Stress Management in the Aviation Industry

Claire Wade

Submitted in part-completion of a Bachelor of Arts in European Business and Languages (K4)

Written under the supervision of Anne-Marie Doherty

National College of Ireland
Sandford Road
Ranelagh
Dublin 6
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## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.6</td>
<td>Redundancies in British travel industry since September 11th 2000.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Response-based model of stress</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Selye's GAS model</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Stimulus-based model of stress</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>Interactive model of stress</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.5</td>
<td>Type A and B personality traits</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>Employee Assistance Usage comparison</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>Stress Management in Aer Rianta</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I, Claire Wade, hereby declare that all work contained in this research dissertation is my own, and has not been copied from any other source or person, unless directly cited and referenced accordingly.

Signed: Claire Wade  Date: April 9, 2002
Abstract

The events of September 11th 2001 brought to a head a number of problems that had been menacing the airline industry for a number of years. The hijacked planes that destroyed New York's World Trade Centre and damaged the Pentagon in Washington precipitated a rapid economic downturn in the aviation industry.

The jobs of airline employees can, at the best of times, be highly stressful due to the nature of the industry. However, the question remained as to how the aviation companies were going to respond to this lapse in the sector. Many redundancies were anticipated and these took place hastily across the industry world-wide.

Stress management is a huge part of any organisation but many do not apply adequate time or resources to it, even though it is such a huge issue in today's working environment. For example, a company of 1,000 employees can expect between 200 and 300 people to suffer from depression and anxiety per year and for 1 suicide to occur per decade. Stress management methods will be explored during the course of the research and their effectiveness in today's work environment will be assessed.

This research investigates the various stress management interventions used by aviation companies at times like these. It examines stress itself, its causes, consequences and the psychological factors contributing to it. The research aims to examine the approach of companies in the aviation industry to stress management.

With respect to this dissertation, research will be conducted with the help of aviation industry companies and their employees.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables and Figures</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1 The aviation industry

1.1 Competition in the industry 3

1.2 The effects of September 11th on the industry 3

1.3 The effects of September 11th on companies 4

1.4 Stress among employees of the industry 6

## CHAPTER 2 Stress and stress management

2.1 Definitions of stress 8

2.2 Models of stress 9

2.2.1 Response-based models 11

2.2.2 Stimulus-based models 13

2.2.3 Interactive models 14

2.3 Causes and Consequences of stress 15

2.3.1 Causes of Stress 15

2.3.2 Consequences of Stress 16

2.4 Stress management interventions 17

2.4.1 Primary level interventions 18

2.4.2 Secondary level interventions 19

2.4.3 Tertiary level interventions 21

2.5 Individual effects of stress 23

2.6 Employer’s responsibilities 26

2.7 Job insecurity 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3</th>
<th>Statement of hypothesis</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Stress in the Irish aviation industry</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Theory development</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 4</th>
<th>Research methodology</th>
<th>32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Method of Research-Case Study</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Method of Research-Interview</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Research Procedure</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 5</th>
<th>Research findings</th>
<th>35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Company overview</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Human resources policies</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Stress management in Aer Rianta</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Recent issues in the company</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Other aviation companies</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 6</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Workforce size and distribution</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Human resources policies</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Stress management in Aer Rianta</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Recent issues in the company</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Stress in aviation industry employees</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 7</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
<th>46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The aviation industry has always been recognised as being a stressful one. Jobs in this industry incorporate a hugely diverse range of skills and knowledge, from the most basic to the most complex. Recent events have impacted adversely upon this industry, and caused huge losses of employment and revenue in Ireland and throughout the world. However, inconsiderable amounts of thought and research have gone into the effects of these events upon the employees of the industry and the interventions taken by companies to overcome these effects.

Minimal research has been performed concerning the affect of stress on employees of the Irish aviation industry. The objective of this research is to evaluate the relationship between stress and the procedures implemented by aviation companies to minimise its effect on their employees. Analysis will be carried out on past research into occupational stress. Methods of stress management intervention and their effectiveness will be incorporated into this. It will also clarify any changes in attitude towards the issue of stress management. The opinions of employees with respect to the organisational interventions will also be researched and analysed.

In order to complete this research on stress management in the aviation industry, research was conducted in two main ways. A literature review was undertaken, outlined in chapters 1 and 2, in which the existing literature pertaining to research previously completed in the field of stress management was examined.

Primary research was then carried out. A case study was produced on Aer Rianta, a very prominent company in the Irish aviation industry. To reinforce this, a formal interview was carried out with an employee of the company, who currently works in an area of human resources and has sound knowledge of stress management interventions within the company. Informal telephone interviews were then conducted with employees of two other Irish companies within the aviation industry, namely Aer Lingus and the Irish Aviation Authority. The results of the primary research are outlined in chapter 5.
The information published in this research will be of interest to the following potential audiences.

It may be used by Human Resources departments in varying organisations, to inform managers about their options and to give them a more detailed insight into this key issue. It will also be of interest to the National College of Ireland, in informing future students and lecturers on the topic being examined, or to improve their day-to-day knowledge. Potential BA students of Business or Human Resource Management could use this research as a guide. The research will be used by employees, particularly those in the aviation industry, to enrich their understanding of this topic, and to enhance their ability to function in this kind of situation. Clinics, doctors and hospitals that frequently deal with job-related stress will use this information for a contemporary and candid view on the topic. Organisations like the Dublin County Stress Clinic, Stress and Depression Relief Club et al will use this information in their routine dealings with clients and to better advise them of occupational stress management.

Chapter 1 contains an overview of the aviation industry. It details the effects of September 11th on various companies within the industry, and the steps companies took to recoup lost revenue. It also deals with stress of aviation employees.

Chapter 2 discusses stress. Incorporated into this are techniques of stress management intervention, theories obtained from past research, the causes and consequences of stress on individuals.

Chapter 3 contains a statement of the hypothesis that this research will investigate. It contains the theory on which this dissertation is based.

Chapter 4 details the methodology used for primary research, the samples used, and how these two aspects were decided upon.

Chapter 5 contains the findings of the primary research, classified into relevant subheadings.

Chapter 6 contains recommendations based on the findings documented in chapter 5.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation.
Chapter 1 - The aviation industry

The aviation industry represents a hugely diverse range of different occupations from the highly skilled to general administration. However, it is also a highly stressful and demanding industry in which to work. The industry is one of rapid change and high levels of competition. Economic crises can adversely affect the industry, and fast technological change increases the pressure on aviation companies.

The following chapter will give an introduction into the aviation industry, some of its characteristics and the effects of September 11th on the industry as a whole, and on individual companies.

1.1 Competition in the industry

The aviation industry is a highly competitive one. Price wars are a common occurrence between different airlines and there is an onus to prove worthiness in other areas, such as customer service, benefits for dealing with a particular airline and widening the choice of routes on offer.

For example, Ryanair was the very first low-price, no-frills airline in Europe, founded in 1985 and basing itself on the same principles as Southwest Airlines, a hugely successful company based in Texas. Ryanair uses secondary airports, with less traffic and is known as being a "ticketless" airline - customers check in for flights using a reference number issued to them on purchase of a seat.

The industry watched Ryanair's success with interest and noted this attractive new niche in the air travel market that had emerged. Between 1995 and 1998, EasyJet, Virgin Express, Debonair, KLMuk, Go and Air One were all established as low-cost carriers. This alone illustrates the high degree of competition within the industry.

1.2 The effects of September 11th on the industry

In times of economic strain, the aviation industry can be severely affected. This has recently been observed since the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001. The aftermath of these events was brisk and detrimental to airlines globally. For an industry that had already slackened somewhat in the months preceding September 11th, the sudden drop in
revenue was, for many airlines, the last straw. The E.U. transport commissioner, Loyola de Palacio, stated that alliances and mergers are inevitable – where there was a need before, now the need is far greater. Profit warnings and fuel price increases provoked talk of recession long before the attacks ever took place.

The fall-off in U.S. trade has severely affected European carriers, with airlines like British Airways, Swissair, Lufthansa and Aer Lingus feeling the brunt of the decrease in transatlantic travel. New security implications in airports will force an increase in expenditure and schedules may have to be reconsidered to accommodate lengthy security procedures.

Some economic forecasts predict optimistically that it could take the American tourism industry eighteen months to recover from this huge setback but it is worth bearing in mind that, after the Gulf War, American tourist levels took four years to return to normal.

1.3 The effects of September 11th on companies in the industry

Data from the IATA (International Air Transport Association) indicates that the aviation industry would have potentially made a loss of $2.8 billion this year, before the terrorist attacks. However, this estimate is now soaring and global mass redundancies are the result. International scheduled airlines may have lost as much as Stg£5 billion. Including domestic airlines’ losses, this figure could be as much as Stg£10 billion. A general feeling of uncertainty and fear has caused many air travellers to seek alternative modes of transport where possible.

In the days and weeks following September 11th, news of mass redundancies came frequently and a total of 200,000 redundancies across the industry are believed to have been made. IATA reported a 17% drop in international flights in September alone and U.S. traffic on international routes dropped by 34%. Transatlantic flights, to and from Irish airports, were down 24%. With a combination of the Foot and Mouth crisis and terrorism, Bord Fáilte estimated that tourist figures in Ireland for 2001 would curtail by up to 600,000, with a total revenue loss of an estimated £230 million.

Predictions indicate that U.K. airlines lost up to 25% on their long-haul market (U.S., Canada, Australia, Singapore, India) in the last quarter of 2001. Following the attacks, Aer Lingus lost 80% of its transatlantic business and lost up to £2 million daily. The rescue plan of Aer Lingus involves a shedding of 33% of its workforce. The total of redundancies within the company is expected to reach an estimated 2,500 and expected losses for 2001 were £70 million. This figure is expected to rise to £100 million this year.
Across the industry, a freeze has been put on recruitment, advertising expenditure has been cut dramatically and all unnecessary expenditure has been halted. Redundancies in the industry have affected all levels, from sales and administrative staff to senior management.

