

PLAN:

1. READING

2. PREPOSITIONS

3. GRAMMAR+SPEAKING

Over half of business owners feeling increasingly stressed

More than half the leaders of privately held businesses globally feel their stress levels have increased over the last year. The research from the Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR) 2010 covers the opinions of over 7,400 business owners across 36 economies. Mainland China tops the league for the most stressed leaders, with 76% of business owners saying their stress levels have increased over the last year.

Other economies that were high in the stress league table were Mexico (74%), Turkey (72%), Vietnam (72%) and Greece (68%). At the opposite end of the scale, business owners in Sweden (23%), Denmark (25%), Finland (33%) and Australia (35%) have the lowest stress levels in the world.

There appears to be a link between stress levels and GDP. Business

owners in mainland China, Vietnam, Mexico, India and Turkey are all high on the stress league table and are working in environments where high growth is expected. But it's not just in countries expecting high growth that stress levels are high – at the opposite end of the growth scale, Ireland, Spain and Greece are all high on the league table. Said Alex MacBeath, Global Leader – Markets at Grant Thornton International, “We have businesses at both ends of the GDP growth scale experiencing high stress for very different reasons. In mainland China, the pressure is on to keep up with the speed of expansion, while in Ireland, for example, the economy is shrinking, and business owners are worried about how they will keep their business alive.”

Business owners were asked about the major causes of workplace stress.

**Business
owners feeling
stressed**

Not surprisingly, the most common cause during 2009 was the economic climate, with 38% of respondents globally saying this was one of their major causes of stress. This was followed by pressure on cashflow (26%), competitor activities (21%) and heavy workload (19%). Alex MacBeath comments, “The causes of workplace stress can be put into three distinct groups – economic, business and personal. An employee may place more importance on personal elements such as their work–life balance. The business owner has additional pressures to consider.”

The survey also found a link between stress levels and the number of days taken off by an individual in a year. Countries at the top of the stress league are those where business owners, on average, take fewer holidays each year.

C**Read the whole article and answer these questions.**

- 1 What is the difference between these groups of countries in terms of reasons for high-level stress?
 - a) China, Vietnam, Mexico, India and Turkey
 - b) Ireland, Spain and Greece
- 2 According to Alex MacBeath, how do business leaders experience stress differently in China and Ireland?
- 3 What are the four major causes of workplace stress?
- 4 According to Alex MacBeath, what three types of pressure are there?

D **Look at this list of countries.**

Vietnam Sweden Denmark Mexico China Finland

In which countries do business owners take:

- 1 fewer holidays?
- 2 more holidays?

(You will need information from paragraphs 1, 2 and 5.)

E **In pairs, discuss these questions.**

- 1 What are the additional pressures that business owners might have?
- 2 Should companies do more to reduce stress at work? What could they do?
- 3 How many days' holiday per year do you think people should get?

Some time references refer only to the past.

*The special deals ended two months **ago**.*

***Last week**, we sold 500 units – a record!*

The prepositions *in*, *on*, *from*, *to*, *for* and *during* often refer to periods of time in the past.

in	months years	<i>I went on a business trip in August. He moved to Germany in 1999.</i>
on	dates days	<i>The goods left the warehouse on 9th April. The offer finished on Monday.</i>
from ... to	beginning and end of a period	<i>They worked on the sales campaign from February to March.</i>
for	a period of time	<i>He lived in France for five years.</i>
during	at some point in a period	<i>During October, we reached our sales target for the year.</i>

LANGUAGE FOCUS 2

Past time references

Christian Sanchez graduated from Tufts University *at / on / in* ¹ 2001, with a degree in chemistry. As part of his course, he did an internship at Merck *for / during / in* ² eight months. After his degree, Merck offered him a permanent job as a chemical analyst at the company's research centre in New Jersey. He worked there *in / from / for* ³ 2001 to 2003. *During / For / On* ⁴ his time at Merck, Christian realised he

wanted to change career, so he decided to do an MBA. *In / On / For* ⁵ May 2004, he started a two-year MBA at Stanford University. Following his MBA, he joined the sales team at Johnson and Johnson *in / on / for* ⁶ 15th September 2006. Two years *since / ago / last* ⁷, he became the Regional Sales Manager for the Americas. *Last / First / Next* ⁸ month, he accepted an exciting new job as Country Manager in Argentina.

Homework

 CD1.79 Mikael Ohlsson is the CEO of furniture retailer IKEA. Listen to an interview about his career and complete the missing information in these notes.

Profile

Born: 27th December¹, 1957

Education: Studied² at Linköping University

Career in IKEA

.....³ Worked as carpet salesman, Linköping store, Sweden

.....⁴ Became Store Manager, Sundsvall, Sweden

1984–1988 Did management jobs in training and⁵

1988 Got a job in Belgium as⁶

..... –.....⁷ Worked as Country Manager, Canada

.....⁸ Became Managing Director, Sweden

2000–2009 Was Regional Manager for⁹

.....¹⁰ Named CEO

