

# Executive Briefing



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## Ill-Fitting Jobs Cause More Than Blisters

Like shoes that pinch, a job that doesn't fit creates a multitude of problems for both the employee and his employer.

This thinking isn't new. The "healthy mind/healthy body" theory has been conventional wisdom among sophisticated businesses, CEOs, and perceptive managers for years. If you like what you do and you're good at it, you will be at ease in your mind, and stress, which can cause disease, will be at a manageable level.

What's new is that recent research by university management professors gives weight to this theory.

Using workers from the same business, the researchers studied their jobs, took samples of their saliva to measure the levels of a disease-fighting antibody, and

interviewed the workers about their recent illnesses. The research goal was to discover how their jobs affected their stress levels.

They discovered that the healthiest workers have a high level of self-confidence and lots of responsibility and autonomy. They didn't blame themselves when things went wrong. They were suited to their jobs, and their illnesses were minimal.

The least healthy workers were not matched well to their work. With low self-confidence and a big tendency to blame themselves for every misstep, these people often did jobs with too much responsibility for their ability levels. This produced too much stress, and over a three-month period, this group averaged two or more cold or flu attacks lasting more than a week.

This research vividly illustrates how important job fit is to the employee and employer. A salesperson that doesn't like talking to people not only won't make consistent sales, she might have high absenteeism rates because of illness. Conversely, an efficient executive with a high level of autonomy and lots of freedom to confront issues on her own terms will likely be on the job day after day, with little or no illness.

Assessment tools that measure job fit compare to giving your employees the right shoes for the job. Maybe in return, they'll run a marathon for the company.

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