Figure 1.6

Redundancies in British travel industry since September 11th 2001

Figure 1.6 shows the approximate redundancies for U.K. travel companies.

The two U.S. airlines whose planes were involved in the September 11th terrorist attacks, United Airlines and American Airlines, have cut their capacity by 20% and cut 20,000 jobs. Continental Airlines estimated their losses to be in the region of Stg£30 million since the attacks, and have cut transatlantic routes by 20% as a part of their overall cuts.

Delta Airlines have reduced their capacity by 15% and shed 13,000 jobs. Their Irish route was put on hold until March 15th this year.

Air Canada has had a total of 5,000 job cuts since the beginning of 2001 and their flight schedules were cut by 20%. They dropped 84 aircraft from their fleet, implying serious problems for aero-engine makers.

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and BMI British Midlands have cut over 8,500 jobs between them and cut all routes. British Airways alone have made 5,000 redundancies and expected to make 2,000 more before March this year. BMI British Midlands has asked pilots to work part-time, a cut of 50%, to save a further 109 redundancies.

KLM, a Dutch airline, has made 2,500 redundancies and SAS, a Scandinavian airline, made 1,100 redundancies and received the resignations of the entire board.

Rolls-Royce, an aero-engine maker, expects to make redundancies of 6,000 employees.

GE, the world’s biggest aero-engine maker, is making redundancies of 4,000.
Boeing made 12,000 redundancies in the first part of its rescue plan and they expected to have two more rounds of lay-offs.

In the United Kingdom alone, 75,000 jobs are in jeopardy as a result of a combination of terrorism and the Foot and Mouth crisis.

These figures summarise the scale of redundancies made globally throughout the aviation industry. Panic was prevalent among executives and employees alike. While at the time of writing this paper redundancies had levelled off somewhat, aviation companies and international tourism levels are struggling to regain normality.

1.4 Stress among employees of the industry

Past surveys conducted on aviation employees in the United States have shown that long work hours were a major cause of stress. Research has also shown that multinational companies in the industry have not become fully aware of the cultural differences in the countries in which they operate, thus unwittingly ignoring the needs of some employees.

In 1998, a leading authority on the effects of airline disasters on aviation employees, Carolyn Coarsey-Rader, noted that chronic and critical incident stress were dominant causes of depression, workplace hostility, abuse and harassment.

Pilots, for example, experience high levels of stress in their work. The very nature of the job involves extensive delays, long schedules and corporate upheaval. In a recent survey, the main causes of stress among a sample of 115 pilots were management style within the company, insufficient breaks and trade union negotiations. Another cause of stress for pilots is long working hours. While a high level of alertness and awareness is essential, they find it difficult to maintain this after a long period in a cramped cockpit.

Among air traffic controllers, stress is the biggest occupational hazard. The job entails a high degree of responsibility and pressure, in a confined area, with very irregular work and rest patterns. In a report for the United States Senate in the 1970s, occupational stressors for air traffic controllers included overtime, inadequate breaks, increased air traffic, poor physical work environment and resentment between management and staff. Other research has shown that air traffic controllers are more susceptible to stress-related illness, such as hypertension, and that solutions may include job redesign, better communication systems, social support
and better work organisation. Stress in air traffic controllers is highly dangerous and can result in what is known as "acute episodic incident" or a near mid-air collision.

Air crew, such as stewards and stewardesses, fear security breaches and cite this as a major cause of stress. There is also an onus to start each flight in an excellent mental and physical state, to meet the needs of passengers, and complete safety procedures correctly.

For all aviation staff, safety and security procedures are an integral part of any job. Maintaining the awareness to implement these correctly is imperative, but many feel unable to do this after a certain time. Aviation companies must realise that the reputation of the company is contingent on the efficiency and knowledge of their employees. It is thus in their interests to operate a fair break pattern during shifts. Research has consistently shown that shift work patterns cause high levels of stress in workers. While it is unavoidable to implement shift work, there are methods of eliminating its drawbacks.
Chapter 2 - Stress & stress management

This chapter summarises the literature review on the topic of stress management in the Irish aviation industry.

This topic is strongly related to Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour. The literature review summarises the material found on definitions of stress, job insecurity and stress management interventions.

In Ireland, stress is a taboo subject and 33% of Irish people admit to suppressing feelings arising as a result of stress.\(^1\) However, the Irish workplace has generally fewer stressors than its European counterparts.

2.1 Definitions of stress

There are many definitions of stress, which can be subjective or objective, based globally or multi-dimensionally. Different authors and theorists have developed their own definitions, based on their own research. It should first be pointed out that “stress” as a word usually has negative connotations and conveys negative effects (for example, headaches, insomnia). However, stress can have both positive and negative consequences. According to Selye (1956), it can motivate growth, development and adaptation and provides a challenge. It is necessary to make a distinction between stressors causing distress (a negative response) and those causing eustress (a positive response).

Stress is, according to Cox (1978)\(^2\), "a stimulus, a response or the result of an interaction between the two...". He further states that the relationship between the stimulus and response may be summarised as being an imbalance between the person and the environment. Lazarus subsequently states that stress exists when a person feels they cannot provide the resources to meet an environmental demand.

\(^1\) Slattery, L., (2001), “Stress needs to be dealt with, not brushed under carpet”, Irish Times, October 19\(^{th}\) 2001
Palmer (1989)\(^3\) defines stress as "the psychological, physiological and behavioural response by an individual" when they distinguish an imbalance between the demands upon them and their own ability to fulfil these demands. This feeling in time leads to ill health. A very simple way in which to define stress is, "Stress occurs when pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope." (Palmer 1999)

Beehr and Newman (1978) assert that occupational stress is the result of a change in the workers psychological or physiological condition to allow the worker to adjust to the demands placed. The mind or body is thus forced to digress from normal functioning. Luthans (1992) subsequently maintains that an external situation causes psychological, physiological or behavioural alterations in order to respond to this situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that

"Stress results from an imbalance between demands and resources."

Much stress research was based purely around the sources of stress, "stressors", but it soon became apparent that this stimulus-based research was not complex enough. Since the research into stress had improved considerably and yielded much information, three models of stress emerged: response-based, stimulus-based and interactive.

### 2.2 Models of stress

The word 'stress' is derived from the Latin word \(^4\) "stringere", meaning 'to draw tight' (Cox 1978). There are many definitions of stress, which, according to the author, can be subjective or objective, based globally or multi-dimensionally. Over the course of the last three centuries, the word stress has been used to describe different things in several different areas. Until the eighteenth century, stress was used to imply hardship or affliction. Physicists and engineers later described stress as the force placed upon an object and the resulting changes in volume, shape and size, known as 'strains'.

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\(^3\) [http://www.managingstress.com/definition.htm](http://www.managingstress.com/definition.htm)

However as Cox (1985) says,\(^5\)

"...stress has to be perceived and recognised by man. A machine, however, does not have to recognise the load or stress placed upon it."

In the nineteenth century, people became more consumed with the need for a "free and independent life" and moved towards an equilibrium known as 'homeostasis'. This word comes from the Greek 'homios' meaning 'similar' and 'stasis' meaning 'state'. Stress was seen as threatening that equilibrium.

Stress can be caused by many factors, which are outlined later in this chapter (2:3.1). Symptoms of stress can manifest themselves emotionally, physiologically or behaviourally and are summarised in section 2:3.2 of this chapter.

However, stress can affect different people in very different ways\(^6\). It often depends on the relationship that exists between the individual themselves and the work environment.

Differences in personality type can affect the ways in which people are affected by stress. Research has shown that stress affects Type A Personality in a more intense way\(^7\). These tend to be more impatient, competitive and aggressive, as well as trying to do everything rapidly. One survey showed that 60% of managers sampled were Type A Personality and only 12% were clearly Type B Personality (less competitive, casual toward appointments, never rushed, even under pressure). (See 2:5)

Models of stress were established as a result of people's struggle to understand stress as a stimulus or a response and can be classified as environmental, medical or personal. Cox identified three models of stress:

- **Response based models** which work on the theory that stress is a dependent variable and is a response to a 'stressor' such as overwork.
- **Stimulus based models** which state that stress is an environmental variable, such as excess noise or cold.
- **Interactive models** of stress which incorporate factors from both response and stimulus based models, plus outside factors such as personality.

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\(^5\) Sutherland, V.J., Cooper, C.L., (1990), *Understanding Stress: A Psychological Perspective for Health Professionals*, Chapman and Hall


2.2.1 Response-based models

A response-based model of stress asserts that stress is the resulting reaction from the presence of stressors (see figure 2.1). Response-based stress research began in medicine, examining mainly the physiological manifestation of stress and how it should be treated. Early physicians established that emotional stress was a factor in physiological dysfunction. As early as the seventeenth century, John Locke (Sutherland & Cooper 2000, page 46) identified the correlation between sensory experiences and intellectual, emotional, muscular and physiological functioning. From his discoveries, physicians and analysts were able to determine the links between everyday life and physiological imbalances for the first time. Osler, at the beginning of the twentieth century, detected a link between angina and a hectic lifestyle in Jewish professionals. The notion of homeostasis was developed by Walter Cannon in the 1930s, a notion of balance, whereby the external functions of the body have an effect on the internal functions. He claimed that this balance functions well, but can be disrupted under heavy demands.

Figure 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>THE PERSON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRESSOR AGENT</td>
<td>STRESS RESPONSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIMULUS</td>
<td>RESPONSE</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLOGICAL</td>
<td>PHYSIOLOGICAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEHAVIOURAL</td>
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</tr>
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Source: Sutherland & Cooper (2000)

Research conducted by Wolf and Wolf in 1943 on a patient showed a definite association between physiological dysfunction and stress. For example, feelings of frustration and anger resulted in stomach secretions and changes in blood flow. Hostility resulted in high stomach acidity. This research showed us the direct relationship between psychological unease and gastric trauma.

