

# Sharing Research on Work-Life, Mental Health and Addictions with Employers

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Research on Mental Health and  
Addiction in the Workplace**  
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# ABSTRACT



This presentation describes the creation of a series of business-style reports that review research literature findings on major aspects of work-life balance, mental health and addiction issues in the Canadian workplace.

Major points of the presentation include:

- 1) What prompted this program of work
- 2) Overview of the three business-style reports
- 3) Implications for others



## What Prompted This Program Of Sharing Research With The Business Community?

# Background: Who is Human Solutions?



- Founded in 1979 in Vancouver
- Provider of Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and Workplace Services
- Serve organizations both domestically and internationally
- Offices across Canada
- Key Practice areas:
  - EFAP
  - Organizational Health & Development
  - Integrated Disability Management

# The Problem



- Employers and employees have a general awareness of job stress, mental health, and addiction issues. What is needed, however, is a more accurate and focused understanding of these issues and practical suggestions for how to respond to these problems that employers can put into action in the workplace.

# Our Objectives



- As a provider of employee assistance and organizational health services, we wanted to support our clients by creating educational tools that distilled the key issues and findings from research and translated the information into useful reports for employers to read and share within their companies.

# Our Methodology



- Working with expert research consultants, we performed literature reviews and in one report also conducted a survey study. Each report examined the nature of the problem, prevalence, consequences and costs, treatment options and their effectiveness, employer action steps, and resource organizations and other reports.

# The Results



- Three reports were written in a business-friendly, non-academic, editorial style. Reports featured quotes, lists of key messages, and simple graphs and summary tables. The reports were distributed to thousands of employers and workers, featured in newsletters, and presented at several industry and business conferences.



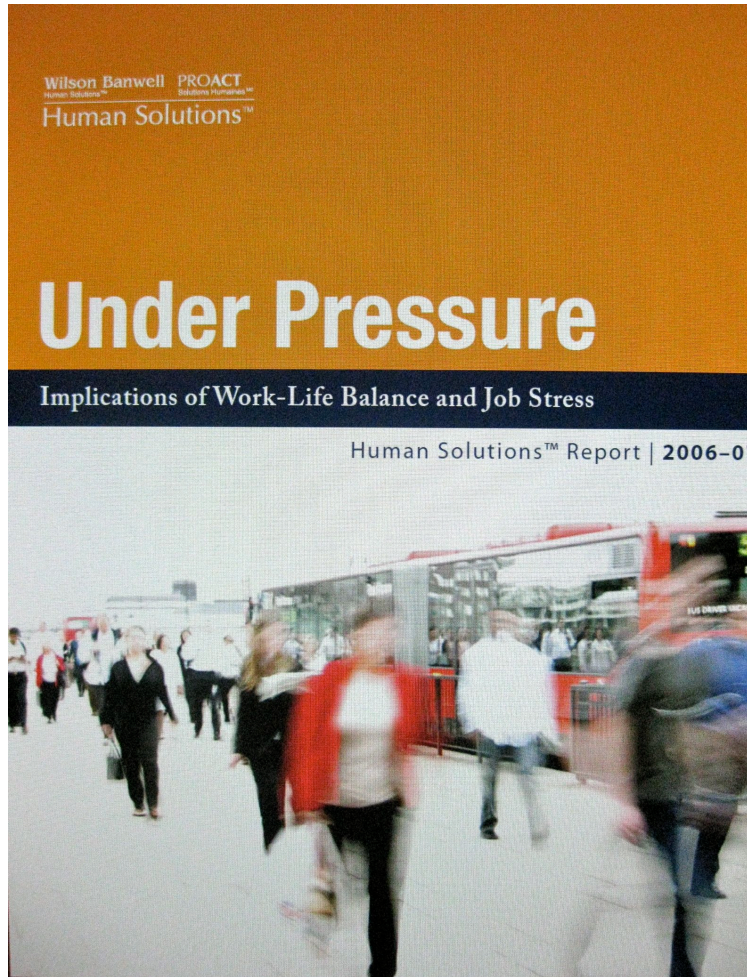
## The Reports

# A Series of Reports for Customers



- 2007 – **Under Pressure:** Implications of Work-Life Balance and Job Stress
- 2008 – **The Quiet Crisis:** The Business Case for Managing Employee Mental Health
- 2009 – **Hidden Hazards:** The Business Response to Addictions in the Workplace

# Report 1: *Under Pressure*



A 28-page report written for a business audience that digests key findings and action strategies from two new surveys and the research literature

