



The Hidden Costs of Executive Marriage Crisis

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Business is driven by profit. Employees in healthy relationships can increase that profit, while employees in failing relationships decrease that profit. No longer can the relationship issues of your workforce be ignored or passed over. It would be irresponsible – fiscally, socially, and ethically – to ignore how relational wellness principles affect your company's financial bottom line.

Relationships issues are no longer limited to counselors, EAPs, or therapists... "Business" takes place inside and outside the workplace. Since your company works to increase productivity, efficiency, and profitability, it's smart to make relational wellness your business.

~ "Relational Wellness: Corporate America's Business," David Olson, Ph.D.

Executives in high-conflict relationships are costly to a corporation – whether the conflict is with another executive, a team member, or at home. The higher the level of the employee, the higher the cost and impact on the organization. In a study published in the Journal of Marriage and the Family (Forthofer, et al, 1996), relationship-related stress was cited as costing employers more than \$6 billion dollars annually – costs borne directly by companies, owners and shareholders.

An executive whose marriage is in crisis cannot help but impact the people around him – even when he does his best to keep his stress private. We telegraph our emotions and attitudes to others regardless of what we say, or how we say it. Inner distress is communicated to others via micro-expressions, voice tone, and body language, all at the subconscious level, triggering unconscious stress responses in others. An executive in crisis can easily snap at a colleague's innocent comment as a discharge of tension from a battle raging at home. This kind of unexpected reaction feels threatening, creating fear, defensiveness and distrust.

A severe marriage or family crises can become an emotional roller coaster, impacting one's productivity. An employee's burden at home affects his capacity to work. Focus



is lost, and priorities are disrupted. In a manager, this can create uncertainty and disengagement in their team. In the case of executives, preoccupation with home life issues can affect the entire company and its bottom line, especially if their spouse becomes unsupportive, or undermining.

If the marriage crisis results in separation or divorce, the impacts are even more dramatic. On the classic *Life Event Stress Scale*, divorce ranks as the second most stressful life event, and marital separation ranks third (behind the number one ranked stressor, the death of a spouse). (Holmes & Rahe, 1967).

A review of the literature on relationship stress at work reveals a wide range of potential impacts that marriage crises can have on an organization and its employees:

- absenteeism
- “presenteeism”
- preoccupation
- attention fatigue
- errors of judgment and action
- reduced capacity for innovation
- increased health insurance costs
- conflicts with others
- team ineffectiveness
- lost opportunities
- decreased health
- grievances
- burnout
- litigation

Executives face a unique double challenge. They are under enormous pressure to perform well at work, and when they arrive home, additional pressures await them: to be fully available to their spouse and children, to be responsible as a householder, to be a caring spouse and a good parent. Additional responsibilities may include social obligations, elderly parents, etc. With limited time and energy, something must be sacrificed. All too often, it is the spouse who bears the burden, becoming unhappy, resentful, or caustic, multiplying the negative cycle of increasing stress at home and at work.

An executive involved in a domestic dispute, especially when children are involved, may become unavailable for travel or extended hours of work. They may experience high arousal states of anxiety, fear or insecurity. Individuals under extreme stress are less capable of empathy, so interpersonal dynamics at work often suffer (Lee, 1997). They may get triggered emotionally more easily. Anger and frustration are frequently projected out onto co-workers, subordinates or customers. Some people collapse or buckle under the pressure.

The direct cost to an organization of an executive divorce can easily exceed ten to twenty percent of salary, plus additional costs each succeeding year (Curtis, 2006). Divorce typically impacts an employee’s productivity and effectiveness for three years or more. (Lavy, 2002)



Unhappy marriages and failing relationships not only decrease productivity and profitability, but can also lead to sexual or emotional affairs within the workplace, which increases risk of damage to the company (Corporate Resource Council, 2002).

Couples in marriages of poor quality have lower immune functioning and report more illness than people in satisfying marriages (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). One study found that in the year following divorce, employees lost an average of more than 168 hours of work time – the equivalent of four full weeks of absence (Mueller, 2005).

In addition to the personal upheaval experienced by an executive who is separating or divorcing, there are additional time and energy costs involved in legal, financial, and custody battles, plus psychological impacts of these extreme stressors.

When a corporation becomes aware that an executive is in personal relationship crisis, it has an important business responsibility to provide assistance – for the betterment of the company, as well as the key individual.

Employee Assistance Programs are rarely qualified to assist senior executives. *Executive coaches* are not trained as marriage and family therapists. And executives themselves are rarely prepared to reveal a crisis at home. A combination of professional expertise is required.

There are huge benefits to helping solve an executive's personal crisis at home. Engagement at work is restored, and there is renewed enthusiasm for work. Relationships with colleagues and team members improve. Benefits spread throughout the organization.

The Solution: Executive Relationship Repair

Luminary Leadership's *Executive Relationship Repair* program is designed to address this problem directly. We specialize in repairing broken or failing marriages of senior executives and key employees. We also assist executives with significant personal and family issues that require emotional attention, such as the demands of caring for elderly parents, or children in crisis. We can address specific mental and behavioral problems such as addictive tendencies, emotional affairs, sexual infidelity, or financial difficulties.



Founders

Carista Luminare, Ph.D. has more than 35 years experience as a consultant, counselor and coach to executives, entrepreneurs, organizations, and partners. She has worked with CEOs and executives from Apple, Charles Schwab, Chevron, Nokia, Gaiam, Wells Fargo Bank, Campbell's Soup, Franklin Templeton, GAP, and PDI Ninth House. She has also worked with numerous Hollywood and University executives.

Lion Goodman is an executive coach with more than 30 years experience consulting to C-suite executives. As an executive search consultant, he served more than 250 companies, including early stage start-ups, mid-sized corporations, and Fortune 500 Companies. His clients have included Computer Science Corporation, American Express, McKesson, Nokia, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Combining more than 65 years of experience in couples counseling and executive coaching, we have integrated the latest discoveries from the *neuroscience of relationships* to create rapid interventions and recovery. We precisely diagnose the subconscious patterns that have caused the problem, and custom-design remedies to support a swift return to individual and relationship integrity. We teach couples in crisis how to reduce their hostilities, repair the damage already done, and return to optimal functioning with mutual respect, love and support.

Our goal is to resolve the immediate problems, and educate the couple how to move from conflict to harmony, from confusion to clarity, and from fear-based reactions to wise actions that repair the relationship. Most couples we've worked with report that their marriages are thriving, with significantly improved positive connection and communication.

We have combined executive coaching with marriage and family counseling in a unique methodology that can turn around a marriage crisis, and save couples (and companies) years of stress and millions of dollars. We also solve conflicts between senior employees – allowing old resentments and conflicts to dissolve, and new, productive working relationships to evolve.

Contact us for a confidential discussion about our services:

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