In 1936, Hans Selye began his work, which revolutionised response-based stress research. He developed his “General Adaptation Syndrome” or GAS, a study on stress-related illness.
Selye submitted that,

"Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it."

He therefore believed that the body's reaction did not vary according to the nature of the stressor. The pattern that he believed this reaction to take is summarised in the GAS diagram (see Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>ALARM</th>
<th>RESISTANCE</th>
<th>COLLAPSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SHOCK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>COUNTERSHELLK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alarm reaction in phase 1 is the initial reaction to the stressor and is shown physiologically and psychologically. Resistance to the stressor is low at this time. After this initial reaction, the countershock phase (phase 2) is entered and resistance levels can be seen to increase. This leads to the “fight or flight response”. In this, the body releases adrenaline to allow itself to act against the stressor. This action may take the form of attacking (“fight”) or fleeing (“flight”) the stressor. Some physiological changes that have been identified as belonging to this alarm phase are rapid and deeper breathing, increased heart rate, increased sweating, decreased salivary flow, the slowing down or stopping of digestive juices, giving the feeling of a “knotted” stomach, acute hearing and dilated pupils to aid vision.

Phase 3 of the GAS indicates resistance to the sustained stressor. Adaptation or a return to equilibrium replaces the alarm reaction witnessed in phase 1. Resistance cannot, however, continue indefinitely. While there may be sufficient energy, continued resistance leads to physiological and psychological wear and tear.

The GAS model has, however, been challenged. Researchers believe that the exact same process cannot be followed every time a stress response occurs and maintain that the body has different reactions for different types of stressors, depending on the circumstances. In addition, psychological responses to stressors are not dealt with in this model.
2.2.2 Stimulus-based models

The stimulus-based approach can be traced back to the time of Hippocrates in the fifth century BC. Hippocratic physicians followed the theory that health and disease are directly related to the external environment. The stimulus theory is based in physics and engineering and implied that stress is an external force causing distortion or damage. The phrase "the straw that broke the camels back" can be associated with stimulus research. A person may be barraged with stimuli and coping. However, one small event or additional stimulus can cause the breakdown in coping.

Figure 2.3

Much of the research into blue-collar stress has used a stimulus-based model, such as that featured in figure 2.3. This research focused largely on the conditions of the work environment, such as heating, lighting and density. It also integrated individual traits that could cause completely different reactions to the same stressors. These traits included past training, past experiences, personality, wants and expectations. The model does not, however, explain this difference in reactions between different individuals. The model is useful for organisations as it allows them to pinpoint common stressors that may affect a large proportion of the workforce.
2.2.3 Interactive model

The interactive model of stress consolidates both the response and stimulus based models of stress. This model (figure 2.4) incorporates five principal characteristics.

1. **Cognitive Appraisal.** This principle incorporates the theory that stress is an illusory experience based upon the perception of an event.

2. **Experience.** Perception of a particular event is dependent upon the individual’s familiarity with the incident, his/her training and experience and his/her previous reaction to a similar event.

3. **Demand.** The demands perceived by the individual and their ability to handle them influence their action to a stressor. Their needs and desires are also influential factors.

4. **Interpersonal influence.** The presence or absence of other colleagues can influence the perception of stress. This has an impact on the coping mechanisms used and can be positive or negative.

5. **A state of stress.** This involves a lack of balance between demand and the perceived ability to cope with it. This model emphasises the need for feedback at all levels. Response to a stressor may have short-term effects (for example, excessive smoking or drinking) or long-term effects, such as heart disease or ulcers. Generally the perceived advantages of coping with stressors are more favourable that the perceived consequences of ignoring them.

The interactive model of stress recognises that most situations are potentially, not intrinsically, stressful and account must be taken of the source of stress, the moderator of the response to this source and how the stress manifests itself.

*Figure 2.4*
2.3 Causes and Consequences of Stress

While all jobs are potentially stressful, organisations can try to decrease the amount of stressors present. These "stressors" or stress-causing elements of an environment or job can cause numerous consequences, all which will be outlined in this section.

2.3.1 Causes of Stress

Stress in the workplace may be caused by factors intrinsic to the job or by factors present in the work environment. Organisations should generally try to minimise these stressors, not only for the well-being of the employee, but also for the well-being of the organisation. Every year, organisations lose millions of working hours due to stress-related illnesses.

Some organisational causes of stress are:
- Role conflict and ambiguity
- Overload and underload stress
- Pay inequity
- Lack of social support
- Lack of participation on decision-making
- Bad performance appraisals
- Bad working conditions (too hot/cold, crowded, noisy, bad lighting, lack of privacy)
- Organisational change
- Lack of advancement/promotion opportunities
- Rotating shifts
- High degree of specialisation
2.3.2 Consequences of stress

The consequences of stress can be classified in four categories: physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioural.

Physical manifestations of stress may include high blood pressure, tightening of neck, jaw and back muscles, headache, twitching, stuttering, nausea, headaches/migraines, insomnia, fatigue, susceptibility to illness, increased heart rate, sweaty palms.

Emotional signs and symptoms of stress may be irritability, outbursts of anger, depression, withdrawal, jealousy, tendency to cry, nightmares, impatience, low self-esteem, overeating, undereating, criticism toward others, expression of anxiety, frustration or hopelessness, lack of interest.

Cognitive manifestations of stress may include forgetfulness, low creativity, loss of concentration, decreased productivity, loss of control, need for too much control, negative self-image, blurred vision, reaction speeds and co-ordination loss.

Behavioural signs of stress may include increased smoking, increased drinking, aggressive behaviour (e.g. driving), hostility, nervous laughter, compulsive behaviour, loss of sense of humour, feeling unable to cope, lethargy, excessive exercising, absenteeism or tardiness.
2.4 Stress management interventions

While stress is becoming an increasingly significant issue in the workplace, employers seem to regard stress management interventions as being of less importance than other areas of the organisation. Organisations must remember that people are their most important resource. Often responsibility falls onto the employee to confront the issue of stress themselves as managers often feel that they are not responsible or that the issue of stress is such that it does not merit the implementation of a stress management programme. This can often be to avoid the legal repercussions of failure to admit to a stressful work environment. Many companies rely upon trade union stress management interventions to cope with stressors in the workplace. This attitude causes lost workdays, absenteeism, poor performance and, often, illness.

Elton Mayo upheld the importance of fulfilling the social needs of employees, on the basis of his interpretation of the Hawthorne Studies. Organisations can help employees recognise stress and its symptoms and can teach staff how they can cope with high levels of stress. While some organisations do invest substantial amounts of money into stress management, they do so without a full understanding of the organisational stressors and the approaches to dealing with these stressors. Employers may feel that intervention is enough and will not make changes to the job design or the work environment. Organisations must also bear in mind that often the implementation of stress management interventions can cause stress, by introducing situations that the employee may not have previously considered.

Employers can implement stress management in three ways.

♦ Primary Intervention
♦ Secondary Intervention
♦ Tertiary Intervention

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9 Sutherland, V.J., Cooper, C.L., (1990), Understanding Stress: A Psychological Perspective for Health Professionals, Chapman & Hall
2.4.1 Primary level intervention

Primary intervention is preventative, to reduce the number of stressors. It aims to change the work environment, technology or structures and to prevent the occurrence of stress. It can also be more commonly known as "organisational-level" intervention.

Removing stressors is the most effective approach, such as job redesign and organisational restructuring. An example is stressor reduction strategies. 10

This type of intervention is the most proactive form of intervention. It must be implemented systematically for it to be effective and stressors must be thoroughly assessed. The aim is to change the environment to meet the employee's needs.

A complete change in the organisation's macro-environment may be necessary to lower stress levels. An organisation may create a more "open" culture and encourage communication between managers and subordinates. Management styles may be amended to correspond with the organisational goals and to improve staff performances. More emphasis may be placed upon supporting fellow employees and teamwork may be increased.

Long hours of work and unusual shift patterns can lead to high stress levels among staff. Kohnhauser (1965) cited, as major causes of stress, disagreeable working conditions, inconvenient or extreme working hours and pressure to get the job done in a short space of time. Maslow (1970) stated that an employee's physical and psychological safety is a basic human need and so training, improved facilities and better motivational management can fulfil these needs.

Ensuring the workplace is free of bullying is fundamental to decreasing stress. Cooper and Sutherland (2000) renamed bullies as "stress carriers". Bullying often becomes more prevalent at a time of uncertainty within the organisation or when workload and job demands are elevated.

To ensure a reduction in organisational stress levels, it is also necessary to review the microenvironment of the organisation. Amendments to work arrangements, such as job sharing, telecommuting and flexitime options, often reduce stress. Improving the skills of employees or enlarging the job horizontally can increase feelings of significance and indispensability. Many organisations do not properly implement a stress awareness and training programme to help employees deal with feelings of vulnerability and misunderstanding. Working to reduce ambiguity in employees' roles can decrease conflict, and therefore stress.

10 Cooper, C.L., Payne, R., (1995), Causes, Coping and Consequences of Stress at Work, John Wiley & Sons,
Wall and Clegg (1981) developed an idea based on the concept of increasing employee control in cases where stress was displayed. By increasing group feedback and a greater task identity, teams of employees delegated authority over break times, over-time and allotting tasks. Supervisors took on a support role and emotional stress was seen to decrease. Increasing employees' participation in decision-making processes also provides the same results.

### 2.4.2 Secondary level intervention

Secondary intervention is preventative and reactive. It aims to change employee's responses to stressors at an individual level, rather than changing the organisational environment or work conditions, and aims to enhance employees' coping skills. This is the most widespread form of intervention used by organisations.

