

Research shows it can be good to get angry at work

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Researchers at the University of Liverpool have found that anger used by managers in the construction industry has a positive impact and contributes to the success of a project.

The study aimed to understand the reasons why and when anger was used by Construction Project Managers (CPMs), as well as the impact that this show of emotion had on their work. The study found that, contrary to previous studies on the subject, anger is widely used by all CPMs, irrespective of age, to get tasks done and to successfully resolve problems.

Researchers interviewed 19 CPMs from four different companies across the UK, ranging in age from 26 to 62 years old. Their experience in the industry varied from one to 35 years. The study found that CPMs use anger in a deliberate fashion reflecting the hierarchy of the industry. Therefore, it is less likely to be used by CPMs when meeting with architects, the design team or line managers but more likely to be used when liaising with contractors and operatives.

Other reasons cited for using anger also included a [fear](#) of losing [reputation](#) and “pulling rank” which was identified as a characteristic common to the [construction industry](#). However, CPMs recognised that if this approach was used too often it would not have the desired impact. Issues which provoked an angry outburst tended to relate to breaches in health and safety and questions about honesty and integrity.

Dr Dirk Lindebaum from the University's School of Management said: "This project found that anger is embedded in the occupational culture of the construction industry and represents a core characteristic of the manager's role. Stress and anger are emotions frequently experienced by the CPMs and contrary to common management theories is widely used to achieve a positive outcome – to get the job in hand done.

"The construction industry is fast-moving, fiercely competitive with many short-term pressures. It is one of the most male-dominated and aggressive industries in the UK which has implications on the nature of behaviour displayed and the nature of power structures. 'Softer' emotions such as sympathy or understanding are rarely displayed whilst toughness and control prevail.

"A CPM is responsible for the day-to-day running of the construction site and oversees control activities on site including instructions, payments, progress meetings and commercial meetings and liaises with [architects](#), civil engineers, sub-contractors and operatives on site."

The construction industry in the UK comprises of more than 300,000 firms employing over two million people in a multitude of roles. Previous studies of anger in the workplace have argued that [anger](#) is a negative emotion which does not yield positive outcomes.

The research was published in the journal *Human Relations*.

Provided by University of Liverpool

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