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New stress

Executives find peace of mind

by John Eckberg

About the same time Enron was melting down in the hot Texas sun about a year ago, the telephone at O'Brien Group offices in Wyoming began to ring. It has not stopped ringing, either, as companies and executives seek counsel, advice and training about the new rules of commerce in the wake of the collapse of Enron's house of cards.

In the past year, prospect calls have increased 150 percent, says Dr. Michael O'Brien, founder and president of the leadership development firm.

Corporate boards are searching for ways to be more confident about the character of their executive leadership teams and organizations.

The calls coming from corporate leaders have another slant: Executives are just plain confused.

"Executives have always had a lot of pressure," Dr. O'Brien says.

"They make really big promises and have always made big promises but in the last decade, the stakes have gotten a lot higher.

"There is way more performance pressure. Stress is going up, and the dynamic pace of change has increased."

Much of the pace of change these days is driven by the Web - you can reach the O'Brien Group at www.obriengroup.us - and new competitive forces.

"There are also new world forces, threats of war, the emergence of China. Everything is happening so quickly," Dr. O'Brien says.

"The pressure at the top is increasing, and there is no place to hide."

An end result is that many executives feel that everybody has a piece of them.

The most common result of those forces is a tendency to react before there is any kind of plan in place.

Few take the time to stop and think, Dr. O'Brien says.

"We ask people to pause and reflect," he says, "to really examine motivations and sort out emotions - do some thoughtful planning before they walk into the boardroom."

He advises clients at all levels of the organization to take time to

reconnect with their convictions.

It may only take a minute, or it may take hours, but it needs to be done. People need to sort out their fears and accountabilities.

For many execs, the temptation is to blame other people when something goes wrong.

But these days Dr. O'Brien and the 10 associates affiliated with his firm are seeing a new trend.

"Executives who are more vulnerable and forthcoming," he says. Even in the midst of a meeting, leaders are increasingly more willing to admit errors in judgment.

"We are seeing more and more often executives admitting a mistake and saying 'Let's regroup and try this one again,'" he says.



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If you'd like more information on executive coaching and how it might benefit your organization, call or e-mail **Dr. Michael O'Brien** of **O'Brien Group** today at **513-821-9580** or **michael@obriengroup.us**. Or visit their website at **www.obriengroup.us**.