The theory is based on the belief that it may be impossible to remove or reduce the presence of stressors but it is possible to modify the employee's reaction to them. Therefore, secondary intervention aims to build up alertness to stressors and to introduce strategies to deal with these.

Newman and Beehr (1979) identified four main categories of secondary level stress management intervention:

1. Amending the psychological condition
2. Amending the physiological condition
3. Amending behaviour
4. Amending the work environment.

Examples are stress management training, information sharing, conflict resolution, relaxation training.

Stress management training is beneficial for some stressors but its consistent effectiveness has not been confirmed. It is easy, rapid and undisruptive to implement, but often, in line with this, job redesign may be required. However, it can help the employee to deal with a stressor that cannot be eliminated or modified. Employees may be trained to use their skills (assertiveness, interpersonal skills, time management, Type A behaviour management) to use a reactive approach in handling stress. Employees may be trained to broaden their
communication skills by developing knowledge in listening, assertiveness and team problem solving. The aim is to prevent aggressiveness but encourage assertiveness, and thereby ensure smoother communication.

Mackenzie (1972) stated that the goal of time management training is to "Work smarter, not harder". Employees are encouraged to consider the future and set realistic goals. The importance of equilibrium between work and leisure time is emphasised.

When discussing the issue of stress, it is necessary to include the factor of Type A personality (see 2.5). Past research into stress has isolated this as a major contributor in the effects of stress on individuals. Methods of managing stress for type A personalities are setting realistic goals, controlling the obsession with time, taking regular breaks and holidays and relaxation techniques.

By increasing knowledge on stress, its origins and its consequences, the employees' ability to cope may be enhanced. A well-planned and properly implemented stress education programme may provide physiological changes in a short time frame.

It may be necessary to educate employees on healthy lifestyle options, or provide wellness or fitness programmes. These may include smoking cessation schemes, dietary advice, anger management or exercise programmes. These have been proven to provide a decrease in absenteeism levels, lower staff turnover, an increase in morale and higher productivity.

AT&T implemented a Total Life Concept (TLC) programme in 1983. The first programme dealt with goal setting and stress coping skills and was attended by 2400 employees. After one year, significant results were recorded. Participants lowered cholesterol by an average of 10% and over 80% of the employees who joined the smoking cessation programme succeeded. Over 50% of these employees had still not resumed smoking after one year. Currently, eighty thousand AT&T employees take part in the TLC programme. Expenditure per employee for this is $50 and the company contributes $4 million each year. The TLC programme slogan is,

"A healthy workplace makes good business sense".

With such results, the motto sums up the attitudes of management perfectly. The company is acknowledging the problems that threaten employees in the workplace and may slow efficiency.

Secondary intervention does not address the sources of strain in an organisation, more the outcome. It is a kind of "damage limitation" (Cooper et al 2001) tool in that sense.
2.4.3 Tertiary level intervention

Tertiary intervention aims to minimise the effects of stressors and alleviate the symptoms of exposure to stress by teaching the individual coping skills. The aim is to treat the problem once it has occurred.

Tertiary intervention methods can sometimes be used in addition to primary or secondary interventions, to help those employees who feel they require additional assistance. Examples are employee assistance programmes, social support and counselling.

Employee assistance programmes are a form of counselling that help employees when a stressor exists that cannot be changed. They were developed in the United States during the 1970s. They help employees deal with the "home/work interface" and also address issues that can affect the employees' coping skills at work.

The human resource department can either complete these or hire external consultants. This can resolve the privacy and confidentiality issues of the employee. It can be recommended by the manager of the employee when problems manifest or by the employee himself in the case of work-related problems, relationship problems, financial concerns, threats of redundancy or those who suffer from alcoholism or a drug addiction.

Employee assistance programmes have been proven effective in improving the psychological well-being of employees and have been beneficial to organisations in their entirety. They have demonstrated improvements in employee retention rates, higher morale and have lessened the pressure upon managers and supervisors that came from problem employees. However, past research (Cooper & Sadri 1991) has shown that while great improvements were seen in the post-counselling mental health of employees, job satisfaction and organisational commitment did not show any significant changes. Some counsellors have also expressed concerns that employee assistance programmes merely counsel the symptoms of the problem and do not provide relief from the cause.

Counselling services can be used to treat employees with work-related or personal problems. The British Association of Counselling defines these services as being,

"The task of giving a client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and toward a greater well-being."
The positive effects of counselling services include lower levels of absenteeism, increased morale and an improvement in work performance, although no improvements are seen in job satisfaction and organisational commitment. On referral to a counsellor, the employee may feel that their coping skills are in doubt. Confidentiality issues have also been raised, particularly if the counselling service is inherent to the organisation.

For example, Phillips Petroleum Company recently instrumented a major lay-off. The management formed a team to confront stress problems among all employees, current and former, and supplied supplementary counselling outside the organisation.

Another tertiary intervention is the training of management and supervisors in basic counselling skills. In order for this scheme to be implemented successfully, an open and trustful environment must be established. Managers must be trained in listening and knowing when support and advice is needed.

Encouraging social support from fellow workers can establish an open working culture. A sense of job satisfaction can be experienced when management takes an interest in the well-being of their subordinates. Rook (1995) stated that moderation of the stress-strain relationship could encourage feelings of belonging and solidarity. However, this situation must be monitored as it could lead to gossiping, a lack of effort and lateness.

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2.5 Individual effects of stress

In dealing with the topic of stress and stress management, it is very important to have an understanding of one of the most important factors governing its effect on individuals – personality. Personality traits such as rigidity, introversion, spontaneity, anxiety, drive, masculinity and femininity have all been identified as being pertinent to individual stress levels.

Personality can typically be categorised in two ways – Type A or Type B. Hettriegel et al (1995, page 253) mention some Type A characteristics as being,

♦ Concerned about time keeping.
♦ Very competitive, almost hostile.
♦ Dislike laziness.
♦ Dislike any restriction to successful job completion.

Due to these and other characteristics, much recent attention has been placed upon Type A personality.

Medical researchers concerned with heart conditions have been examining personality and the resulting behaviours since the 1950s to establish some causes of heart problems. Certain personality traits were identified as being present in many patients of premature heart disease. In the 1960s, Friedman and Rosenman initiated the use of Type A and Type B personalities in the study of stress. Extensive research showed that people with Type A personality succumbed more easily to stress than those with Type B personalities. Type A Coronary Prone Style of Behaviour (TAB)\(^{12}\) has also been identified as a risk factor for heart disease. It is a response to an environmental challenge.

Recent studies have indicated, however, that Type A’s may be better able to cope with stress than Type B’s. The results demonstrate that the feelings of anger and hostility inherent to a Type A may be the causes of the heart problems associated with this personality type.

People with Type A personality work harder to achieve more in a shorter time frame. They are strictly punctual, competitive and always feel that time is against them. They often do things – such as eating, driving, walking – very quickly as if trying to squeeze more and more tasks in. Type A personality often involves bottling up emotions and problems and life can often revolve around work, with little or no outside diversions. They find it difficult to enjoy the sense of satisfaction and achievement that a completed task brings. While people with Type A personality may feel the physiological and psychological effects of stress, they tend to repress these as a sign of weakness. Polyphasic activity, the process of doing a few tasks at once, is another trait. Another typical trait of this personality type is a lack of advance planning.

Friedman and Rosenman (Luthans, 1995, page 303) define Type A personality as,

"...an action-emotion complex that can be observed in any person who is aggressively involved in a chronic, incessant struggle to achieve more and more in less and less time, and if required to do so, against the opposing efforts of other things and other persons."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE A</th>
<th>TYPE B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is always moving</td>
<td>Is not concerned about time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walks rapidly</td>
<td>Is patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats rapidly</td>
<td>Doesn’t brag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks rapidly</td>
<td>Plays for fun, not to win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is impatient</td>
<td>Relaxes without guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does two things at once</td>
<td>Has no pressing deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t cope with leisure time</td>
<td>Is mild-mannered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is obsessed with numbers</td>
<td>Is never in a hurry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures success by quantity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is aggressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is competitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly feels under time pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type A workers feel under constant deadlines and work long hours to meet these. They often bring work home to complete at weekends or night. They can become easily irritated by work and the work of others. Type A’s do tend to be more successful than Type B’s within organisations but once they have worked their way to the top, this success dwindles. Type B’s are more likely to be able to cope with the stress that comes with extra responsibility.

Some organisations, however, tend to tolerate and encourage Type A behaviour. From the organisational point of view, employees are working harder to do more and provide a more efficient environment. It is the responsibility of management to be aware of Type A behaviour and have the ability to isolate it among employees.

The individual must be encouraged to identify the traits in his/her personality that cause stress and be encouraged to accept the need to change. The individual must be acknowledged when a task has successfully been completed and must be taught methods to control the obsession with time. Social activities and regular breaks must be encouraged to help the employee unwind. They must also be taught how to concentrate on one task at a time, without overloading with unrealistic goals.
2.6 Employers' responsibilities

Employees' welfare in the workplace has been an issue for some time. Just as an employee is entitled to work in a workplace that is physically safe, he is entitled also to a psychologically sound work environment.

Effective stress management requires the contribution of both the employer and employee. Employers should include stress management in their health and safety policies. Trade union feedback on these policies will aid the employers further, by verifying that they correspond with legislation. A stress management policy should typically contain information on stress prevention, stress control and stress intervention.

Legislation and acts now decree the rights of employees to a safe work environment and much importance has been placed upon these laws. Litigation is common these days as employees claim damages against organisations that fail to implement these laws.

There does not currently exist any law or act, which controls stress in the workplace. However, the Irish Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989\(^\text{13}\) states that its implementation aims to:

"...ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees."

This includes the "provision and maintenance of welfare facilities" and "the use of specialist services to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the work-force."

