

Gallup's Perspective on

Employee Burnout: Causes and Cures



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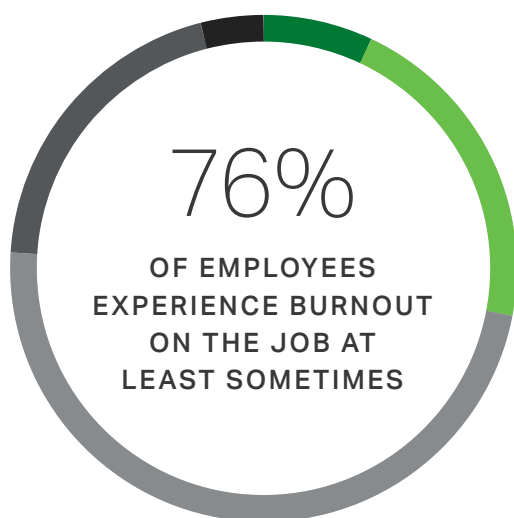
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Burnout: A Phenomenon That Organizations Can No Longer Ignore

Employee burnout is a widespread problem.

According to a 2019 Gallup study, 28% of full-time employees reported feeling burned out at work “very often” or “always.” An additional 48% reported feeling burned out “sometimes.” That means *most full-time employees* — nearly eight in 10 — experience burnout on the job at least sometimes.

There is little doubt that employee burnout is a symptom of modern workplaces that are increasingly fast-paced, complex and demanding. At work, many employees feel overwhelmed by competing demands and conflicting expectations. And technology — especially mobile technology — has blurred the lines between home life and work life.



Most Employees Experience Burnout at Work

Please indicate how often ... the following is true of your job. If you have more than one job, please think about your primary job — the one where you spend the most time working.

You feel burned out at work.

- 7%** Always
- 21%** Very often
- 48%** Sometimes
- 20%** Rarely
- 4%** Never

Percentages are from a 2019 study of 12,658 individuals who were employed full time by an employer.



The pressure to address job burnout became so intense in 2019 that the World Health Organization (WHO) declared burnout an occupational phenomenon¹ in its global standard for diagnostic health information, the 11th revision of the *International Classification of Diseases*.²

1 World Health Organization. (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International classification of diseases*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/

2 ICD-11: International classification of diseases 11th revision. (2018). World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://icd.who.int/en/>

WHO defines burnout as a "syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed" and describes three dimensions of employee burnout³:

- 1 feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- 2 increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- 3 reduced professional efficacy

Organizations are responsible for the wellbeing of their employees — alleviating burnout is the right thing to do. It is also essential for engaging and retaining top talent.

3 World Health Organization. (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International classification of diseases*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/

Employee Burnout Undermines Health and Productivity

Employees who say they very often or always experience burnout at work are:

23%

more likely to visit the emergency room

63%

more likely to take a sick day

2.6x

as likely to be actively seeking a different job

1/2

as likely to discuss how to approach performance goals with their manager

13%

less confident in their performance



The Ripple Effect

For organizations, employee burnout comes with a hefty price tag — it triggers a downward spiral in both individual and organizational performance.

Burned-out employees are 63% more likely to take a sick day and 2.6 times as likely to be actively seeking a different job. Even if they stay, they typically have 13% lower confidence in their performance.⁴

Burnout also diminishes employees' desires to learn and grow. When employees are burned out, most of their energy and mental focus is on *daily survival*, not developing for the future.

Employees experiencing burnout are half as likely to discuss how to approach performance goals with their manager. They become resistant to coaching and develop a mindset fixated on problems rather than future opportunities and success. When employees are running on low and underperforming, so are their organization's decision-making, customer service, quality control and innovation engines.

Not surprisingly, the effects of burnout don't stop when employees walk out the office door. Those who consistently experience high levels of burnout are two times more likely to strongly agree that the amount of time their job takes makes it difficult to fulfill their family responsibilities. Even scarier, burned-out employees are 23% more likely to visit the emergency room.

⁴ Gallup's burnout-related data in this report came from Gallup Panel™ studies conducted in 2016, 2018 and 2019. See the appendix for details.



