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TODAY IN HR



## JOB BURNOUT: HOW TO SPOT AND PREVENT IT FROM IMPACTING THE WORKPLACE

A fast-paced work environment can motivate employees and fuel productivity. Work-related burnout, however, does the opposite. In a recent survey of 1,500 U.S. workers, the job site *Indeed* found that work burnout is on the rise, affecting Boomers to Millennials. The sudden shift to all remote work and school during the pandemic blurred the lines between work and family time, making a healthy work-life balance harder to achieve than ever. Even the most experienced managers struggled to connect with and motivate teams through a Zoom screen. Those who could not work remotely faced mounting pressures of their own. The gradual transition to a post-pandemic workplace will also bring a new set of challenges that could trigger burnout. That's why it's important for companies to establish methods to identify the signs of burnout among all employees and implement actions to address and prevent it.

Some experts define burnout as a state of physical or emotional exhaustion. It can involve a sense of reduced accomplishment, a lack of focus and motivation, even an inability to sleep. Though not a medical diagnosis, other conditions such as depression may be a root cause of job burnout as well.

A good first step to prevent job burnout is to identify the “symptoms.” For example, Engage’s benefits partner, Health Advocate has some suggestions on how to identify and overcome burnout (see blog post, [here](#)).

**The following are some broader actions companies can consider to prevent job burnout from impacting the workplace:**

**Educate Managers. Reiterate an Open-Door Policy.** Managers can play a key role in preventing burnout by learning what causes it and being open to new ways to manage individuals and teams. Leaders should provide managers with the resources to do so. Train managers and supervisors to identify signs of burnout (e.g., fatigue, change in work product, attitude, or demeanor). Reiterate to employees that the company has an open-door policy, and that the employee can discuss any matters with their supervisor or others in the chain of command. Managers can lead by example by sharing their own experiences with work burnout and how to manage it.

**Provide Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Resources.** Provide employees with the company’s EAP program information. Encourage workers to seek any confidential assistance available to them through their company sponsored benefits. Medical plans may also offer special programs such as mindfulness courses or guided meditation apps to support overall mental health and wellness.

**Encourage Time Off.** Managers should gently remind employees that they are free to take time off and that the company encourages it, to unplug and recharge. Make sure your teams are aware and able to shift workloads and responsibilities efficiently when colleagues take time off.



**Conduct Team Building Activities/Breaks.** To boost morale on an ongoing basis, plan monthly or quarterly (virtual and non-virtual) social events that allow employees to step away from work and interact with each other in a fun, social setting. Be creative and involve team members in the planning. The “events” don’t have to be elaborate or expensive. They can be as simple as taking regular “relaxation breaks” as a team. Share ideas on ways to clear your mind and re energize during the work week.

**Be Flexible.** If an employee is feeling overwhelmed, managers and supervisors can temporarily rebalance workloads amongst the team or offer to adjust the time of an employee’s work shift.

As workplaces prepare for a post-pandemic environment, spirits are high, and the pace of activities may speed up quickly. Keep a lookout for signs of employee burnout creeping in and be ready to manage it, proactively.

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