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5 Ways to Manage Employee Burnout

TIPS FOR INCREASING YOUR TEAM'S WELLBEING AT WORK





Workplaces naturally hyper-focus on productivity. Without engaged and productive employees, very little is accomplished. Unfortunately, sometimes that hyper-focus has a negative impact and can decrease productivity and even profitability over time. Balance is crucial to both achieving business goals and mitigating employee burnout.

MIT Sloan Management Review found that **people value a healthy work environment more than they value their pay** – workers were 10.4x more likely to leave their jobs because of toxic work culture than because of compensation.

To avoid the detrimental effects of burnout and create a healthy environment that meets your employees' needs, try these five steps.



ONE

Understand the experience of burnout.

Burnout is a cycle of negative emotions that results from investing too much physical, emotional, and intellectual energy for extended periods of time. It cuts deeper than stress and hurts like fatigue, only worse.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon that influences the health status of employees and can lead to significant health problems. This makes it important to recognize common warning signs of burnout in your employees, such as:

- Increased absenteeism and/or sick days
- Higher sensitivity to constructive feedback
- Decreased productivity or performance
- Disengagement from work projects and/or team activities
- Complaints of insomnia, difficulty sleeping, or low energy
- Inability to concentrate
- Sudden changes in behavior (i.e., easily angered or upset)
- Having a negative, critical, or cynical attitude toward the job and colleagues/clients
- Thoughts of quitting or switching roles
- Making unhealthy lifestyle choices

Burnout is perpetual and seemingly unending. Once it begins, your employee is essentially out of gas and has given up hope of overcoming the obstacles they're experiencing at work.



TWO

Treat burnout concerns seriously and lead by example.

When an employee on your team is burned out and experiencing some or all the symptoms above, your understanding and support are vital. Try this:

- Ask how you can help instead of assuming what they need from you.
- Encourage them to engage with your employee assistance program or seek guidance from a healthcare professional.
- Regularly check in with them.
- Take care not to dismiss their feelings as inconsequential or insignificant.
- Perform small acts of kindness, such as bringing them coffee or taking them out to lunch.
- Listen without judgment.

In addition, leading by example is one of the best day-to-day things a manager can do. This includes taking responsibility for mistakes, building strong relationships, setting healthy boundaries for work-life harmony, and clearly communicating the company's vision, mission, goals, and values.



THREE

Solve for the root causes of burnout.

In a workplace, psychological safety is the ability to ask for help, raise concerns, admit mistakes, and suggest ideas without the fear of being punished, humiliated, or disregarded. When the work environment doesn't support psychological safety or otherwise invites toxicity, it often contributes to burnout.

To solve common causes of burnout on your team, you should:

- Demonstrate engagement during meetings. Try not to multitask.
- Encourage new and innovative ideas and taking calculated risks. Make work a place that's fun, engaging, and full of opportunities for discovery and problem-solving.
- Consider employees' thoughts and opinions when making decisions and setting strategy.
- Focus on solutions and establish norms for handling mistakes. Instead of looking for someone or something to blame, ask, "How can we make sure this situation doesn't happen again?"
- Create an atmosphere in which employees feel comfortable telling you when they're overloaded, falling behind, or otherwise struggling.
- Provide opportunities for development and encourage a growth mindset.





FOUR

Mitigate culture-level burnout with recognition.

The solutions above will help set the precedent for a burnout-free team, but what can you do in the long term and on a larger scale? Cue strategic employee recognition.

Gallup and Workhuman® [research](#) found that when organizations create an environment where employees consistently receive high-quality recognition, they see tangible benefits, such as increased engagement, reduced levels of burnout, and improved company loyalty. In fact, the study shows recognition can help mitigate the \$322 billion cost of global turnover and lost productivity.

Recognition builds appreciation into culture at its root, and leaders who strategically incorporate it into their culture can drastically improve employees' perceptions that they're valued, cared for, and respected as people. This makes recognition a low-cost, high-impact way to avoid burnout.

Here are some small but powerful ways to give meaningful recognition:

- Use your recognition program to call out good work done by someone on your team.
- Celebrate events that happen outside of work, such as weddings, new degrees, and family additions (whether a pet or a baby).
- Acknowledge and celebrate employees' promotions, role changes, and years of service.





FIVE

Check in frequently to monitor your employees' wellbeing.

The manager-employee relationship is a critical element in the human workplace, and at the heart of that relationship is the check-in. Research from Harvard Business Review suggests that daily check-ins are desirable.

In general, evolve your check-ins from focusing on project status and deadlines to driving ongoing, continuous support and growth, especially when a team member is experiencing burnout. In addition, make HR aware of the situation so they can support you, the affected employee, and your entire team with available policies and resources.

Few managers realize the power they wield to mitigate burnout for their employees. In truth, properly inclusive cultures compassionately make space for people who are struggling. When leaders miss the mark on this, they lose brilliant people who need support through a tough time.

How people leaders manage the workplace shapes emotional and physical wellbeing every day, for better or for worse. With this in mind, take steps to ensure your people know you care and have their back.

Ready to get started? Discover solutions that empower your employees to reach their full potential – without the risk of burnout.

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