

Guide

The rise of employee burnout and how to tackle it



Guide



What is burnout?

Burnout is not just an empty term used to define when employees have had a long week. It's a severe and real issue affecting their long-term wellbeing and ability to perform effectively. Using the definition of the World Health Organisation, employees have defined burnout as 'feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job and reduced professional productivity in relation to chronic workplace stress.'

The pandemic has exacerbated the burnout crisis, which has seen people blur the lines between work and home due to the onset of remote working. Yes, it brought about flexibility for some, but for others they struggled to switch off, and the working day got later and later.

The next generation is currently feeling the brunt of the crisis, with more than half of 16-34 year old's stating that they feel burnt out right now. Burnout can rear its head in many different forms, [with employees experiencing troubled sleep \(47%\)](#), exhaustion (46%) and negative thoughts (39%). The effects are not just limited to the self either, with nearly half of the employees questioned admitting to getting agitated at partners, family members and friends. A crucial determinant of these issues was said to be a rise in employee shortage (38%), long work hours (30%) and lack of reward and recognition (25%).

Within this piece, we intend to look at the growing cost of burnout, what you can do about it and, more importantly, how wellbeing can play a part in creating a resilient and healthy organisation.

Common signs of burnout include:

Feeling tired or drained most of the time

Feeling helpless, trapped and defeated

Feeling detached/alone in the world

Having a cynical/negative outlook

Self-doubt

Procrastinating and taking longer to get things done

Feeling overwhelmed

Cost of burnout and what to do

There are no two ways about it; burnout is an expensive problem. And it's growing. Companies are burning through cash trying to deal with the issue. The most significant impact is felt with depression and anxiety (which are key symptoms of burnout), estimated to [cost the global economy up to \\$1 trillion a year](#) in lost productivity. It affects productivity, but [95% of HR leaders have admitted](#) that burnout hurts retention at their organisations, contributing to up to one half of their annual workforce turnover.

Furthermore, figures from Gartner show that the cost of stress alone has rocketed to \$300 billion per year. These figures are already huge, and will continue to increase if action isn't taken straight away. Rather than being reactive, a proactive solution that embeds itself at the company's roots will work best. That means that buy-in is needed at exec level, with a focus on employee wellbeing built into the companies values.

[With only 23% of workers](#) saying that their workplace has a plan to spot and combat chronic stress and burnout, employees will soon look to make their feelings known by heading for the exit. [According to research by Oxford Economics](#), the average cost of turnover per employee is £30,614. Have more than one employee suffering from burnout, and that begins to rise quickly.

Even before implementing a workplace wellbeing strategy, businesses can save themselves a lot of money by just doing the simple things well. Dr Batman, an esteemed member of our scientific advisory board who has been in the medical field for nearly 50 years, states that organisations should "pivot to becoming a more empathetic business."



Meaning that businesses should be mindful and understanding of every individual need and requirement of their employees. People have been surrounded by negative news stories over the last few years, all of which would impact how they think, feel and interact. This is the time to be softer and empathetic in your approach, from dealing with mental and physical health issues right through to any personal problems they may be facing. Having managers who can support and understand the physical and mental pressures of the modern-day workplace can be of benefit.

It's no secret that COVID-19 wreaked havoc not only on people's physical health but their mental health too. As remote work became the norm, the lines between work and home became blurred. This puts workers at increased risk for burnout due to the increased demands. [1 in 5 UK workers felt unable to manage pressure and stress levels at work during the pandemic](#). This has now been compounded and has manifested into employee burnout.



How the great resignation can become the great attraction

Are we going to talk about it? Let's talk about it — the Great Resignation. Microsoft state that 41% of workers globally are looking to hand in their notice. And it's the youngest generation, the fabled Gen Z'ers, who are leading the charge. The headline is that workers are exhausted, fed up and want out. The Great Resignation might be a chance to play the market and snap up some top talent, but we think this is the time to take stock and see what to improve in-house.

HR guru Josh Bersin states that the Great Resignation is, in fact, the Great Migration. Bersin's research team found that, in the wake of the pandemic, people are simply fed up with mediocre employers: "Employees are migrating from 'crummy jobs' to 'better jobs' and from 'companies that don't seem to care' to 'companies that really, really care'". Employees want more from their jobs. They want their place of work to bring a powerful sense of purpose to their life.