15 Factors Highly Related to Burnout and What to Do About Them

Many leaders feel as though they're between a rock and a hard place. They don't want their employees to get burned out, yet they need to inspire higher productivity and performance.

To unpack this dilemma and help leaders take effective steps to improve their workplace, Gallup researchers examined more than 100 workplace factors — employee experiences, types of jobs, demographics, manager actions and leadership decisions — known to affect how people work and live. Among the issues of interest and potential determinants of wellbeing, engagement and performance, we discovered 15 that correlate highly with employee burnout.

Gallup's study revealed that the primary determinants of burnout are largely a reflection of *how effectively someone is managed*.

This discovery should be an inspiring call to action. Leaders can prevent and reverse burnout *while increasing productivity* by understanding what causes burnout and fostering a work environment that combats it.

In the following three subsections, we summarize our findings and what to do about them.

- First, we discuss the **top five causes — the “root causes”** — of burnout.
- Then, we look at the **next five issues managers should target** to reduce burnout.
- Finally, we explore **five factors related to systems and workspaces** that leaders can re-engineer to minimize burnout.

We recommend that you begin your burnout prevention efforts by evaluating which aspects of the 15 primary correlates of burnout are most relevant to you and your team.

Your Top Priority: Address the Root Causes of Burnout

To create a culture where employees can do their best work with less risk of burnout, leaders and managers should initially direct their efforts toward curbing these top causes:

- 1 Unfair treatment at work
- 2 Unmanageable workload
- 3 Unclear communication from managers
- 4 Lack of manager support
- 5 Unreasonable time pressure

The Top Five Causes of Burnout

Five factors correlate most highly with employee burnout. We call these the “root causes” because they have the greatest effect on burnout.

1 UNFAIR **TREATMENT AT WORK**

When employees strongly agree that they are often treated unfairly at work, they are 2.3 times more likely to experience a high level of burnout. Unfair treatment can include all kinds of workplace issues, from bias, favoritism and mistreatment by a coworker to inconsistently applied compensation or corporate policies.

When employees do not trust their manager, teammates or executive leadership, the psychological bond that makes work meaningful breaks. Conversely, when employees are treated fairly and feel respected, strong relationships form quickly, and employees are more resilient.

2 UNMANAGEABLE **WORKLOAD**

Employees who strongly agree that they always have too much to do are 2.2 times more likely to say they experience burnout very often or always at work. Even high-performing employees can quickly shift from optimistic to hopeless when they're struggling with an unmanageable workload.

Having too much to do can take a variety of forms. Some people think about the long hours they work, while others are affected more by the many tasks they have to complete or the difficulty of the work. Gallup analytics show that the number of hours people work each week does matter, with burnout risk increasing greatly when employees exceed an average of 50 hours per week and escalating even more substantially at 60 hours per week. But *how people experience their workload* has a stronger influence on burnout.

For instance, employees who are engaged and have job flexibility tend to work more hours each week than the average employee, while reporting higher wellbeing.⁵ But when work feels burdensome, difficult to do well or endless, employees can feel suffocated, regardless of how few or many hours they work.

Employees look to their managers to position them for success and be their advocates when their workload feels out of control. It's up to managers to help employees determine what they can and can't accomplish — and find others to help when employees are overburdened. Telling employees to “just take some time off” may provide temporary relief but won't permanently fix workload problems that lead to burnout.

The right question for leaders and managers to ask is: What causes work to become unmanageable for my team, and what can be done about it?

5 Harter, J. K., & Agrawal, S. (2012). *Engagement at work: Working hours, flextime, vacation time, and wellbeing*. Gallup.

When employees strongly agree that they are often treated unfairly at work, they are 2.3 times more likely to experience a high level of burnout.

3 UNCLEAR **COMMUNICATION FROM MANAGERS**

When managers don't provide employees with the information they need to do their job effectively, work becomes difficult and frustrating.

Managers should explain role expectations, partnerships, processes and the impact of the employee's work. When expectations and accountability are inconsistent or unclear, employees can become frustrated and exhausted, just by trying to figure out what their manager wants from them.