In the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in the United Kingdom\(^\text{14}\), it states:

"Employers...have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, the way people deal with each other at their work or from the day-to-day demands placed on their workplace...stress should be treated like any other health hazard."

In the British Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, regulation 5 requires that employees have adequate health surveillance, keeping in mind the risks that may threaten them. Regulation 11 requires employers to consider the capacity of their employees regarding health and safety when dispensing tasks to them.

\(^{13}\) Gunnigle, P. et al, (1997), Personnel & Human Resource Management: Theory & Practice in Ireland, Dublin, Gill and MacMillan
Despite this legislation, 76% of British workers believe their bosses are unable to effectively deal with stress, and thereby cause further stress to employees.

In 1996, the TUC in Britain, represented by elected Safety Representatives, completed a survey among trade union members. Of the 200,000 safety representatives who conducted the research, 68% reported that stress was among the top five health and safety concerns of trade union members. The same survey pinpointed long hours as one of the main causes of stress. The European Union has now sanctioned a Working Time Directive, which will place limits on the length of the working week. Resistance against this directive is however being exerted from the United Kingdom.

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2.7 Job insecurity

Burchell, Lapido and Wilkinson (2002, p. 62) define job insecurity as:

"the subjective feelings about the risk of job loss, as expressed by the employees themselves".

The perception of a risk of job loss is stressful to the employee, not the risk itself, which may cause shifts in morale.

Effects of job insecurity can include depression, anxiety, anger, problems in personal relationships, headaches and pains.

In our modern society, job stress is prevalent. In the 1980s, the world entered the “Enterprise Culture”, with many companies merging, privatising or entering into joint ventures. Economic competitiveness in the international markets improved but the first signs of stress began to show themselves.

In the early 1990s, we entered a recession. Many organisations were downsizing and structures became flatter. While there was more work to do, there were fewer people to do it. Job insecurity was rampant at this stage.

In the 1990s, information technology saw a huge expansion. The work pace quickened and there was an ‘information overload’. Employers began using what they called a ‘flexible workforce’ and began to outsource, hire on short-term contracts and use freelancers. This flexibility did not extend from the workplace to the family, however, and this job insecurity led to high stress levels. The previous psychological contract between employer and employee, which suggested “reasonably permanent employment for work well done”, was forgotten and employees felt little or no job security.

A survey conducted by the British Institute of Management (Warsall & Cooper, 1997-1999) highlighted this changing workforce. Over 60% of the managers sampled had undergone major restructuring in the previous 12 months, in the form of downsizing, cost reductions, delayering and outsourcing. These changes had led to higher job insecurity, low morale and less motivation and loyalty. While profitability and productivity had increased, decision making had slowed down and the organisations were regarded as having lost the right mix of human resources skills and experience during this process.

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Employment statistics from several countries including the United States, Canada and Europe indicate that the rate of involuntary unemployment increased in the late 1980s (Latack, Kinicki and Prussia 1995) and that this has persisted throughout the 1990s (Hanisch 1999).

Research conducted during the Depression of the 1930s has shown a direct relationship between unemployment and mental illness. Young people are more likely to be affected by this than older workers. Often, young workers will have young families to support, mortgages to pay and have the added pressure of having to find another job as quickly as possible which will cover the costs of these necessities. They will also have less job experience, which may impede upon their attempts to find work. Older workers are more likely to be home owners and often the family will have grown up and moved on. In that time of approaching retirement, older people often resign themselves to the reality that another job may be difficult to find as most companies prefer fresh young people with a recent education and new concepts.

Higher socio-economic classes are less likely to be greatly affected by job loss or a threat thereof. They are often more financially secure with some assets and possibly have a high level of education which will enable them to find employment elsewhere.
Chapter 3 - Statement of hypothesis

This chapter states the hypothesis and theory that has been developed over the course of the completion of this dissertation. The aim of this paper is to confirm or disprove the hypothesis, through the fulfilment of primary and secondary research.

3.1 Stress in the Irish aviation industry

The literature reviewed for chapters 1 and 2 has outlined the fundamental aspects of stress in the workplace, such as causes, consequences and the possible stress management interventions available to companies. It has also given an insight into the economic state of the current aviation industry, in terms of the number of recent redundancies and problems that have threatened companies in the industry.

This literature has allowed an understanding of stress management in organisations, its difficulties and its advantages. It will create a better understanding of the results of the primary research, summarised in chapter 5 of the paper.

3.2 Hypothesis

Having reviewed all the literature related to the variables in the research questions, the following theory has been deduced:

Companies within the Irish aviation industry have not adequately tackled the problem of stress.

Furthermore, the hypothesis incorporates the concept that aviation companies are aware of the issue of occupational stress but have failed to take adequate measures to combat it, for financial reasons or otherwise.

Chapter 1.4 has demonstrated the stressful nature of the industry relating to different occupations, and the hypothesis was deduced from speculation into the company’s position on situations such as these.
3.3 Theory development

The theory was first considered during the time of the Celtic Tiger, when the economy was hectic and jobs were demanding. For the purposes of this research, it was scaled down to the aviation industry, after the industry fell into a decline at the beginning of 2001.

This theory has been further developed over the course of the secondary research. Material relating to stress management interventions and to the aviation industry has indicated that aviation companies may not be investing enough time and finances into this section of their human resources functions. While many companies in the industry claim the high value of their employees and their importance in the company’s success, they seem to do little to affirm this.

As was stated in chapter 1.1, the aviation industry is highly competitive one, which can put employees under pressure to “be the best”. Chapter 1.3 outlines the effects of September 11th on various companies within the industry. It resulted in 200,000 redundancies being made across the industry, and Aer Lingus, the Irish national airline, losing up to £2 million daily. It also indicates that panic was widespread at this time, with a freeze put on recruitment in the industry, all advertising and unnecessary expenditure being cut and redundancies being made across the board. Chapter 1.4 clarifies the effects of stress on employees of the industry, such as pilots, air traffic controllers and air crew.

Chapter 2.4 outlines the different types of stress management interventions available to companies, namely primary, secondary and tertiary, and the different methods within each category.
Chapter 4 - Methodology

The issue of airline stress is a contemporary one and yet, in Europe and Ireland, little research has been conducted into this problem. Stress has been acknowledged as being an issue but, nevertheless, research conducted in Italy and the United States shows us that stress in the airline industry is a far bigger problem than is currently recognised. As previously stated, the aim of this paper is to assess the attitude of airline companies towards stress management.

The airline industry contains a diverse selection of professions, from baggage handlers to administrators to pilots and air traffic controllers. Stress management techniques should consequently be diverse so as to accommodate each of these professions.

Research on this subject in Ireland and the United Kingdom is minimal and lacks concrete information.

Keeping this in mind, the methods of primary research chosen are case study, backed up by interview. These methods were evaluated to have the ability to answer the questions that remain unanswered. The use of questionnaires in gathering information was considered and rejected. Due to the sheer scale of companies in this industry and the diversity of the functions, it was decided that to obtain a sample of all employees at all levels would be impossible.

Secondary research had already been completed at this point (see chapters 1 and 2). Information was found using books, journals, encyclopaedias and articles. The Internet also proved an invaluable source of information.

4.1 Method of Research – Case Study

A case study was carried out on an Irish company within the aviation industry. The initial research was done into the company as a whole, establishing the company’s size and presence within the aviation industry. This includes data on the workforce and various activities.
Research was then conducted into the human resource procedures of the company. This established the position of the company on issues regarding employment and employees and includes research into policies on human resources.

Finally, research was done into the company’s stress management procedures. This established which procedures are used by the company and in what situations. It also tries to ascertain the company’s understanding of the diverse nature of the industry and the many stressors that are present. An impression of the satisfaction levels of employees towards these interventions was assessed.

The case study was undertaken on Aer Rianta, the Irish Airports Authority. This company was chosen, as it is one of the most prominent aviation companies in Ireland. It is a presence all over Europe, and often receives bad press due to its supposedly unfair monopoly. However, more pertinent to this paper, the company enjoys an excellent reputation with regard to its human resources policies. It was also chosen due to its prevailing importance in Irish aviation.

4.2 Method of Research – Interviews

This case study was strengthened with the use of interviews. One formal interview was with an employee of Aer Rianta, and more informal interviews were held with employees of other companies in the aviation industry, Aer Lingus and the Irish Aviation Authority. The employee formally interviewed from Aer Rianta works in the Human Resource function, and provided information on the stress management techniques offered by the company and the circumstances governing their implementation. The informal interviews sought to gain a balanced perspective on the information researched and outlined in chapters 1 and 2 of this paper.

The questions used in the interviews were based upon the concepts put forward in the research questions and hypotheses, and also on information discovered in secondary research, documented in chapters 1 and 2 of this research. They aimed to establish the techniques used by the company in controlling stress, and whether these interventions are primary, secondary or tertiary. In addition, the questions probed into the circumstances governing stress management. As the airline industry is in a state of uncertainty at the moment, the interview also yielded information as to the techniques used by the company in a time when job
uncertainty may be prevalent. The interview also investigated whether employees feel that the company is fulfilling their duty to alleviate stress.

The interview questions are documented in Appendix 2 of this paper.

4.3 Research Procedure

In completing the case study, annual reports from recent years were used. These provided an insight into the company's recent profitability and staffing levels. The annual report also contained data relating to the company's human resources procedures and to the changing values of the company. Information from journals and industry statistics were used in completing the case study.

The formal interview was requested by means of a letter (see appendix 1), followed by a telephone call. It was held with an employee of the company, who was familiar with stress management interventions. The answers given in the interview were used to evaluate the company's approach to stress management. The conversation was recorded so that the answers could be recorded and analysed at a later stage.

The informal interviews were held by telephone and served to provide a further insight into the outlook of companies in the aviation industry with regard to stress management.

