

Fewer IT professionals in the US change job due to stress at work

Administrators in the UK paint a less rosy picture with more considering a job change

Political uncertainty, elections, a sluggish economy and a lack of business confidence have impacted people across all walks of life. And the natural progression from this is the inevitable rise in stress levels, greater demands on our time, greater pressure to meet deadlines, reach targets and, if you're a businessman, do more with less.

IT administrators know a thing or two about doing more with less while keeping up with new threats, the need to update their networks and meet business needs, at the same time as struggling to do their job with fewer support staff and budget.

When GFI Software™ asked **IT administrators in 2012** what they thought about stress and how it impacted their life, the results showed that people working in IT were negatively affected by their job to the extent that they considered changing jobs.

A lot can change in a year and to this end, GFI revisited the issue and once again asked IT administrators for their views on stress at work and how it has affected them over the past 12 months. The survey gauged respondents' stress levels at work and revealed their opinions on their main stressors, how their stress level compares to friends and family, and how it affects their personal and professional lives.

According to the findings of the second annual IT Administrator Stress Survey, the number of IT professionals considering leaving their job due to workplace stress has declined from 67 percent last year to 57 percent in 2013 - a 10 point drop in one year. While the percentages are still high, the results suggest a measure of improvement in working conditions and attitudes over the past 12 months.

The outlook is not so rosy in the UK, where 73 percent of IT professionals are considering leaving their job due to workplace stress, an increase of four percentage points from last year's figures (details [below](#)).

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The independent blind survey of 207 IT administrators in U.S. organizations with more than 10 employees was conducted by **Opinion Matters** on behalf of GFI. (A similar survey of 206 UK-based administrators was also conducted by Opinion Matters).

Nearly one-third of those surveyed cited dealing with managers as their most stressful job requirement, particularly for IT staff in organizations with fewer than 50 or more than 500 employees. The other top sources of workplace stress for IT managers were lack of IT staff and tight deadlines, with 24 percent and 20 percent of respondents, respectively, citing these as primary contributors to their stress levels.

In summary, the GFI research revealed:

- » Sixty-five percent of all IT administrators surveyed consider their job stressful, which is down slightly from the 2012 survey which revealed 69 percent of IT admins found their jobs stressful.
- » Nearly one-third of those surveyed work more than eight hours of overtime each week in order to keep on top of their workload. That is the equivalent of working more than ten weeks a year in overtime.
- » Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of respondents feel the same level of or more stress than others in their social circle. This is more than a 10 percent decrease from last year's findings, when an astounding 72 percent said this was the case.
- » Of those who work at companies with more than 500 employees, one out of 10 employees (10 percent) regularly considers switching careers because of on-the-job stress. However, last year nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of IT administrators were regularly thinking about making a change, suggesting the environment has improved.
- » IT staff from companies sized between 10 and 49 employees are most likely to quit their current roles due to stress, with 41 percent regularly considering a change. Staff from the largest organizations surveyed -- more than 500 employees -- are least likely to quit due to work stress, with only 10 percent of employees regularly thinking about a career change.
- » The top three sources of stress for IT admins are: management (29 percent), lack of IT staff (24 percent) and tight deadlines (20 percent). Users are the smallest source of stress, contributing to the stress level of 12 percent of IT admins.

Personal lives and health bear the brunt of IT work stress

The impact that work stress has on health and relationships is concerning. The 2013 numbers show a slight improvement, but the problem is still pervasive among IT administrators. While 73 percent of participants revealed that their jobs have negatively impacted their personal lives in a general way, the survey discovered some specific impacts on their personal lives:

“Thirty-four percent of respondents have lost sleep due to work. This is an eight point drop from 42 percent last year.”

“Another 16 percent revealed they have experienced a strained or failed relationship due to work stress. 20 percent thought that was the case last year.”

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- » Twenty-one percent of IT administrators have suffered stress-related health issues – such as high blood pressure – due to their work. This number actually slightly increased from 20 percent in 2012.
- » One in five respondents (20 percent) indicated they do not feel great physically as a result of stress, which is an improvement from last year when 22 percent said that was the case.
- » Thirty-four percent of respondents have lost sleep due to work. This is an eight point drop from 42 percent last year.
- » Another 16 percent revealed they have experienced a strained or failed relationship due to work stress. Twenty percent thought that was the case last year.
- » Nearly one-third of IT administrators (29 percent) have had to cancel commitments to family and friends due to work obligations. A decrease of six percentage points from last year.
- » More than one-third (36 percent) of respondents have missed social functions due to work issues. That number was 40 percent last year.
- » Thirty-one percent of those surveyed have missed out on time with their children because of work demands. Again, this is a decrease from last year when 39 percent reported this.
- » Twenty-seven percent of respondents said their job doesn't impact their personal life at all. However, last year, only 16 percent could say that.

