



Managing & Bandaging Employee Burnout in 2021

Employee burnout isn't new. But in 2021, it's escalated to a whole new level with triggers and stresses from a number of different angles. Teams are creatively pivoting from work to family, office to home; choosing deadlines over wellness to manage their lifestyles. Plus, there are additional complications. Things like financial challenges, loneliness, fellowship, and doing more with less complicate the matter, making it hard for companies to manage everyone's needs. This is why employee burnout is a really hot topic.

The goodmenproject.com says this about burnout: "The hallmarks of job-related burnout have been well described – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a lack of a sense of personal accomplishment. To be burned out means to be completely miserable in your work."¹ And, according to many, burnout is the opposite of engagement. This is NOT what we want. So what can you do to manage and improve employee burnout? Here are three ideas to help your employees thrive and achieve better balance (emotionally and physically). When they feel more balanced, your company will be more balanced, and that in turn leads to a more engaged workforce. This is our goal.

Keep your employees' well-being in check.

Burnout isn't just the result of working more hours. It's a combination of multiple factors over time that build up, both physical and emotional. According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace: 2021 Report "Mental health, emotional strain, social isolation, financial shocks and caregiving responsibilities all influence work performance over the long term. Over time, the negative side of these experiences can lead to burnout." Companies who have a focus on employee wellbeing can build a strong culture with an eye to ensuring their teams are managing negative emotions (worry, stress, anger and sadness). This can help minimize burnout.

Show gratitude. It never gets old.

How you show gratitude to your teams is a reflection of who you are as a company and should reflect what's most relevant for your employees and your culture. In 2020, LinkedIn, who monitors their employee sentiment regularly, noticed there was evidence of employee burnout. To address this right away, they developed "LiftUp!," an initiative that included manager training about burnout, no meetings days (such a good idea!) and resources for their teams' mental health. There were benefits, perks, surprise and delights, and a week off for everyone at the same time to recharge, so that people didn't experience FOMO (fear of missing out) at the office. As Teuila Hanson, LinkedIn's chief people officer said, "We wanted to make sure we could give them something really valuable, and what we think is most valuable right now is time for all of us to collectively walk away."² For their culture, this worked, and they received a lot of positive feedback after.

Regularly assess how you recognize, praise and communicate with your employees.

How you say things is sometimes just as important as what you say (as the saying goes). And, in times of high stress, operational conundrums, heavy workloads, and family/work life balance, recognition efforts may get deprioritized. That's not a wise idea if you care about long-term employee engagement and employee burnout. "Lack of autonomy, lack of recognition for work, lack of meaning in work, a cutthroat, results-oriented culture ... can all make for an environment that pushes people beyond their capacity to function well."³ If anything, during times when employee burnout may be looming, messages of encouragement, and recognition of successes and tenure need to be communicated and celebrated.

Remember, when your teams are happy and engaged, your customers will be happy and engaged as well.

¹<https://goodmenproject.com/business-ethics-2/opposite-burnout-absolutely-must-know-knts/>

²<https://invisionmag.com/tackling-employee-burnout-after-a-tough-year-and-more-of-your-questions-for-june/>

³<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/02/success/linkedin-paid-week-off/index.html>