Interviews were requested of several companies by letter. Unfortunately, response rates were very poor, and telephone calls to follow up were ignored or unsuccessful. It must be emphasised at this point, that stress in the aviation industry remains a delicate subject. Many companies have been reluctant to discuss it since September 11th, and many have sealed their records, making research more difficult. There was also a fear of bad public relations as a result of speaking about any financial difficulties since the events in September or a lack of intervention on the company's part.
Chapter 5 - Research findings

This chapter details the results of the research conducted. The research took the form of a case study into Aer Rianta, supported by an interview with an employee. Two informal telephone interviews also took place to strengthen the data that was uncovered by this research.

5.1 Company overview

Aer Rianta is the Irish Airports Authority and operates in a wide range of activities. The seven main activities of the organisation are:

2. Commercial activities – shops and bars, catering, car hire.
3. Technical activities – planning, design and construction of airport infrastructure.
4. International activities – airport management, consultancy services, dealings in Birmingham and Dusseldorf airports, in which the company holds shares.
5. Hotel management – Great Southern Hotels.
7. In-flight services from Shannon for several airlines.

The company was established in 1937 with the aim of developing Irish airports and general aviation. The company’s objective is “to be the best organisation in the world in the field of managing airports and associated ...activities”. Dublin Airport was opened in 1940 and now handles over 13 million passengers every year. Shannon Airport opened in 1945 and the first duty free shop was established there in 1947. In 1961, Cork Airport was opened and the company has been responsible for the smooth running of these airports.

Aer Rianta International was founded to support new overseas business and continues to control the development of commercial ventures in Russia, Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia. The company handles 21 operations in 14 countries.

In such a volatile industry as aviation, Aer Rianta has thrived and now employs around 3,200 people. One of the organisations core strengths is in its highly diverse workforce, with a
wide range of skills and abilities. The company has also been praised for its introduction of pioneering human resources policies. Aer Rianta is also renowned for its ability to find opportunities for innovation.

5.2 Human resources policies

Aer Rianta has long emphasised their positive attitude towards their employees as being their "greatest asset". The company has been applauded for its strong human resources ethic, breaking ground in Ireland by introducing job sharing and workplace nurseries long before other Irish companies. The company has strived to maintain this image by implementing human resource policies to maximise staff participation and satisfaction. The Aer Rianta Annual Report 2000 states, "The company’s human resources policies...perform a vital function in promoting the groups strategic aims and objectives."

In 1975, the company set up an organisational development study to analyse staff-management relations. Again, this was ahead of most Irish organisations, who did not at that time concentrate on human resources. The “Putting People First” programme was designed to improve customer relations through improved work relations. The Compact document was implemented by the company to aid change and to deal with key issues of the company, staff and trade unions. It recognises that the company’s economic progression is the common aim of management, staff and trade unions. Its predominant feature is communication, and all parties respect confidentiality. The concept of the Compact is that open communication and mutual respect will lead to trust. The Constructive Participation programme is aimed at the company’s economic stability achieved by parties working together. This programme is incorporated into the Compact document.

The “Change Through Learning” programme promotes continuous learning for all levels of employees. The company has long recognised training as a source of competitive advantage, and researches and maps the resulting progress. This aims to help the company deal with future challenges and to grasp future opportunities. However, in 1988 a staff survey indicated that, while staff had a high level of job satisfaction, they did not feel that they had an opinion in the business.
Despite the pioneering attitude of the company towards human resources, it is uncertain as to whether that culture will remain in the company. In recent times, many managers who held strong views on the value of employees have left the company. New managers entering the company do not share the same views. The company has also reduced some of the fringe benefits available to employees. In the past year, functions that integrated staff (Christmas parties, presents) have been phased out, due to the supposed effect of September 11th on business.

The company had been planning the implementation of facilities for staff, but plans for these have now been abandoned. An after-school childcare facility had been proposed and an EU grant had been secured. This, however, has been dropped. A canteen had been proposed since 1997 and has also been abandoned. Aer Rianta staff did have authorisation to use Aer Lingus’ canteen but this was recently removed. The staff now have no facility for lunch or break times.

Aer Rianta is changing and, as an employer, no longer has the finances to provide benefits to staff as previously.

5.3 Stress Management in Aer Rianta

Aer Rianta operates an Employee Assistance Programme, which provides a confidential information, advisory, counselling and referral service. Employee Assistance also, organises healthy lifestyle initiatives, which are supported by a significant number of staff. Lifestyle initiatives that have been recently implemented include the following:

- Smoking cessation programmes
- Weightwatchers
- Cancer screening in men and women
- Heart disease clinic, asthma clinic and menopause clinic
- Healthy eating and nutrition courses
- Parenting courses
- Sli na Sláinte walking facility installed in the airport and promotion of ALSAA gym
- Make-a-Will week every second year

The belief of the Employee Assistance Programme is that stress is a cause of illness and creates a cycle, which must be interrupted.
While a formal system to assess feedback is not used, informal information indicates that Aer Rianta employees are satisfied with the work of Employee Assistance. Recent figures have indicated an increase in the use of the service:  

**Figure 5.1**

Employee Assistance Usage Comparison

![Employee Assistance Usage Comparison Chart](image)

In 2001, 800 contacts of the Employee Assistance service were continuing cases and 800 contacts were new. Many new contacts of the service indicate that it was recommended to them by a colleague who previously used it. Employee Assistance maintains a good relationship with the group of unions involved with Aer Rianta and promotes the service through training and induction courses to new employees.

Employee Assistance does not record any noted differences in employee behaviour after consultation with the service. While past research in other organisations has shown benefits such as lowered absenteeism and increased morale, the service in Aer Rianta lacks the resources to map any progress.

In as diverse an organisation as Aer Rianta, the group most using Employee Assistance tend to be cleaning staff. This may be due to lower salaries, fewer skills and less education than other groups in the company. The biggest issue for contacts of the service is illness, that of the employee or of a family member. This again ties in with monetary problems, as many of those contacts of the service are unable to afford private health insurance. Depression is also a prominent problem. Given that almost 2,500 Aer Rianta employees work in Dublin Airport, the law of averages suggests that many people deal with it, personally or in a family member, on a daily basis.
Around the time of September 11th, Employee Assistance found itself inundated with calls from anxious employees, who were witnessing the problems in other companies in the industry.

However, the Employee Assistance service may have to discontinue some of its initiatives, as shortly, the number of staff will decrease. The lifestyle initiatives may suffer first, as the primary role of Employee Assistance is to provide a counselling service. The programme has also become more restricted in its proactive approach to helping contacts. For example, in the past, if an employee approached Employee Assistance with a problem due to illness in the family, Employee Assistance could approach his/her manager and request that the employee be kept on pay, or not penalised for extra time off. That practice has become obsolete, and the service is now restricted to counselling staff.

5.4 Recent issues in the company

The most recent obstacle presented to the company was that of the repercussions of the September 11th attacks. With a sudden and rapid downturn in the aviation industry, many employees of the company became anxious as to the security of their jobs. Prior to September 11th, managers in the company had begun demanding increased pay. Aer Rianta consulted with an external company, which found the company was overstaffed. The company announced its intention to make changes to the workforce and some managers were offered severance deals.

After the attacks, employees grew more nervous as Aer Lingus (Aer Rianta's biggest customer) ran into trouble, as Aer Rianta and Aer Lingus had once shared many of the same functions. Aer Rianta then became more aggressive in terms of shedding staff. However, the opinion among employees is that it was opportunism on Aer Rianta's part. Atlantic air travel was most affected, which does not represent a large proportion of business for Dublin Airport. Employees of Aer Rianta saw that the passenger volume in Dublin had not dropped significantly and scepticism grew.

As previously mentioned, intra-EU duty free was abolished on July 1st 1999, after the European Union decided that it was contrary to the spirit of a free market and was depriving it of income. While flights outside the EU still had access to duty free shops, flights within the EU were denied access. Prior to the introduction of the legislation, potential profit losses
were estimated at £30 million per annum. Despite these forecasts, figures at the end of the year 2000 showed that profits were up on 1999, even though 2000 was the first full year without intra-EU duty free.

5.5 Other Irish aviation companies

In support of the material outlined above, informal telephone interviews with employees of Aer Lingus and the Irish Aviation Authority yielded similar information.

In the case of Aer Lingus, an Employee Assistance Programme is available to employees. Generally, a supervisor would recommend that they consult with Employee Assistance where they can speak confidentially with a counsellor. Occasionally, half-day seminars are held to teach employees how to cope with stress. Management development and training includes a seminar on how to recognise the symptoms of stress in themselves, or in the case of a colleague or employee.

The Irish Aviation Authority has designated “contact people” throughout the company. The aim is for other employees to speak to these people about any problems they may be having and seek information and support. It is a more informal way of coping with stress. It may, however, raise confidentiality and privacy issues. An Employee Assistance Programme is provided by an external company and is available to all employees and to their family members.
Chapter 6 - Recommendations

The primary research that has been completed confirms the hypothesis that stress in aviation employees continues to be unresolved by organisations. Information found in the case study on Aer Rianta, the Irish Airports Authority, and through an interview with an Aer Rianta employee has produced confirming evidence in favour of the hypothesis.

6.1 Workforce size and distribution

Given that Aer Rianta employs approximately 3,200 people, of which 2,500 work in Dublin Airport, good management of human resources and the corresponding issues is of absolute importance. The diversity of the company's activities would suggest that different needs may be present for each of the business areas represented. In order to assess this, extensive research would have to be done into each group's needs and dissatisfactions.

Aer Rianta must also examine its recruitment procedures, in order to avoid redundancies and severance deals. As the company was found to be overstaffed by an external consultant, it had to downsize to cut costs. By maintaining a healthy number of employees, costs could be kept to a minimum and the company would be financially healthier. This could also lessen pressures on the company, if another economic decline presented itself. The company was placed in a difficult decision after September 11th by having to shed staff so quickly. This pressure was not, however, entirely the responsibility of September 11th and was also caused by overstaffing. If Aer Rianta had handled this situation better, and kept staff informed, such a sceptical attitude may not be present.

