



THE MALTA CHAMBER

PRESS RELEASE

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Majority of CEOs Report High Workload and Stress, Study Reveals at Leadership Wellbeing Conference

A staggering 90% of CEOs report experiencing a high workload, while 77% acknowledge high stress levels in the workplace, according to a recent study conducted among employers and employees across multiple sectors. These findings were unveiled during the conference *'Who is Taking Care of the Boss?'*, organised by The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry in collaboration with Willingness Team.

Drawing on both clinical expertise and organisational insight, the conference highlighted the often-overlooked pressures facing those at the helm of businesses. It aimed to identify practical strategies for cultivating a healthier, more resilient leadership culture in Malta - starting with the wellbeing of top-level executives.

During his introductory speech, William Spiteri Bailey, The Malta Chamber President, emphasised that leadership can be a lonely journey, with few safe spaces to talk or seek help. "When employers are under strain, their decision-making suffers, innovation slows, and team productivity declines," he noted.

"Mental health is something we all need to look out for, and this includes the people in charge. When a leader takes care of their own mental well-being, they are usually more understanding and supportive of the people around them. The same qualities that push someone to become a successful leader or start their own business, like being driven, ambitious and always aiming higher, can also take a toll on their mental health. If that same mindset spreads through the team without clear limits, it can lead to a workplace where people feel overwhelmed, exhausted and burnt out," outlined Matthew Bartolo, Psychotherapist, Clinical Supervisor and Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee of The Malta Chamber, as he presented the results of the study.

Kindly click on this link to view the survey results: <https://maltachamber.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Keynote-Results-Chamber-Research.pdf>

During a panel discussion titled 'Strong Leadership starts with a Strong Mind', Dr Marthese Portelli, The Malta Chamber CEO, noted that strong leadership approach is grounded in open communication, mutual respect, and a clear understanding of responsibilities. "Embracing an open-door policy fosters trust and helps dispel the notion of the 'lonely boss', emphasising the importance of relationships across all levels. Effective leaders balance the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors with the needs of employees, acting as a bridge that supports both high performance and morale," she highlighted.

“True leadership involves understanding people, not just performance metrics. Support structures and empathy play a vital role, especially when navigating both formal contracts and the more complex psychological contracts that shape workplace relationships. The latter, built on trust and mutual understanding, is harder to define but crucial for long-term employee engagement. Misaligned expectations can cause friction, making open, honest communication essential,” said Paul Borg Bonaci, Managing Director at Elia Caterers.

Ramona Galea, Director at ARQ Advisory Ltd, shed light on the evolving role of HR shifting from a compliance-based focus to a strategic, human-centred force. “Today’s leaders must communicate with clarity, empower through trust, and embrace vulnerability as a mark of authenticity, not weakness. Creating a culture that respects professional maturity, and mutual accountability strengthens collaboration and opens opportunities for growth for all parties. Leadership is not just a position, it is a privilege that demands emotional intelligence, courage, and a deep commitment to people-first cultures, but this will only be possible if leaders take good care of themselves, first,” she stated.

“Business leaders are human not machines, facing their own wellbeing challenges. Chronic stress, sleepless nights, skipped meals, and loneliness can be part of a leader’s daily reality, but it does not have to be. Everyone needs to be responsible for their own wellbeing, be it as an employee or an employer. Employees benefit from numerous policies and protections, but who supports the person in charge? Safeguarding leaders’ wellbeing is crucial if they are to keep creating opportunities for others. A healthy body fosters a healthy mind, both essential for effective leadership,” emphasised Danica Cassar, Health Psychologist and Partner at Willingness Team.

“Recognised in the ICD-11 as an occupational phenomenon, burnout is no longer just a personal struggle- it’s a workplace responsibility. Managing burnout isn’t optional; it’s essential for sustaining employee and employer well-being and organisational performance,” highlighted Prof. Rose Marie Azzopardi.

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