There are so many factors that can cause stress but the increasing importance of IT in the workplace and the 24/7 availability paradigm that has been created creates an even more stressful atmosphere for many IT administrators.

As companies become more reliant than ever on IT innovation, uptime and speed of deployment, and thus, IT staff members are under extreme pressure to deliver for the benefit of the whole business. While it's promising to see the results showing a slight improvement in morale, it's concerning that more than half are still stressed to the point that they are actively considering leaving their current role. For SMBs in particular, the research is a stark reminder that IT staff need to be supported and given the right resources to do their job efficiently – and that management needs to be an enabler, not an obstacle for IT progress.

It is also unfortunate that IT administrators are unduly stressed by employees within the company. End users are always a particular source of stress. As one respondent put it when asked about the ridiculous **things that end users do**, "just showing up is usually bad enough."

That, really, sums up it.

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UK administrators paint a gloomier picture as stress continues to take its toll

It has been a tough year for IT professionals in the UK, according to the IT Administrator Stress Survey, with the number of IT professionals considering leaving their job due to workplace stress has jumped from 69 percent last year to 73 percent, underlining the increasingly challenging business landscape in the UK and the growing emphasis being placed on IT to help businesses grow, thrive and compete.

One-third of those surveyed cited dealing with managers as their most stressful job requirement, particularly for IT staff in larger organisations, while handling end user support requests, budget squeeze and tight deadlines were also singled out as the main causes of workplace stress for IT managers.

Here are some of the highlights of the UK survey:

- » Sixty-eight percent of all IT administrators surveyed consider their job stressful.
- » Twenty-one percent of those surveyed work between three and five hours of overtime in order to keep on top of their workload. 12 percent work eight to 10 hours a week. In total, almost half (49 percent) are working six or more hours overtime a week.
- » Over a third (35 percent) of respondents have missed social functions due to work issues. A further 30 percent of those surveyed have missed out on planned family time because of work demands.
- » Over 63 percent of staff surveyed feel they are either as stressed or more stressed at work than their friends and colleagues.
- » 28 percent of IT admins point to a lack of budget and staff needed to get the job done as their primary reasons for job stress.
- » Of the 73 percent of respondents considering changing their role, 36 percent do so on a regular basis.
- » IT staff from companies sized between 100 and 249 employees are most likely to quit their current role due to stress. Staff from the largest firms surveyed (more than 500 employees) are least likely to quit their role due to work stress.
- » The top three sources of stress for IT admins are: management (35 percent), tight deadlines (19 percent) and lack of budget (17 percent). Interestingly enough, users dropped from the second biggest stress cause in 2012 (21 percent) to only the fourth biggest cause (16 percent)

IT admins also noted that they continue to put in many hours of overtime beyond the traditional 40-hour work week and, in many cases, in excess of

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the legal maximum 48-hour working week set down in the [EU Working Time Directive](#). While slightly down on last year (34 percent), one-third of survey participants (33 percent) said they work 10 hours or more of overtime during an average week, equating to 12 extra weeks per year.

Of great concern is the impact that work stress is having on health and relationships. While a total of 80 percent of participants revealed that their job had negatively impacted their personal life in some way, the survey discovered some significant personal impact:

- » Eighteen percent have suffered stress-related health issues due to their work, although this is a stark improvement on 2012 (29 percent).
- » Another 18 percent also revealed they had experienced a strained or failed relationship due to work stress.
- » Nineteen percent do not feel great physically as a result of stress, up from 16 percent last year.
- » Twenty-eight percent have lost sleep due to work.
- » Just over one-quarter (26 percent) have had to cancel commitments to family and friends due to work

End users do the strangest things

Although users are not causing IT staff as much stress as they used to, it isn't stopping them from creating moments that make IT admins want to tear their hair out in frustration. Stories include users complaining their mouse wasn't working when they were trying to use a foam stress squeezer, a user thinking there was a ghost in her PC when IT support staff remoted into it to deliver support, a user who reported the Windows version as being "Patio Doors", and stories of users who folded up a 5.25inch floppy disc in order to fit it into a 3.5inch disc drive. The most common issues were users complaining of hardware not working, only for IT to find the device was either not switched on or not plugged in, along with users spilling tea, coffee and other beverages over their computer or keyboard and then denying they had done it.

The survey of 413 UK- and US-based IT decision makers at organizations with more than 10 employees were fielded by noted polling expert Opinion Matters in March 2013.



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