## The Report has Five Sections:

1. **21<sup>st</sup> Century Work**
2. **Employers' Challenges**
3. **Work-Life Balance**
4. **Job Stress**
5. **The Future Workplace**

*Includes findings from two original survey studies of workers (n = 2002) and employers (n = 603) conducted for the report and review of key studies in the literature*

700 Full-Color Reports Printed

# Report 1: *Under Pressure* – Highlights



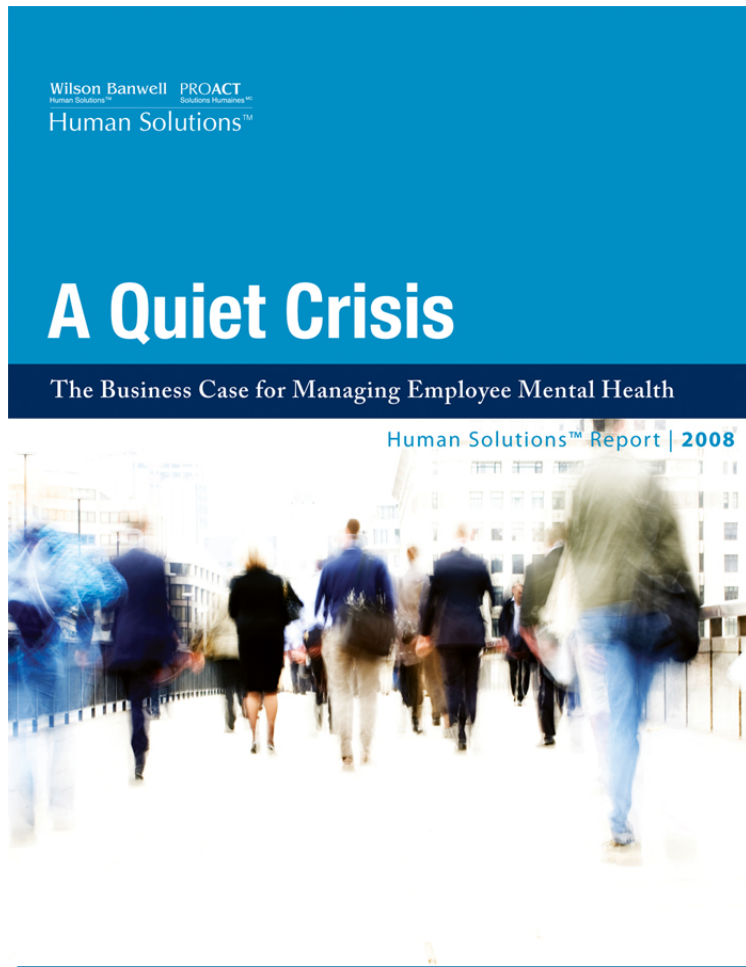
## Key Findings

- Top problems from Employer survey:
  - 36% work-load balance
  - 33% employee stress
  - 29% recruit/retain workers
- Top problems from Employee survey:
  - 38% of employees experience chronic high stress in their job
  - 30% of employees rate their job as most stressful part of life
- Workers who report they have a good balance between work and personal/family life experience less stress than workers who lack this balance

## Employer Action Steps

- Only about one in three employers are taking positive action in these areas
- Reducing workloads and improving the quality of supervision are management actions that have good potential to address the causes of job stress
- ‘Supportive Managers’ are those who are good communicators, focus on work quality rather than hours, show respect for employees, and support worker career development
- Companies can offer flexible work schedules and family care supports

# Report 2: *A Quiet Crisis*



A 34-page report written for a business audience that digests key findings and action strategies from the literature based on over 80 research studies.

## The Report has Four Sections:

- 1. Mental Health Conditions and Causes**
- 2. Inadequate Care and the Resulting Cost Burden**
- 3. Use and Effectiveness of Mental Health Treatment**
- 4. How Employers Can Create Mentally Healthy Workplaces**

*Also includes resources for employers and the weblinks to 12 other reports and 19 organizations*

