

NEW APP TO STEM FASHION SECTOR STRESS

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Photos courtesy of Pulse by Fierce

Pulse workplace wellness app aims to stem staff stress, combat toxic culture and improve employee wellbeing while helping companies combat the billions lost annually.



Stress is undermining fashion workplace well-being. Just one Google search of “fashion industry occupational stress” or “mental health within the fashion industry” and the pervasiveness of the issue becomes well apparent. Some reports assert that fashion industry employees suffer greater stress than those in other industries. As recently reported by the World Economic Forum amid Gallup’s annual State of the Global Workplace report, stress-compromised mental health is causing workers around the world to feel “stressed and disengaged,” also noting that “work-life balance is becoming blurred.” These and other such study findings further reinforce calls for fashion sector employers to rethink their approach to workers’ well-being.

On the heels of its artificial intelligence (AI), Metaverse and interactive 3D virtual employee training and simulation deployments, global leadership development and training company Fierce, Inc. is again changing the way people communicate with each other and address workplace stress. This time via the visionary company’s new Pulse app poised to refine—and redefine—workplace culture, while also notably boosting bottom lines. With the ability to demonstrate double-digit reductions in stress and anxiety, as well as improved resilience levels, Pulse is designed to address the stressors today’s pressure-laden business climate is causing on the industry’s collective staff psyche.

The Problem

“Beyond the increasingly tumultuous economics, politics, supply chain and other macro issues, companies and their employees are grappling with handheld technologies. Better equipped home, remote and on-site offices have made people more readily accessible—all resulting in greater demands for work participation and productivity,” notes Dr. Gabe De La Rosa, chief behavioral science officer for Fierce Inc. “Uptime or ‘on time’ expectations are contributing to higher stress levels as downtime—that is the time to relax, enjoy family and friends and explore hobbies that might help to moderate those stress levels—continues to shrink. The toll for that is being paid on multiple fronts—emotional, psychological, physical, operational and fiscal.”

It has been well-proven that workplace stress severely undermines productivity, efficiency and morale. Now, in the post-pandemic era, employees are struggling that much more. Companies in general struggle to adapt to and aptly address employees’ changing needs. In this vicious cycle, hundreds of billions of dollars of revenue is being lost—a situation that’s avoidable if duly addressed. One notable cost-of-illness study estimated that “the cost of work-related stress ranged from U.S. \$221 million to upward of U.S. \$187 billion...” A more inclusive analysis conducted by the American Institute of Stress found that after including factors such as absenteeism, turnover, diminished productivity, increased medical costs and increased legal costs, the total economic impact of stress to U.S. employers was estimated at \$300 billion.

The Solution

For 20 years, Fierce has been challenging companies and those who lead them to have the kind of dialogue that drives cultures of transparency—a philosophy that prompted Fierce founder Susan Scott’s first book, “Fierce Conversations,” to sell more than 800,000 copies while propelling her second book, “Fierce Leadership,” to become a New York Times, USA Today and

Wall Street Journal best seller.

Today, Fierce, Inc. CEO Ed Beltran and Dr. De La Rosa have parlayed the idea that “the conversation is the culture” to develop the ground-breaking Pulse app—a technological solution affectionately coined “The Fitbit of Corporate America.” It’s in that spirit Pulse strives to build a mentally fit workforce and shore up financial fitness in kind.

Early data from the Pulse app, which is now available for early registration ahead of its official September launch, has demonstrated multiple staggering results, including:

- 14% decrease in anxiety
- 10% decrease in stress
- 8% decrease in burnout
- 11% increase in resilience

Pulse uses Stress and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) to objectively measure stress. It categorizes stress and ties it to specific times and events, which allows the user to decipher and identify their true causes. Beltran underscores the value of this approach, noting, “The app pinpoints stressors and can help both the individual and the company identify if it was triggered due to something in the employee’s personal life, a temporary intense workplace assignment or more macro company issues like identifying signs of a toxic workplace culture.”

“The critical piece is going beyond just managing stress through meditation, exercise, diet and being aware of the root cause of your stress and tackling it head-on,” Beltran continued. “This is what Fierce has been teaching for over 20 years—how to engage your environment through conversations with the goal of enriching relationships and driving to your desired results. This is what Pulse does at your fingertips.”

The Features

- Specific Meditation to your stressors
- Biometric analysis to increase self-awareness
- Interactive AI Bot to guide you through your stressor
- Optional coach support
- Integration with today’s top wearable devices
- Integration with calendar and GPS to pinpoint stress origin

The Benefits

Users can pinpoint and eliminate stress through patented technology, breakthrough research and interactive content and linking self-awareness, identifying people’s toughest challenge and moving to action:

- Quicker determination of issues and moves toward resolution
- Eliminates open-ended coaching that is hard to tie to results
- Determines organizational issues/themes for broader virtual or live L&D/wellness engagements
- Connects users directly to wellness and employee assistance programs
- Connects users to relevant and applicable On-Demand L&D content
- Develops and increases resilience that drives economic impacts on the organization, supporting a thriving culture

- Supports EAS Compliance
- Delivers results in as little as two weeks and one coaching session

“A leader’s best friend is visibility, and Pulse is perhaps the biggest innovation in employee engagement in many years—one that helps leaders see and address what otherwise would be difficult to detect,” Beltran said.

One of Fierce’s more compelling findings from its own research is that a lack of self-awareness decreases effectiveness of traditional coaching, leading to longer engagements with lower impact. Studies have shown that, while 95% of people think they are self-aware, only 10-15% truly are. No matter how difficult the situation, demonstrating resilience is possible. The Pulse app fosters an increase in self-awareness and gives leaders valuable insights that help build a more positive culture—one that can make staff resiliency commonplace.

“Since the founding of Fierce 20 years ago, we’ve been on the cutting edge of communication training serving over half of the Fortune 500 companies,” Beltran added. “Now, we’re offering leading-edge technology solutions and unleashing Fierce as the ‘API of human-to-human connection.’ Pulse is meant to help companies ensure they stop toxic culture and support a transparent and low stress culture that drives results. Like a pilot, for leaders, visibility drives success.”

Dr. De La Rosa reinforces the importance of stress mitigation and the significance of the Pulse app’s development, having noted, “Companies should have a proactive communication strategy to help address and alleviate staff stress and anxiety and the tools to help facilitate those goals. Solutions like Pulse can help create cultures eliminating the gap between what people feel and what they say in workplace conversations, which is at the center of what drives a lack of mental and emotional health. Leaders that help their groups eliminate this gap produce higher performing company cultures. When employees feel safe to truly show up as they are, they can invest more of themselves into their work roles. While stress has always been a cause of operational unease, the ensuing pandemic has raised the stakes far higher. It has exacerbated concerns far beyond the health realm—a reality that can have grave consequences for individual businesses and industries at large.”

Dr. De La Rosa brings extreme expertise relating to organizational stress to the development of the Pulse app, a first-of-its-kind workplace wellness app. He has valuable experience measuring the impact of stress on individuals in one of the highest stakes workplace cultures: the U.S. Navy. There, he works as a contractor in the role of Industrial/Organizational Psychologist for the Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control. He is responsible for understanding and enhancing organizational factors impacting performance among sailors and marines. His work has been published in peer reviewed empirical journals such as “Military Medicine Journal of Traumatic Stress, Journal of Addictive Behaviors and Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.” He’s also edited books such as “The Handbook of Employee Engagement,” which is considered a valuable resource for organizational psychologists.