Employees won't simply be won over by the job opportunity that offers the highest

salary—they're also looking for benefits that meet their personal and professional needs. The right benefits package empowers all employees to be the best versions of themselves. That's a win for employers—a healthy, happy workforce is more engaged, productive, and less likely to take sick days.

Employees want to work for an organisation that genuinely cares for the health and wellbeing of their workers, reinforces a culture of acceptance and belonging, and has a solid corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy. People may work for a paycheck, but they'll often stay for a purpose.

3 ways to banish burnout

So what can you do to help your team? Here are five tips on what you can implement to help manage the general wellbeing of your business and minimise burnout amongst your teams:

1

Wellbeing challenges

A workplace wellbeing challenge is your secret weapon. Be it tracking steps, making healthier nutrition choices or just having a good night's sleep. The competition drummed up by the challenge can be a powerful motivational tool. A successful workplace challenge looks to embed itself within your business's culture and improve things from the ground up. It seeks to inspire and drive your employees to create long-lasting healthier habits in all aspects of wellbeing. But don't fear! It needn't be a long, complicated process – a workplace challenge like [VP GO](#) is a turnkey solution, that's ready to go and rolled out in a matter of days.

Workplace challenges create essential support networks in various ways. They connect people with similar health and wellbeing goals and create an environment where people can share their stories and encourage each other to lead healthier lifestyles. [Research from Gallup also found that team-building significantly impacts combating burnout.](#)



2

Support stress management

We understand that it's a lot easier said than done, but as our science advisory board expert Dr Batman stated in [our post-covid safety webinar](#), doing the simple things well, and being an empathetic leader should be the mark of a modern business. He explains that "openness and empathy are always the bedrock of what we can do going forward."

At its most fundamental level, the cause of burnout is stress. And so, taking the time to find out what's going on with your employees, both professional and personal, should be at least the minimum. Clear and open communication is vital, especially for your employees who may suffer from severe anxiety and stress. Provide them with a private forum with yourself to help them to discuss their needs, priorities and wants.

Stress can be about many different things. And when the cost of living is also on the rise, it's also vital to be mindful of financial issues that may be troubling your employee. Providing them with any internal and external information that can be of benefit, with matters of finance discretion, is also key.

You should also encourage your team to take part in any workplace wellbeing programmes that promote practising mindfulness and creating meditation habits as these can effectively help in the management of stress.



3

Keep your employees engaged

Did you know that the current crisis of [lack of engagement amongst employees costs businesses £5.9 trillion](#)? With just 15% of workers stating that they're engaged at work, the issue seems to be growing. Employee engagement goes beyond simply how happy an employee is at work. Businesses are now factoring in workplace mood and productivity alongside wellbeing, which is seen as encompassing personal, financial and health issues.

Between stress, lack of engagement and an increasing workload, your team is not working at total capacity. Getting your team's attention and engagement back is beneficial for all involved. [Gallup's Global Workforce report](#) found that the behaviours of "highly engaged business units result in 21% greater profitability." It also stated that while employees are engaged, they are less likely to leave, with "highly engaged business units achieving 59% less turnover".

Separate [research from BambooHR](#) found that employees who feel engaged are proven to be more productive and content in their job role, they are also more loyal to the company and more driven to contribute to overall business success.



Here's how you can keep your team engaged:

Communication: It's centred around building trust with your employee and making them feel supported. Having regular all-hands meetings will let everyone know how the business is doing, and they will feel that they are respected and trusted with this information. Make sure you take questions and listen to feedback too! That way people will feel that their thoughts count – and that they have a real stake in the business.

Create an inclusive workplace: Far from being a buzzword, building an inclusive workplace for your employees is actually beneficial for productivity and your bottom line. [Figures from Gartner](#) have shown that fostering an inclusive team improves performance by up to 30%.

Foster a family friendly framework: A family-first approach won't be relevant to all your staff, but the principles remain the same for everyone – being flexible enough to support people's personal circumstances will help build loyalty and trust amongst your employees.

Implement a wellbeing programme: Having an employee health and wellbeing platform is a fantastic way to encourage healthy habits and build a connection with your team. Wellbeing platforms and challenges allow businesses and employees to mix social networking with their health targets.

[Read our in-depth guide](#) on how engaging your employees can help you build a resilient and productive workforce.





Why gratitude matters

It's easy to think that gratitude is simply just the process of expressing thanks or appreciation for something. Spreading gratitude can go a long way in building that company community and do wonders for your employees' mental health.

