

Employee Burnout Is at the Top of the Stressor List

By Justin Black, Head of Glint People Science Aug 20, 2020 | HR Daily Advisor

In 2020, the world has dramatically changed, from COVID-19, which greatly impacted our daily lives and the world of work, to protests that shine a light on injustice and oppression. Organizations are looking to understand how all of this impacts their employees—how are they doing, and how can I be of support?

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Since March 18, Glint has gathered over 3.9 million survey responses from over 1.1 million employees around the world in a sweeping range of industries. One of the biggest emerging trends threatening employee well-being? Burnout.

Burnout Doubles Due to COVID-19

What we're seeing is that employee survey comments around burnout doubled from March to April, increasing from 2.7% to 5.4%, suggesting that it's

a growing threat to the productivity and engagement of today's workforce.

This is to be expected as employees attempt to maintain their mental health while learning new ways to manage their many responsibilities, the lines between which have become increasingly blurred. In fact, employees who said they struggle with balancing personal and work lives were 4.4 times more likely to exhibit signs of burnout, and the effect was 2.3 times for employees who felt overwhelmed by their workload.

Communication is also a critical factor impacting employee well-being: Employees who felt their managers were ineffective communicators were 2.7 times more likely to use language signaling burnout; it was 2.1 times for those who felt their organization communicated poorly about change.

Good communication reduces uncertainty and increases perceived control and can protect employees from feeling overwhelmed in this "new reality." Fortunately, employees and employers are stepping up and owning well-being as a personal and an organizational focus.

How to Reduce Burnout

The reality is, with the amount of distress we're all facing, it's unlikely that the threat of burnout will dissipate anytime soon. As a leader in your organization, you can encourage actions that alleviate the pressures of burnout in the following ways.

1. Check in with employees. Conduct short, frequent pulses to understand and respond to employee needs. This effort shines a light on opportunities that leaders can take to encourage focus and productivity.

One example of this is an early adopter of Glint who issued a weekly companywide wellness survey, which uncovered that employees were seeking mental health and wellness support. In response, the company provided free access to a global emotional support app to manage stress, anxiety, and depression.

2. Establish meaningful discussions. The manager role has never been more important in helping employees feel connected, supported, and focused than it is now. Organizations need to support managers with fact-based information and centralized resources so they can have meaningful conversations and maximum flexibility to address individual challenges. Enable managers to share their learnings and get their questions answered.

3. Emphasize prioritization. When situations change, demands do, too. Times of distress cause us to take a fresh look at priorities, and this is an excellent opportunity to be kind to others by deprioritizing projects, activities, and processes that are not urgent and nonessential. It's also an opportunity to be kind to ourselves in the same regard.

The future of the workforce remains uncertain, but it's up to organizational leaders and managers to create some sense of certainty within their workforce. Employees now more than ever are looking for consistency, empathy, and guidance. And with the right insight, that can be achieved.