More funds within the company could also mean the implementation of a stress management programme and an increase in resources for the existing Employee Assistance Programme. In this way, the lifestyle initiatives may not have to be abolished and staff could be retained.
6.2 Human resources policies

Aer Rianta has become known as a strong company in terms of its human resource ethic and its approach to policies and procedures. Recent policies which have been implemented have included those aimed at improving work relations, improving trust and mutual respect, aiding change and promoting lifelong education. These policies must, however, be implemented fully, so employees feel that the company does really intend to follow them, and that they are not used as a mere tool for a positive image.

However, the company has not, to date, implemented a formal stress management policy. The Health and Safety Authority is currently drafting stress management guidelines and Aer Rianta will implement these upon their introduction. In such a volatile environment, a stress management policy would be a fundamental part of the human resources portfolio.

However, the question arises as to who will implement and direct the policy. The Employee Assistance Programme may be called upon to do so, but with lessening resources and a growing demand, it is unlikely that they will be able to. The Health and Safety department of the company seem the most likely alternative but it is uncertain as to whether they will be willing to take on the extra responsibility.

6.3 Stress management in Aer Rianta

The Employee Assistance Programme offers a valuable source of counselling and support to all employees. The service also organises a wide range of lifestyle initiatives, aimed at nutrition, exercise and healthcare.

However, as the service is losing staff, it seems likely that this trend will not continue. As the main objective of the service is to provide a confidential counselling and advisory service, the lifestyle initiatives will be first affected. This will have an impact on a significant number of Aer Rianta employees, who use the lifestyle programmes.

Currently, Employee Assistance provides the only source of stress intervention in the company. The following table, however, shows the company's other programmes, which may have a positive effect on stress:
**Figure 6.1**

**Stress Management in Aer Rianta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary intervention</strong></td>
<td>Open Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee input in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary intervention</strong></td>
<td>Lifestyle initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tertiary intervention</strong></td>
<td>Employee Assistance Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, the company has covered all three aspects of stress management. Primary intervention is a preventative method of reducing stress, is proactive and aims to lessen the number of stressors in the work environment. In terms of this method of intervention, the company is aware of the issues facing its employees and the danger of feeling unvalued and under-stimulated. This affects morale, which in turn affects productivity and a “them and us” culture can sometimes emerge as a result. This is where Aer Rianta’s open culture is beneficial to employees. Communication is a key ingredient of human resources in Aer Rianta. In fact, the company states good management/staff communication systems and an opportunity for all staff to meaningfully participate in company affairs as being the hallmarks of their human resources policy.

The lifestyle initiatives of the Employee Assistance programme are methods of secondary level stress management intervention. Secondary intervention is preventative and reactive and aims to modify the reaction of the employee to stressors. It is based on the concept that, while it may be impossible to remove stressors, resistance can be built up. While teaching employees about leading a healthier lifestyle, lifestyle initiatives also have been proven to lower absenteeism and staff turnover, and increase morale and productivity. Aer Rianta’s lifestyle initiatives are organised by the Employee Assistance service. As has been previously stated, these initiatives may be phased out due to a lack of resources in the near future.

Aer Rianta’s Employee Assistance Programme is a method of tertiary level stress management intervention. The primary aim is the treatment of the problem once it has occurred. While a service of this sort can lessen pressure upon management and increase morale, there are concerns that it may just be counselling the symptoms of the problem and not solving it. This is certainly true of Aer Rianta’s Employee Assistance, where the service is restricted to counselling and cannot take a proactive approach.
6.4 Recent issues in the company

Recent issues affecting the company have been the affect on the aviation industry since September 11th and the abolition of intra-EU duty free.

The increase in anxiety around the time of September 11th was mainly due to the company’s increased aggression in sheeding staff and an industry-wide increase in redundancies. Employee Assistance counselled a higher volume of contacts around this time. Some of this anxiety was also due to the recurrence of suppressed feelings about loss of family members, due to the extensive media coverage of the unfolding events since the attacks.

The severance deals being offered to management and staff also impacted heavily on other employees, who did not want to leave the company. There was the issue of increased job insecurity, and also uncertainty as to who was going to take on the duties of those who left.

The abolition of intra-EU duty free posed a major threat to the company. The company had created the concept of duty free shops in 1947 and it was developed in Shannon. Duty free represented a core business activity of the company, who won contracts to provide these shops at each end of the Channel Tunnel and in airports, such as Moscow. The company responded to the EU proposal by recognising the value of all staff members and increasing internal stability to deal with the external upheaval. Goals were more clearly defined in order to deal with the change in business.

6.5 Stress in aviation industry employees

From the information outlined above, it is reasonable to confirm the hypothesis that aviation industry employees are under stress. Companies in the industry must recognise this and implement definite measures to deal with this issue.

As seen in figure 6.1, Aer Rianta has covered the three main stress management intervention techniques - primary, secondary and tertiary. However, this may have been achieved unwittingly. It can also be said that these do not fully reduce, as far as is possible, the stressors present and their affect on employees.

It is necessary to implement a formal stress management policy. This would give a definite procedure for dealing with stress, but would also improve employees’ feeling of value. A stress management policy should include information on stress prevention, stress control and stress intervention. In emergency situations, such as September 11th, a plan should be in place to reassure and help employees who feel threatened. This was one of the major failings
of the company around this time. Employees felt that the company was taking advantage of
the situation to downsize, and were unsure as to the security of their position in the company.
Meetings and circulars would help to inform staff of the situation at hand and the intentions
of the company. The implementation of a stress management policy would also reaffirm Aer
Rianta’s pioneering reputation in the field of human resources, in the eyes of employees and
the public.

The abandoning of plans for a staff canteen and after-school childcare facility are further
deceiving Aer Rianta’s previous human resource ethic. Now that Aer Rianta employees have
been denied access to the Aer Lingus canteen, they have nowhere to eat lunch, take a break
and relax. With 2,500 employees in Dublin Airport alone, it seems extraordinary that a
canteen had not been previously built. This is one of the major developments that Aer Rianta
management will have to examine. After-school childcare is a major consideration for any
working parent and the search for a good facility can be exhausting and in vain. A facility
such as this would solve these problems for many parents, especially those from dual income
households. The child would also be near the parent, which may encourage more parents to
work full-time and not use flexi-time or job sharing options.

As was previously stated, the Health and Safety Authority is currently compiling guidelines
to help companies combat stress. However, many companies may not implement these when
they are released. In this case, it may be wise to have some form of legislation, which could
perhaps be incorporated into the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989. It is an
employee’s basic right to have a safe work environment, and it may alleviate financial strains
in organisations in the long term. In the United Kingdom, legislation governing occupational
stress has already been introduced, incorporated into the Health and Safety at Work Act
1975. It states that stress must be treated as any other occupational health hazard, and
declares that demands placed on employees must not be too strenuous. Problems with its
forceful implementation have been encountered but it is a positive move.
Chapter 7 - Conclusions

Having completed the research for this dissertation and reviewed its findings, the hypothesis has been proven that aviation companies do not fully understand the enormity of stress in employees, and thus have not implemented sufficient measures to combat stress to date.

In chapter 1, it was shown how potentially stressful the aviation industry is. This was illustrated with examples of different occupations in the industry and the various stressors they face. The repercussions of September 11th were demonstrated, showing how that event had huge implications across the industry and led to increased levels of stress among employees. Figures were used to illustrate the impact that September 11th on the industry.

Aviation companies claim great pride in their employees and the skills they possess, yet these companies do little to protect their employees from occupational stress. In chapter 2.3.2, some of the causes and consequences of stress are described. If airlines were more aware of these, perhaps they could then implement a formal stress management policy, thus saving themselves hours of absenteeism and extra costs. The forms of stress management interventions available are illustrated in chapter 2.4.

Primary research, conducted mainly on Aer Rianta, but further evidenced by other Irish aviation companies, proved that companies were not doing enough to reduce stress in their employees. While companies have implemented Employee Assistance Programmes, proactive and positive help is not available to employees. Human resources policies also have to be implemented properly, rather than being promoted as a public relations tool. An examination will moreover have to be done into staff resources for running Employee Assistance Programmes and implementing lifestyle initiatives.

Precise legislation will have to be implemented before companies in any industry take stress management seriously. As was stated in chapter 2.6, employees have a right to work in a safe working environment. This comprises of a physically safe environment and an emotionally safe environment. If more employees were made aware of this right, organisations would be obliged to make changes.
Due to time constraints and a lack of resources, a survey could not be conducted in an aviation company. Ideally it would have incorporated all occupations, to gain a concrete understanding of employees' opinions of the matter. Also, more research would have been done into aviation companies in other countries, to assess any cultural differences between stress management in organisations. Studies such as these may be conducted in future research.
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276 Griffith Avenue,
Drumcondra,
Dublin 9.

Phone: 086 349 7471

28th February 2002

The Manager,
Human Resources Department,
Aer Rianta,
Head Office,
Dublin Airport,
Co. Dublin.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a final year student of a BA in European Business and Languages at the National College of Ireland, Dublin. As part-fulfilment of my degree, I am currently writing a dissertation based on the topic of Stress Management in the Airline Industry.

I have a great interest in your company and would like to complete a case study on it as part of my dissertation. To gain an informed insight into your company’s stress management policy, I would be grateful if you would permit me to conduct an interview with yourself and some of your employees. I feel this would equip me with knowledge of your company’s position on stress and the opinions of normal employees as to the intervention techniques used, as well as providing a balanced perspective.

If this is acceptable to you, I would like to conduct the interviews as soon as possible, at your convenience. I would also like to emphasise that any information disclosed during the interview will be treated with the strictest confidence.