The best managers *regularly* discuss responsibilities, performance goals and priorities with their employees, and they collaborate with their team members to ensure that expectations are clear and aligned with team goals. Great managers proactively share information, ask questions and encourage employees to share their thoughts.

4 LACK OF **MANAGER SUPPORT**

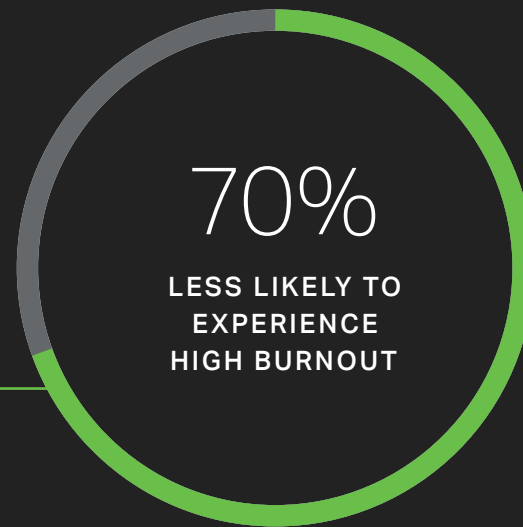
Manager support is *central* to preventing burnout. Manager support provides a psychological buffer, so employees know that their manager has their back — even when challenges arise or something goes wrong. Supportive managers are there for their team members, listening to their needs and encouraging them.

They help their employees prepare and develop. Employees who strongly agree that they feel supported by their manager are about 70% less likely to experience burnout regularly.

In contrast, a negligent, absent or condescending manager leaves employees feeling uninformed, alone and defensive.

Learn more about how managers can step up their support in ways that affect burnout by reviewing the section that begins on page 12: "The Next Five Issues Managers Should Address."

Employees who say they often or always have enough time to do all of their work are:




5 UNREASONABLE **TIME PRESSURE**

When employees say they very often or always have enough time to do all of their work, they are 70% less likely to experience high burnout. Unreasonable deadlines and pressure can create a snowball effect: When employees miss one overly aggressive deadline, they fall behind on the next thing they are scheduled to do.

Notably, individuals handle time pressure differently. Employees who are a natural fit for a role tend to work more efficiently and sustain high performance for longer periods. They also have more positive daily work experiences and handle stress more effectively when under time pressure than employees who are not a natural fit for the job.⁶ In contrast, an effective way to create inefficiencies and increase stress is to ask someone to repeatedly do something they're not good at.

Unreasonable time constraints often are imposed by people who do not know how long it takes to deliver high-quality work or great customer service. Leaders must ensure that their role expectations and performance standards are fair and inspire excellence. And when employees step up to work overtime or accomplish tasks under tight deadlines, leaders should recognize their willingness to go the extra mile.

⁶ Harter, J. K., & Arora, R. (2010). The impact of time spent working and job fit on well-being around the world. In Diener, E., Helliwell, J. F., & Kahneman, D. (Eds.), *International differences in well-being* (pp. 398–435). Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.



Managers: Turn Your Team From Burned Out to Built Up

Managers can foster positive, burnout-mitigating employee experiences by ensuring that employees feel supported.

HERE'S HOW:

- Listen to work-related problems.
- Encourage teamwork.
- Make everyone's opinion count.
- Make work purposeful.
- Focus on strengths-based feedback and development.

The Next Five Issues Managers Should Address

The root causes of burnout are within the span of control of managers. They cover some of managers' most important job responsibilities, including fostering positive employee experiences, addressing stressors at work, setting clear expectations, communicating effectively, removing barriers and ensuring that employees feel supported. How employees feel about their job is largely on the manager's shoulders. That said, to be fair to managers, the root causes are big, broad issues to tackle.

Fortunately, research provides some clear-cut recommendations to help managers dig deeper into the antecedents of burnout. Beyond personally addressing and helping leadership develop solutions for the five root causes, managers should focus on these action items that reflect the five next-highest correlates of burnout.

6 LISTEN TO **WORK-RELATED PROBLEMS**

Listening may seem like an obvious solution, and many managers may feel as though they are doing well in this area. Yet, too few managers make frequent employee check-ins and ongoing conversations a high priority.

