Understand, Identify, and Prevent Employee Burnout
One of the Biggest Threats to Your Business
A Message from Debra

Employee burnout became more prominent than ever before in 2020. With layoffs, changes in workplace settings, and even businesses shutting down, the pressure was on for millions in the workforce. A recent Gallup study of nearly 7,500 full-time employees found that 23% of employees reported feeling burned out at work very often or always, while an additional 44% reported feeling burned out sometimes.

As a team leader, you may be aware of burnout, but do you know just how serious of an impact employee burnout can have on your employees lives and your business? Or how to spot, mitigate or prevent burnout?

If you don’t know much, or anything for that matter, about employee burnout don’t be intimidated—we’re here to break it all down for you. This guide will provide invaluable insights and actionable tips to understand, identify, and prevent employee burnout, leading to a happier, healthier workforce.

Debra Lopez
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What is Employee Burnout?

The term “employee burnout” originated in the 1970s but wasn’t recognized as a phenomenon until recently.

**Burnout Defined**

Burn-out is defined in ICD-11 as follows:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and
- reduced professional efficacy

Workplace burnout diminishes employees’ desires to learn and grow. When employees are experiencing these signs of burnout, most of their energy and mental focus is on daily survival, not developing for the future.

While employee burnout isn’t considered a medical condition, it could cause one. It can also cause roadblocks in workflow, lower retention rates, problems at home or in one’s social life, among other things.

**A Phenomenon?**

Yes, unfortunately. The World Health Organization (WHO) included burnout in its 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon.
Challenge Number One: Spotting Employee Burnout

Spotting burnout can be tricky. Just because an employee seems tired and disconnected does not mean they’re experiencing burnout. They could just be tired from dealing with things outside of work, like a newborn baby or caring for a sick relative. The flipside can also be true—just because an employee puts on a cheerful face and has a positive tone during a quick interaction doesn’t mean they aren’t burnt out.

This means that open communication is really the only way to know if your employees are feeling burnt out.

In an article written by the staff of the Mayo Clinic, they recommend asking some of the following questions to determine if people are experiencing burnout:

› Have you become cynical or critical at work?
› Do you feel like you’re dragging yourself to work every day and have trouble getting started?
› Have you become more irritable or impatient?
› Do you lack the energy to be productive?
› Is it hard to concentrate?
› Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?
› Are you using food, drugs, or alcohol to feel better?
› Have your sleeping habits changed?
› Do you get unexplained headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints?

Looking for Some Extra Help Spotting Burnout?

We’ve developed a free Employee Burnout Survey that you can use to help gauge the level of burnout in your workplace.

Visit www.vensure.com/burnout-survey

70% Of employees are less likely to experience high burnout if they say they have enough time to complete their work.

87% Say they have passion for their current job.

64% Say they’re often stressed or frustrated.
The Negative Effects of Employee Burnout on Your Business

Now that we know what employee burnout may look like, it’s time to ask the big picture question: How can employee burnout have a negative impact on my business?

Employees who are feeling the effects of burnout are far more likely to misuse paid sick leave. Of course, if an employee is sick, they should take leave. But, an employee should not be taking leave because their burnout is beginning to lessen their motivation or cause stress.

According to the Harvard Business Review, Stanford researchers found that workplace related stress led to spending of nearly $190 billion — roughly 8% of national healthcare outlays.

Employees who say they often experience burnout are 13% less confident in their performance.

- Gallup
Employees who say they often experience burnout are nearly 3 times more likely to leave their current employer.

- Gallup

**Employee Churn**

According to the Society for HR Management (SHRM), the average cost of a hiring process in 2016 was $4,425. The report also shows that it may take up to 94 days to fill a position, adding more work to your current employee’s agendas which can cause even more stress.

**Employee Health**

While stress doesn’t sound terrible, considering everyone experiences it in one form or another, it can lead to severe health problems like high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes – to name a few.

Considering 63% of employees who are feeling the effects of burnout are more likely to take a sick day, businesses can see a decrease in profits that directly ties to lost productivity.

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) study, anxiety and stress related costs the U.S. economy over $500 billion and 550 million workdays lost each year. Stress also accounts for $1 trillion in lost productivity in the global workforce each year.

Workplace related stress correlates to serious health concerns that accounts for roughly 120,000 deaths each year.

- Harvard Business Review
Preventing Employee Burnout

The physical, mental, and financial ramifications of employee burnout can be scary, but there’s no need to be unnerved. We have some great tips to avoid burnout and create a stronger workforce.

› Show your appreciation.
› Alter the culture of your workplace.
› Switch up your employees’ work hours.
› Make sure your employees are taken care of.
› Conduct employee reviews.
› Train your management team.

A large percentage of why employees leave an organization has to do with their manager. Managers are responsible for generating positive employee experiences and learning how to reduce stress at work for employees.

Manager Responsibilities

A manager’s duty is to set clear expectations, remove barriers, facilitate collaboration and ensure that employees feel fully supported to do their best work. When they do, managers can reverse burnout and prevent further burnout before it starts.
Conduct Employee Reviews
In an effort to assure your employees are taken care of, try conducting reviews more frequently. They give fantastic insight on your employees’ mental state of wellbeing, in addition to the efficiency of your business. If you haven’t conducted reviews before, VensureHR has created a free, easy-to-use review template to help.

Want a jumpstart on giving reviews? Use our free employee review template at www.vensure.com/employee-review-template

Alter Your Workplace Culture
Workplace culture can be managed in a number of ways, but proactively acknowledging that work can be stressful and creating a mental health strategy can mean so much. You also need to be sure that transparent two-way communication is an ideal that is known company-wide.

Switch Up Your Employees’ Work Hours
It may also help to consider veering from the traditional 9-5 landscape. While this was a type of scheduling most have been used to, it may not be the most effective. Give your employees the flexibility to “choose” their hours.

Show Your Appreciation
These are all simple, effective, and costless ways that can help prevent employee burnout, and they all start at the top. As a business owner or manager, you have the power to positively effect change in your employees’ daily lives. It all starts by letting them know they’re doing a good job and you notice their efforts. A show of appreciate alone will begin to alter your workplace culture.

Make Sure Your Employees are Taken Care of
Making sure your employees are taken care of is not an easy task, but a task that needs to be at the top of your priority list. Your employees should be focused on the work they’re expected to do, not worried about 401(k) and insurance plans. It’s important for you to let your employees know what the company benefits packages look like. Working with a PEO can help you make the correct decision as to which plans will best suit your business.

Train Your Management Team
Managers are responsible for generating positive employee experiences and learning how to reduce stress at work for employees. It’s their duty to set clear expectations, remove barriers, facilitate collaboration and ensure that employees feel fully supported to do their best work. When they do, managers can reverse burnout and prevent further burnout before it starts.

Ultimately, managers greatly influence how employees feel about their job.
Try Not To...

There are six aspects that make a workplace prone to burnout:

- Demand Overload
- Lack of Control
- Insufficient Reward
- Socially Toxic Workplace
- Lack of Fairness
- Value Conflicts

“When there are these imbalances in any of those six areas, you’re going to see people more at risk for experiencing the exhaustion, the cynicism, the lack of competence and efficacy,” says Maslach, who coined the term burnout. “Whereas, if it’s working better, then there’s going to be more engagement.”
Payroll + Benefits + Risk Management + Human Resources