



### **“The Difficulties Associated With A Business Turnaround – The Stress Factor”**

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Consider this analogy: if your company is viewed as an injured person lying prone on a hospital bed, you want this person to be back up and on their feet as quickly as possible. A prolonged stay in the hospital is no good for anyone. The sooner you can get back to self-sufficiency, the better for all concerned.

To illustrate why this is important, here is one real-world example, and you may not expect something like this if you have never been through a turnaround. When a company is having financial difficulties, the employees are in limbo. There is commonly a hushed atmosphere between management and employees, and it really has to be this way for management to do their job.

But this hushed workplace often gives rise to a profusion of rumors and a high level of uncertainty and of course the anxiety that goes along with it. I have seen employees react to this uncertainty in different ways. The level of infighting may increase if there is already the propensity for this type of conflict in the business culture.

In a closer work environment, I have seen the employees put up a chalkboard on which to post all the latest rumors. Then each day, they prioritized the rumors based on some factor or other (possibly the quality of the rumor source, along with other factors or a combination of factors).

When a particular rumor became impossible or simply died out, it was erased. I can tell you that in the particular business I am describing, there was a tremendous amount of laughter associated with this process, and overall this rumor-board process turned out to be a very healthy way for the employees to deal with the uncertainty and helplessness they



were feeling.

The board was labeled “Rumor Central,” and even the business managers got involved somewhat in the light atmosphere that arose spontaneously around the chalkboard. Besides the actual rumors, sometimes people would also add in their own humorous stories (like “customer service is being relocated to a 3rd-world country”) and this led to a fair amount of laughter.

So in this case, the employees (and management to some degree) were dealing with the stress and uncertainty in a positive way by dissipating some of that anxiety with laughter.