

# STRONGER UNIONS

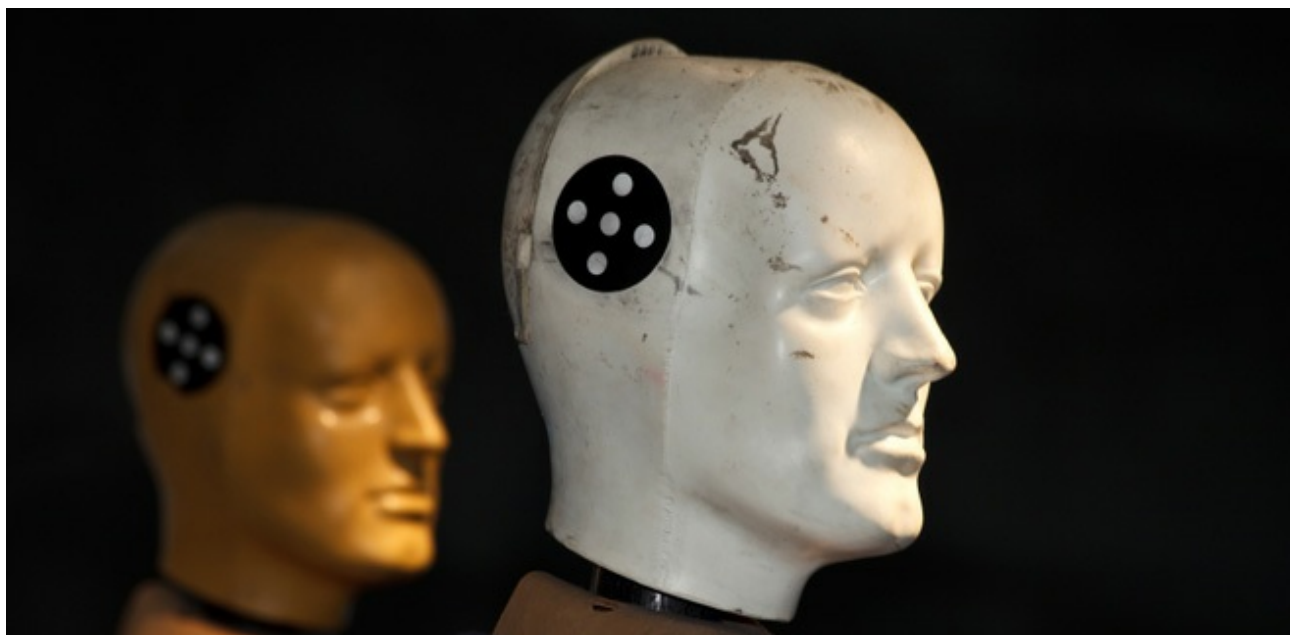


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## Stress at work: “Resilience” gets nastier

23 May 2014, By [Hugh Robertson](#)

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Resilience has just got worse. For the past year the TUC has been warning about the new trend to try to introduce “resilience” in the workplace. That means trying to ensure that people are more able to cope with stress rather than trying to remove or reduce it. In other words changing the worker, not the job.

Apart from the fact that this is morally repugnant, there is absolutely no evidence that it has any effect.

Now companies are saying that companies should screen for resilience before taking on staff. One such company is trying to sell a questionnaire that it claims can now be used in assessment for recruitment or selection. They claim that “research indicates that there is a direct correlation between top talent losses and stress, with a recent study reporting that 90% of leaders were let go due to physical or mental conditions that impaired their leadership effectiveness.”

All this is complete rubbish of course and if people are being “let go” because of stress that simply means the organisation is not handling stress very well and they might want to have a look at the HSE stress management standards.

Any company that was tempted to introduce recruitment procedures based on measuring resilience would soon be in trouble because they would be fostering the illusion that there is a certain kind of “personality” that will cope whatever is thrown at them and another kind, sometimes called an “eggshell personality” that is somehow vulnerable to stress and therefore should not be employed. In reality any person will suffer from anxiety and depression in the right circumstances and often it is those who least expect it, and who carry on regardless, who are hit hardest, while those who have experienced stress in the past know how to avoid it. Selection based on some kind of “resilience” is therefore simply creating an illusion of security and preventing the organisation dealing with the root cause.

The other point is that any employer that goes down this path of selecting workers on the basis of their “resilience” could well be breaking the law on two grounds. Firstly, if there is a hazard in the workplace (such as stress) there is a legal requirement on the employer to remove or reduce the risk from the hazard. Secondly, if someone has an illness or a history of an illness that may be linked to stress that can be classed as a disability, the Equality Act makes it unlawful for the employer to take that into account and pre-employment questionnaires and screening that consider such health issues are actually forbidden. What is being proposed is simply introducing such screening by the backdoor.

Unions have to be very vigilant in opposing this nonsense. For more on resilience you can read my

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Written by Hugh Robertson

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## One Response to Stress at work: “Resilience” gets nastier

**May 24, 2014 War on Workers News**

*May 24th 2014, 8:12 pm*

[...] Now companies are saying that companies should screen for resilience before taking on staff. One such company is trying to sell a questionnaire that it claims can now be used in assessment for recruitment or selection. They claim that “research indicates that there is a direct correlation between top talent losses and stress, with a recent study reporting that 90% of

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leaders were let go due to physical or mental conditions that impaired their leadership effectiveness.” Read the source story here. [...]

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*Promoted by Frances O'Grady on behalf of the TUC, both of Congress House, Great Russell St, London, WC1b 3LS.*

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