Adding gratitude to a daily wellbeing strategy can combat burnout and help the mind focus on things it can control, rather than those it can't. It's a technique used by top-level physicians, athletes and coaches. Psychologists have reported that gratitude promotes a state of wellbeing and can help with burnout.

Naturally, as humans, it is easy to become engrossed in the outcome of your work whilst forgetting about the journey or what got you there. Maximising the benefits of gratitude needs to be a core part of your wellbeing routine. Dr Najma Khorrami believes that practising gratitude can help you "savour positivity" and is the gateway to other positive emotions because it helps [increase dopamine and serotonin levels in the brain](#).

Studies also show that gratitude positively correlates with sports satisfaction amongst college athletes. It's also a vital part of success for athletes at the top of their profession. Legendary NFL quarterback [Tom Brady was asked what makes him great](#). Instead of talking about killer instinct, drive, hard work or other traits we would associate with a top-level athlete— he explained how gratitude makes him great. He stated that every time he steps out for a game, he's not only playing for the name on the front but also the back. He tries to remember all the people who have helped him get him to that position (and yes, even in a regular-season game!).

Practising gratitude can be done in many different ways, such as:

Saying thank you

Gratitude exercises such as journaling

Telling someone you're grateful for them or for something they did

Kind acts

Mindfulness and meditation.

Take Action

As we've stated, the last few years have done away with the old way of working. Employees aren't just clocking in and out from a 9-5 anymore. They want meaning from their careers and enjoy company benefits that genuinely benefit them. Battling two years of lost loved ones and lockdowns alongside undefined workloads, financial stress, and growing anxiety has brought personal health into a new light. Employees are desperately seeking companies that care about them and their wellbeing. Now is the time to create a new culture, a new way of working that beats back burnout and helps your team succeed.

Did you know that 87% of Virgin Pulse users stated that the platform changed their lives? Virgin Pulse has decades of experience within the industry and understands that your most valuable asset is your people. We also understand, no one person or business is the same.

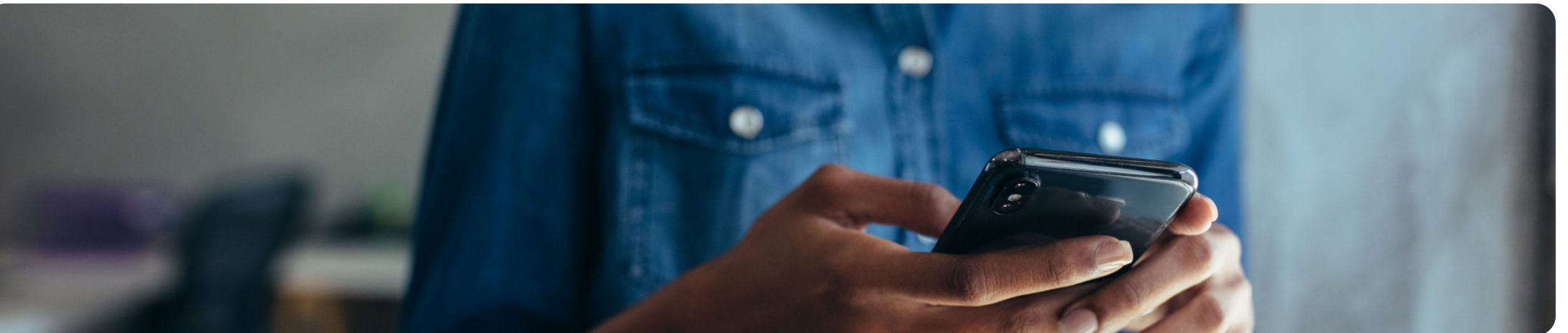
We pride ourselves on providing a personalised platform that is purpose-built to engage members daily and cultivate healthy habits. Our behaviour change model is backed by clinical and population health expertise, and is supported and validated by Virgin Pulse Science Advisory Board. And we also take on the burden of setting up - with our dedicated customer success team supporting your roll-out every step of the way.

As you slowly implement gratitude and make it a part of your wellbeing strategy and plan to beat burnout, you will begin to see its benefits, such as:

Feeling like you have more social support

Less negative thinking and self-talk

Increased ability to minimise stressors and stressful circumstances



Changing lives for good.®

If you want your employees to become one of the 8 out of 10 of members who reported positive lifestyle changes, then speak to a member of our team and see how we partner to banish burnout together.

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