Employees whose manager is always willing to listen to their work-related problems are 62% less likely to be burned out. To help combat burnout, employees need to believe that their manager will address their problems, and they need to feel like their manager genuinely cares about them as *people*.

The best managers demonstrate that they care by investing in employees through awareness, time and attention. They know employees as individuals, celebrate achievements, have performance conversations, conduct formal reviews and, above all, respect their employees.

7 ENCOURAGE **TEAMWORK**

Coworkers provide an essential line of emotional support for employees who are struggling. Coworkers often understand the stress of a job better than managers do. But this doesn't mean managers should sit on the sidelines. Just the opposite — it's the manager's responsibility to create an environment where teamwork thrives, people help one another and everyone has someone at work who is willing to listen.

Great managers build committed, highly cohesive teams with deep bonds. They initiate effective, frequent communication and help to align their team members. They also hold individuals accountable for their role in building quality partnerships.

8 MAKE EVERYONE'S **OPINION COUNT**

Managers should actively solicit employees' opinions and ideas. When employees believe their opinions are welcome and make a difference, they feel important and included, and they begin taking more responsibility for their performance. This sense of ownership reduces burnout because it gives employees a feeling of *control* over their work — rather than feeling like work is something that happens to them.

Exceptional managers initiate open dialogue and ask for employees' input. They encourage creativity and new ideas that can positively influence business results. They also provide honest feedback on employees' ideas — advocating for good ones and addressing unfeasible ones.

9 MAKE WORK **PURPOSEFUL**

Employees are significantly less likely to be burned out when they can connect their work to their company's mission or purpose in a way that makes their job feel important. People do not want to work just for a paycheck; they want to find meaning in what they do. Managers must do more than point to the mission statement on the wall — they must show how their employees' contributions make a difference.

Reinforcing how employees' work changes their organization, industry or world is especially important for preventing or reducing burnout among millennials, who particularly crave purpose-driven, mission-oriented work.

The most effective managers cultivate a sense of purpose among employees by clarifying the organization's mission and helping employees discover how their role and daily tasks contribute to fulfilling that mission.

10 FOCUS ON **STRENGTHS-BASED FEEDBACK AND DEVELOPMENT**

Employees who have the opportunity to do what they do best are 57% less likely to experience burnout frequently. Why? When people have the opportunity to tap into their strengths, they are more engaged, more effective, less stressed and more focused on *doing their best work* — rather than seeing their job as a burden.

Gallup analytics consistently prove that managers get the best performance from their team members when they identify what their people do best, praise them for it, and guide them into tasks and partnerships that maximize their natural talents.

World-class managers know where their employees excel and look for career opportunities that empower employees to use their talents and strengths. Managers position their team members so they are engaged as individuals and provide value to the organization.

The Final Five: Key Changes for Systems and Workspaces

When prioritizing burnout-related strategies, organizations should put a strong emphasis on **manager development**. Our research consistently shows that no one has a more powerful influence on employee burnout than a direct manager.

However, issues related to employees' work environment — demands put on them and the spaces and structures that they work within — also affect their risk of burnout.

Here are five ways that employers can improve systems, structures and workspaces for the benefit of their employees.

11 PLACE **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND METRICS** WITHIN EMPLOYEES' CONTROL

Performance metrics tell employees and their managers how they're doing. Naturally, they also influence performance conversations and incentive pay. Employees who strongly agree their performance metrics are within their control are 55% less likely to experience burnout frequently.

When employees feel their work is being evaluated using metrics they can't control, anxiety results. It feels pointless to work hard when external factors can easily obscure one's best effort. And metrics — which should be a way to track success and show improvement — become a source of chronic despair and frustration.

12 REDUCE **NOISE AND INTERRUPTIONS**

Workplace studies consistently have shown that when employees are frequently interrupted, the quantity and quality of their work suffers — as does their wellbeing.