I look forward to your reply, and hope that you find my proposal acceptable.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Wade
Appendix 2
Interview Questions

1. I understand that the company does not currently operate a stated stress management policy. Can you tell me why no such policy has so far been implemented?

2. Have you ever encountered any feedback from employees regarding the level of intervention offered by the company?

3. I believe that you do have an Employee Assistance Program in place. How long has that been operating?

4. How many employees, on average, would use the Employee Assistance Program each year?

5. Research has shown that Employee Assistance programs have a positive effect on employees, such as lowered absenteeism and increased morale. Have any such effects been recorded or noticed since the program began?

6. What are your views on the statement that, while the EAPs are effective in counselling the symptoms of a problem, they have little effect in solving the actual problem?

7. Does Aer Rianta's Human Resources department carry out the EAPs or does the company hire external consultants? Often, employees may feel that privacy is an issue when being counselled by what they regard as a "fellow employee".

8. I believe the company did a Stress Survey recently. Would you be able to briefly outline some of the findings?

9. After September 11th, was there a noticeable increase in stress in any of the employees?

10. Aer Rianta is a highly diverse company. Commercial activities cover retail, technical, management, consultancy, in-flight services, catering and hotels. With such a broad spectrum of activities, there must also be varying levels of stress. What, in your opinion, is the most stressful area of the business?

11. Over the course of my research on Aer Rianta, I read that the company has implemented several programmes to facilitate employees, such as "Constructive Participation" and "Putting People First". They aim to improve the work environment and customer relations through improved work relations. Do you feel that these prove as combatants to stress in a roundabout way?
Some factors contributing to stress are over and under-load stress, lack of social support, monetary inadequacy and poor working conditions. I would like to know how Aer Rianta copes with these so successfully.

I understand that the EAP promotes healthy lifestyle initiatives, which attract a significant number of staff. What kinds of programs are offered?
Appendix 3
Case Study – Aer Rianta

History

Aer Rianta, the Irish Airports Authority, was established in 1937, originally to “operate lines of aerial conveyances directly or by means of Aer Lingus Teoranta”. The aim of the state company, which now operates as a public limited company, was to develop Irish airports and general aviation. Aer Rianta states its ambition to be, “the best organisation in the world in the field of managing airports and associated commercial activities”. The company came from the evolution of a number of different groups, including the Civil Service, Aer Lingus and the Shannon Sales and Catering Organisation. The name Aer Rianta came from the translation “Air Ways” or “Air Tracks” from the Irish language. The first flight from Dublin took place on January 19th 1940. The airport currently handles over 13 million passengers every year. Shannon Airport was developed as it provided an ideal port of call for transatlantic stops between Europe and America and the first scheduled commercial flight passed through it in 1945. In 1947 the concept of a Duty Free Shop was created and developed in Shannon. This concept was a core trait of Aer Rianta’s business, until recently. Cork Airport opened on October 16th 1961 and services tourist, business and offshore gas and oil exploration off the south coast. The main business of the company is in the management of Ireland’s three main airports, in Dublin, Cork and Shannon, and the company has been successful in the smooth and efficient running of these three airports.

Aer Rianta International was founded in a profitable period in the aviation industry, with international growth and development. It was established to support the new overseas business and continues to control the development of commercial ventures in Russia, Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia. The company examined the industry for expansion opportunities and won the contract to operate Duty Free Shops at each end of the Channel Tunnel. The company now deals with all areas of business including airport operations, commercial and technical. In Irish airports, the company handles all aspects of management, such as maintenance, security, parking and catering. Aer Rianta International has regional offices in Bahrain and Canada and handles 21 operations in 14 different countries.
Since the 1970s, significant development has taken place at all three airports, including new passenger terminal buildings, expansion of existing facilities, an 8,600 foot runway in Dublin Airport and additional parking and cargo handling facilities. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Aer Rianta expanded into the retailing, catering and hotel industries. In May 1988, Aer Rianta took part in a joint venture with Soviet airline, Aeroflot and formed Aerofirst. Duty Free was also opened in Moscow Airport. In 1990, Aer Rianta acquired the Great Southern Hotel group when they joined the Aer Rianta Group. In 1996, Aer Rianta, in partnership with NatWest Ventures Ltd., acquired a 40% stake in Birmingham Airport. In 1997, Aer Rianta and the German company Hochtief acquired a 50% stake in Dusseldorf Airport.

One of the strengths of the company is in its highly diverse workforce, with a wide range of skills and abilities. The company has invested in joint ventures and partnerships in places like Russia and Bahrain. The company has been recognised for its ability for finding opportunities for innovation. The first of these was the Shannon Duty Free Shop in 1947. The decision to move to Russia in 1988 and the Channel Tunnel Duty Free in 1994 were also recognised as being innovative.

Aer Rianta has always emphasised the importance of passenger comfort and highlighted this in the company’s "Heritage Programme". This programme sought to accent Irish identity and achievements, in Ireland and abroad. The extensive landscaping, a Festival of Lights at Christmas and an Arts Festival are fruits of the programme.

One of the more recent threats to Aer Rianta was the abolition of Duty Free. The European Union decided that Duty Free shops were contrary to the spirit of a free market and were depriving it of income. While flights operating outside the European Union were still allowed access to Duty Free, flights within the EU were affected. Prior to the legislation being introduced, profit losses were estimated at £30 million per annum. Despite these forecasts, figures at the end of the year 2000 showed that profits were up on 1999, even though 2000 was the first full year without intra-EU Duty Free revenue.
Human Resources in Aer Rianta

"The company’s human resources policies, practices and skills perform a vital function in promoting the group’s strategic aims and objectives. Staff are our greatest asset and Human Resources plays a major role in helping everyone to adapt to change. The end result will be the creation of an organisation capable of responding quickly to the challenges and opportunities that arise."

Aer Rianta Annual Report 2000

In a business such as aviation, where the environment is volatile and change is constant and rapid, Aer Rianta has successfully evolved. The company employs almost 3,000 people. Their Human Resource Management practices have, in the past, been considered the reason for their success. In fact, the company states good management/staff communication systems and an opportunity for all staff to meaningfully participate in company affairs as being the hallmarks of their human resources policy. They are recognised as being one of the first Irish companies to introduce job sharing and workplace nurseries.

Aer Rianta has long been recognised for its strong Human Resource ethic. As far back as 1975, the company set up an organisational development unit to study the relations between staff and management. “Putting People First” was a programme designed to improve customer relations through improved working relationships. In 1990, an initiative known as “The Management Factor” was carried out, which analysed changes in the management role and style of Aer Rianta. However, despite these programmes and initiatives, a survey taken in 1988 showed that, while staff had a high level of job satisfaction, they did not feel that they had an opinion in the business. The Compact document addressed this issue.

In a changing industry such as aviation, where fluctuations in passenger numbers, heightened security requirements and financial uncertainty have recently caused severe problems, Aer Rianta have recognised the need to implement some form of change management. The company has also faced opposition from those who believe that the company holds an unfair monopoly over Irish airport management. The Aer Rianta change proposal is known as the Compact and is a document dealing with key issues for the company, its staff and trade unions. It is based on the recognition that the management, employees and trade unions have a common aim and responsibility in ensuring the economic progression of the company. While any changes take place, this document is implemented and the process is continuously
monitored to analyse the changes and to make any further amendments, if necessary. It handles, among other things, the Constructive Participation proposal. The principles in the Compact were ratified by the owner, the Department of Public Enterprise, trade unions, and the management and staff of Aer Rianta. The predominant feature of the Compact is communication. Both parties commit to the respect of confidentiality and the mutual disclosure of information, where necessary. The thinking is that free availability of information and mutual respect will lead to trust. Teams were set up in Maintenance and Finance departments in all three airports in its implementation. Groups were also set up to address important issues, such as the abolition of the Duty Free shops. A library and Intranet were set up to improve the flow of information to employees. The care to avoid rushing into any change has been considered a key success factor of the company.

Aer Rianta has recognised the issues facing employees and understands that people can feel under-stimulated and unvalued. This affects morale, which in turn affects productivity and a "them and us" culture can sometimes emerge as a result. The company has implemented a programme known as Constructive Participation within the Compact, whereby parties work together to achieve a common objective - the economic stability of the company, in this case. The aim of this company, as cited in the Annual Report 2000, is "to create a modern company, where all stakeholders are committed to seeking solutions to everyone's benefit". The company has also recognised the use of training as a source of competitive advantage. Research and progress mapping records the effectiveness for future reference. The "Change Through Learning" programme promotes continuous learning for all levels of employees. The goal is to help the company cope with future challenges and to grasp future opportunities.

Company Overview

Aer Rianta is a public limited liability company, which has statutory responsibility for Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports in accordance with the provisions of the Air Navigation and Transport (Amendment) Act, 1998.

The core mission of the company is, to manage and operate safe, efficient, customer-focused and environmentally responsible services at the three airports on a fully commercial basis and
at competitive international rates in support of Government policies for advancing national economic prosperity.

The company operates seven main activities.

1. Day to day management of Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports – maintenance, cleaning, security, fire fighting, facilities and operations management, information services, sales of aviation fuel and car parking.

2. Major commercial activities in the airports – duty and tax free shops, catering and bars (Shannon only), which are conducted on a direct labour basis. Contract labour would apply to passenger and ramp handling, catering and bars in Dublin and Cork and car hire.

3. Technical activities – planning, design and construction of airport infrastructure, which would include guaranteeing compliance with safety standards.

4. International activities – airport management, provision of in-flight services for several airlines at over twenty international locations and consultancy services. This would also include the airports in which Aer Rianta has shareholdings, Birmingham and Dusseldorf.

5. Hotel management through Great Southern Hotels, operation of the Shannon College of Hotel Management.


7. Provision of inflight services from Shannon Airport for several airlines.