HR Has a Responsibility to Help Employees Who 'Feel Stuck' in Their Careers

HR Brew | Mikaela Cohen | December 17, 2025

A lack of career opportunities has caused a rise in employee burnout and fatigue.



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Employees aren't jazzed about, well, being employees right now.

Burnout and fatigue were some of the most commonly used terms to describe employee sentiment in 2025. Glassdoor reviews mentioning "burnout" were up 32% year over year in Q1 2025, reaching the highest level since Glassdoor started tracking mentions of the word in 2016. "Fatigue," however, was "the word of the year," with a 41% increase in mentions in 2025.

"It's not a surprise that workers feel fatigued after five-plus years of the emotional roller coaster that we've all been on, really starting from the pandemic," said Daniel Zhao, chief economist at Glassdoor. "This is also exacerbated by the state of the job market right now where workers do feel stuck."

Many workers may feel like they're experiencing a "career pause or freeze" as a result of the cooled labor market, and when workers don't feel they are progressing, they can "feel stuck," Zhao told HR Brew. This, he said, can contribute to burnout and fatigue.

What HR can do for employees. Start by recognizing there's an issue in the workforce, Zhao said. When workers don't feel like they're progressing in their careers, engagement and productivity can suffer.

"When workers don't feel like they're being rewarded for the effort that they're putting in, then they're naturally going to stop putting in that level of effort," Zhao said. "Especially, in the current moment where leaders are pushing extremely hard on productivity and efficiency, and after layoffs, many workers are doing the jobs of multiple people, that is a recipe for burnout."

HR pros can give employees career growth opportunities, even if they don't equate to promotions or title changes, Zhao said. Whether that's temporarily working on a different team, or handling a new project, "giving people more options to learn new things is a really important motivator for workers," he said.

"Being upfront with workers about how you're framing these opportunities is important, too. Workers recognize that the economy is not in a fantastic spot right now," he said. "If you can frame these skill development programs or learning opportunities as a way to jumpstart people's career growth once the market opens up again, I think that level of transparency can be really valuable to workers in an uncertain moment like this."

What HR can do for HR. Yes, even hardworking HR pros can suffer from burnout and fatigue. Ask yourself, "What matters to you in your career?" Zhao recommended. "Do you actually care about getting a more senior title, or is it the work itself and the skills growth that's more important to you?" It's all about preparing for "what comes next," he added.

"The job market won't stay slow forever," he said. "So, what skills and experiences could you build now that will set you up like a springboard to jump into your next career opportunity once the market does open up again?"