Organizations can reduce environmental accelerators of burnout by providing quiet, comfortable workspaces where employees can easily immerse themselves in their individual work, and organizations should be intentional and strategic when creating the workspaces that employees will use for collaboration and meetings. Gallup research shows that the three office features employees want most are privacy when they need it, personal workspace and their own office.



Enrich Your Employees' Work Environment

Although managers are confined by various policies and practices at work, they should make their best effort to enhance their workplace in these ways:

- Place performance expectations and metrics within employees' control.
- Reduce noise and interruptions.
- Design jobs to allow for autonomy.
- Audit your workspace lighting.
- Provide collaboration spaces that are inviting.

13 DESIGN JOBS TO **ALLOW FOR AUTONOMY**

Job autonomy means having flexibility and control over how work gets done. It is a strong enabler of high performance⁷ and can take on many forms, from personal choice in what to work on and how much time to spend on a task, to choice of work schedules and locations.

Jobs designed to enhance autonomy do so by providing **clear expectations** for outcomes and boundaries while empowering employees with an appropriate level of **decision-making authority** over the types of work they do and the processes they use to achieve their goals and develop professionally. Job seekers often list “interesting work” and “opportunities to learn and grow” as top reasons for wanting to join an organization. They also want a workplace that is flexible — one that gives employees a **choice about where and when to work**. More than half of employees say they would switch to a job that allows them flextime.

Allowing employees to have authority and flexibility can help them discover their ideal work conditions for getting into the efficient, productive flow of their work. That is why flexibility greatly affects employees' wellbeing and engagement and, therefore, their level of burnout. Employees are 43% less likely to experience high levels of burnout when they have a choice in what tasks to do, when to do them and how much time to spend on them.

Although providing autonomy is important, organizations need to find a balance between too much and too little freedom. Too much autonomy can cause excessive ambiguity and strain partnerships, creating a risk of burnout. Employees who work independently and flexibly still need managers who ensure that role expectations are clear, check in often and partner with their employees on goal setting. Remote working, for example, can result in unclear expectations and isolationism if remote employees are mismanaged. Leaders and managers should align on the right amount of job autonomy and flexibility when designing or redesigning a job.

⁷ Spector, P. E. (1986). Perceived control by employees: A meta-analysis of studies concerning autonomy and participation at work. *Human Relations*, 39(11), 1005–1016.

14 AUDIT YOUR **WORKSPACE LIGHTING**

Suitable lighting is important for maximizing productivity and promoting positive emotions in the workplace. About one in four employees say they would consider changing jobs for an office with better lighting — particularly one with natural light and a window where they can see outside. Natural lighting has been shown to promote calming, peaceful moods and reduce stress. A lack of natural lighting or the presence of poor, artificial lighting can cause negative moods and depression among employees.

Individuals have their own preferences for which environments fit how they work best. Employers should find out what is ideal for the majority of their team members, while providing alternatives to meet personal preferences.

15 PROVIDE **COLLABORATION SPACES** THAT ARE INVITING

Employees who have a space that helps them connect with coworkers are 26% less likely to feel burnout frequently. When employees have to wait in line for conference rooms, huddle in private offices or work against background noise, collaboration can become stressful.

An inviting collaboration space should include features such as room to move around, a whiteboard, teleconference capabilities and acoustics that allow everyone to be heard clearly. Notably, when employees are not collaborating, they want privacy and a workspace they can call their own.

Develop a Holistic Strategy for Combating Burnout

Gallup's breakthrough discovery in this research is that managers are largely responsible for the conditions most likely to cause or prevent burnout. The most immediate way to reduce burnout at your organization is for managers and employees to discuss which of the top 15 factors are most relevant to them.

However, managers can't do it all on their own. Various sources and situations — leaders, managers, teams, workspaces, systems and structures — cause burnout and affect it in different ways. Consequently, organizations must strategically focus on three areas to combat burnout.

Gallup recommends strategically focusing on three areas:

- 01 Make **wellbeing** part of your culture.
- 02 Equip your **managers** to prevent burnout.
- 03 Design your **employee experience** to reduce burnout.

01. Make Wellbeing Part of Your Culture

Organizational culture — the norms that define “why we exist,” “what we believe in” and “how we do things” — dictates how employees treat each other and experience the workplace.