1000 Full-Color Reports Printed & 500 Second Printing

# Report 2: *A Quiet Crisis* – Highlights



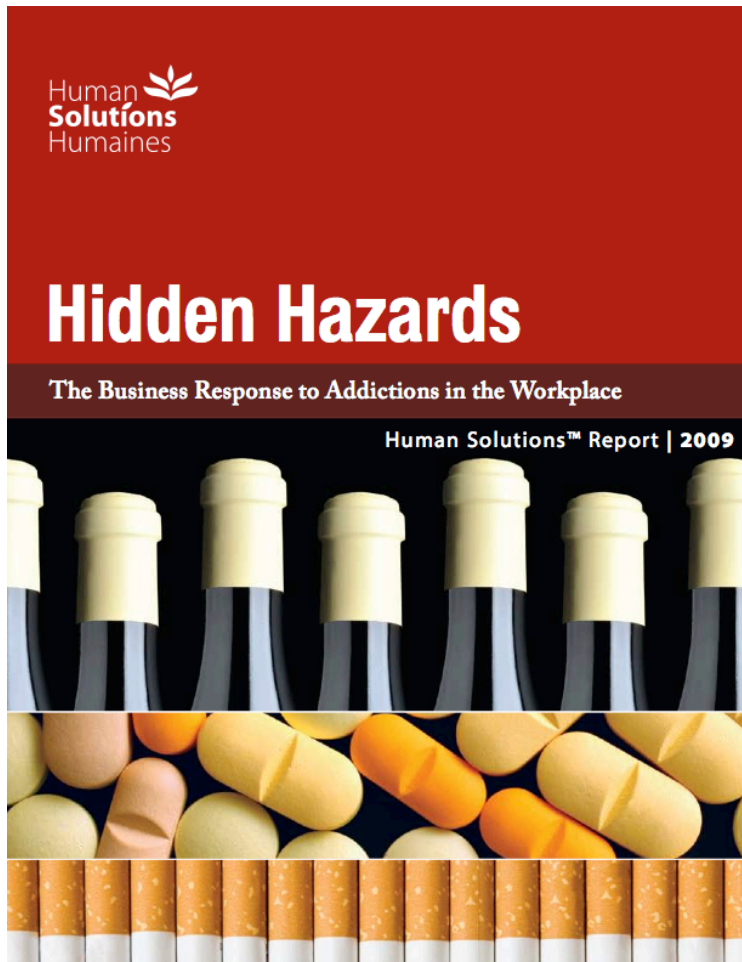
## Key Findings

- More than 1 in every 10 Canadians have a diagnosable mental disorder
- Many people with mental health disorders also have substance use disorders and have medical conditions
- Lost work productivity, absence and safety are where employers are most affected by untreated problems
- Mental health conditions rank first for causing disability claims in Canada
- Treatment is clinically effective, but identification and referral are needed

## Employer Action Steps

- Recognizing the severity of the problem is the first step
- Offering workplace prevention and support programs (EFAP) can help
- Organizational-level programs to create a healthy workplace are more effective than individual services
- Company leadership is key to changing work culture and reducing stigma for mental health issues
- Many organizations offer resources

# Report 3: *Hidden Hazards*



A 36-page report written for a business audience that digests key findings and action strategies from over 120 research studies.

## The Report has Four Sections:

1. The Nature of Addictions
2. The Impact of Addictions
3. The Treatment of Addictions
4. The Employer Response to Addiction

*Also includes resources for employers with weblinks to 11 reports and 18 organizations*

1200 Full-Color Reports Printed

# Report 3: *Hidden Hazards* – Highlights



## Key Findings

- Addictions are common in Canada:
  - 20% abuse alcohol
  - 19% smoke tobacco
  - 15% misuse prescription medications Rx
  - 14% ingest marijuana
  - 5% gamble
  - 2% use other illicit drugs
  - 5% have other kinds of addictions
- Most people with addictions have jobs
- Societal costs for addictions has quadrupled in the last decade (from about \$9 billion to \$40 billion)
- Early stage treatment is effective, but long-term addiction is a chronic disease

## Employer Action Steps

- Create a substance use policy
- Effective policy should encourage early detection and facilitate early intervention for addiction issues
- Employers can provide support for the employee to address the problem by offering insurance coverage and EFAP
- Offer return to work support for after treatment for the employee and staff
- Alcohol abuse is by far the most damaging addiction problem in Canada



## Implications of Our Work For Improving Knowledge Transfer of Research to the Business Community

# Implications



- Style of the report or presentation is important
- Need credible content and synthesis of findings
- Distribute using multiple formats and channels
- Employers are appreciative for this information

# Case Example



- Client of Human Solutions
- Printed 500 copies of the *Quiet Crisis* report and gave to all of their insurance broker staff members across Canada
- Featured the issue with staff and clients

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