumulative needs to be emphasised. Stress builds up. Each new and persistent stressor adds to an individual’s stress level. Each single stressor in itself may seem unimportant, but when all are present over a sustained period of time, stress may become a strategic threat to the business. The level of executive stress identified is such that there must be a significant cost accruing to organisations within the New Zealand finance sector.

Anecdotal evidence from psychologists working in this area suggests that negotiating one change process does not necessarily mean you will find the next one less stressful. Often executives are recruited in the belief that they will not suffer from stress or need support because they have previously been through significant change processes. However, *Stress is additive and they still require support*.

The people leading these finance sector companies are highly intelligent and have been recruited for their leadership abilities. In many ways it is a contradiction that, on the one hand, the industry expects its executives to be leaders and to be creative and innovative, while at the same time removing a large degree of autonomy in many companies. The managerial prestige of these leaders has been devalued as a result.

Executives, as with all workers, are having to learn to cope with a new organisational identity. They are having to also learn to work with new team members, learn to trust, learn the strengths and weaknesses of their new colleagues, and to learn to respect, and gain respect, as

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a member of a team. The executives in the New Zealand finance sector are having to come to terms with the changes that are being imposed from head office and, in turn, implement those changes throughout the organisation, often without having the opportunity to be able to 'buy-in' into the new organisation.

As a result of the findings of the study, a major question should be — *who supports the executives of these companies?* There is an attitude on the part of the companies that, at this level of seniority and remuneration, there should not be a need for support and training programmes. This is a very short-term and potentially dangerous view. For many, this is the first time that they have themselves experienced, or been responsible for, driving a merger/acquisition or major change process. The changes being experienced are just as unknown and cataclysmic for people at the executive level as they are for the rest of the people working in the sector.

Rather than the issue of stress being seen as a problem for the individual, or any stress or stress related illnesses being seen as a sign of weakness, there needs to be a move towards recognition of the problem as an organisational or industry issue. While the traditional stress management techniques will go some way toward alleviating the symptoms of stress, they will not remove the cause.

As discussed previously, it is time for stress management to be recognised as a two-stream process (Maslach & Leiter 1997). The causes are organisationally; therefore, the solutions must also be generated from an organisational base (see Figure 2).

In summary, the key findings are that stress is a problem for people both organisationally and throughout the industry and should be viewed with serious concern by both. The organisational causes of executive stress are of such magnitude that it may not be within the individual's power to solve the problem on their own. Therefore, the organisation, as a good employer, must take some responsibility for the solution. The prevalence of stress within all the organisations taking part in the study may threaten the future viability of the organisation and, therefore, ultimately the finance industry itself. In order to ensure profitability and ultimately survival, organisations should take responsibility for providing solutions for the problem of organisationally induced stress.

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## Appendix A - Interview Questionnaire

These are indicative questions only. The direction of the interview and the responses of interviewees determine the exact wording of these questions, and the wording of intervening and supplementary questions.

### Merger & Acquisitions/Change Process

1. What were the principal reasons for the M&A?
2. How long did the Due Diligence Process take from start to finish?
3. What were the choices facing XXXX prior to the change process for example grow, shrink, buy, build?
4. What form was the M&A for example
5. -raid
6. -contest for control
7. -collaboration
8. -rescue
9. If you were going to develop a checklist for Post-Merger Success, what would be the most important points?
10. What are the issues that make a cross border M&A different from a domestic M&A?
11. (or a global change project different from a domestic)
12. How important are international considerations to the NZ M&A environment?
13. At what point was the integration process started?
14. What would you consider the CSF's of a successful integration (or change) process?
15. Was there an integration checklist/plan – if so is this available?
16. What was the composition of the integration team?
17. What would be the recommended pace for an integration of this nature?
18. What resources should be available for the integration project?
19. What was the executive style during this period?
20. What were considered to be the core competencies of the executive team during this period?
21. What were the primary objectives of the executive team?
22. What were the CSF's for the executives during the process?
23. What worked well?
24. What worked not so well?

### Executive Recruitment and Selection Methods

1. How were executives chosen for their roles post change process?
2. Why should incumbents be evaluated?
3. How was this carried out?
4. What worked well?
5. What worked not so well?
6. What would be the key challenges facing executives during the process?
7. What support/training etc was provided in order for executives to operate effectively in this process?
8. How does the firm recruit and select executives for the future?

9. What training and development is available for these recruits?

Executive Experience and Skills

1. What are the key experiences a successful executive in your company would have had to operate effectively until 10 years ago?
2. Are there any key experiences that are needed now that were not needed 10 years ago?
3. What about in 10 years time?
4. What executive development and education programmes are available currently?
5. What are the core components of the programmes?
6. What should be there that isn't?
7. Are there any specialist's programmes available for executives?
8. Does the firm have a graduate recruitment policy?
9. What are the core components?

Human Resource Systems

1. What are the core functions of your Human Resource System?
2. What is the function of the Human Resource System in the new xxx?
3. Where is the HR Strategy developed i.e. is it centralised or decentralised?
4. How do benefits differ from country to country? Remuneration etc
5. What input do regional HR Executives have into the corporate HR policies?

International

1. How are managers for international placements selected?
2. What training/development is available for managers undertaking international placements?
3. How many interactions are there between Australia and NZ?  
NZ and the rest of the world? Daily weekly etc
4. Is there a formal hierarchy of international communication?
5. What are the main reasons that would lead you to accept an international assignment?
6. How much contact/interaction have you had with non-NZ business or business people?
7. Tell me about one of the most satisfying experiences you have had in this area? Why?
8. What would be one of the most dissatisfying experiences? Why?
9. What do you consider are the key skills for managers in MNC's?
10. What career development programmes are in place?
11. What are the main reasons you would turn down an international assignment?