When an organization makes wellbeing a priority of its culture and provides resources for employees to live healthier lives, they take better care of themselves. Employees encourage one another to live a healthy, meaningful and productive work life. They support each other in pursuing their ideal work-life balance — whether that means working reasonable hours, taking advantage of flexible work arrangements or enjoying their vacation time — and they collectively model making healthy choices. When wellbeing is a priority, preventing and reducing burnout is an imperative.

In contrast, when wellbeing is an HR-driven nice-to-have rather than the norm modeled across the organization, the workplace culture can perpetuate burnout.

The perks that HR offers for physical and financial health mean little when the other ways you do business advance work outcomes at the expense of everything else. If an organization's culture promotes working excessively long hours, working during personal time and generally putting work ahead of family, those burnout-inducing habits are going to be difficult to break.

Similarly, a command-and-control culture in which leaders encourage managers to give orders and achieve performance goals at all costs creates burnout risks related to feeling disrespected, unsupported and underappreciated.

What should wellbeing look like to employees? Gallup's research has found five essential elements that differentiate thriving lives from those that are struggling or suffering. The elements are interrelated — improving one element helps elevate the others. Organizations can act on all five.



TAKE ACTION

- Use Gallup's five elements of wellbeing as a science-based structure for all of your benefits and wellbeing programs and offerings. Monitoring behavior and taking action based on these elements will help keep employees healthy and thriving at work.
- Align leaders on why a culture of wellbeing matters and how to clearly communicate its purpose to the rest of the organization.
- Give employees ongoing access to advice and best practices. Organizations should develop a network of wellbeing "coaches" — specialists in the gym, internal financial experts, nutrition guides, community service and volunteer organizers, or generalists who collect success stories and methods, and managers should encourage their team members to use the available resources.
- Encourage team members to keep their wellbeing top of mind by integrating wellbeing topics into regular coaching conversations and development plans.
- Recognize and reward wellbeing achievements.

02. Equip Your Managers to Prevent Burnout

Managers are responsible for generating positive employee experiences and addressing stressors at work. 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.

Educate Managers About Burnout

Leaders are responsible for empowering managers with the necessary development and resources to create a successful work environment. In fact, this should be leaders' top priority for addressing burnout.

Managers are your best solution for burnout when they take time to learn what's behind burnout and are open to changing how they manage their teams. Taking ownership of their role in preventing burnout shows they are fully committed to helping every employee excel. Managers who are intentional about reducing burnout and increasing engagement set the stage for a high-performance culture.

TAKE ACTION

- Determine which of the 15 burnout factors are most applicable to your team and discuss them with team members ongoing.
- Help managers examine how their habits, communications and management style could be causing or mitigating burnout.
- Incorporate burnout-related conversations into meetings and gatherings where managers can reflect on common scenarios and share best practices with peers.

Position Managers to Focus on Their People

People manager jobs tend to include lots of management tasks that don't relate to leading and developing people, and these overloaded job descriptions are a big problem. When managers are strapped with administrative responsibilities, how can they provide employees with necessary support?

Leaders should review managers' job descriptions and role expectations, considering whether the expectations allow managers to prioritize people needs first. For what percentage of a manager's time does their leader expect them to engage in ongoing coaching conversations with individuals? How long should they spend allocating and monitoring budgets, creating schedules, and completing other management tasks?

Leaders should carefully look for competing priorities that make it difficult for managers to support and develop their team members. By eliminating or reassigning such tasks, leaders can liberate their managers to focus on their people.

TAKE ACTION

- Audit systemic causes of burnout, such as poor planning, communication issues, resourcing challenges and competing responsibilities.
- Set the expectation that managers are responsible for the engagement, wellbeing and performance of their people.
- Help managers master the five coaching conversations that drive performance to build trust and create opportunities to listen well and support their team members.
- Make wellbeing and burnout risks regular topics of discussion during coaching conversations.

Hire Managers Who Are the Right Fit

Great managers are a natural fit for their job and are prepared to lead others. Managers with innate leadership talents are wired to help employees feel energized to do their best and motivated to help their coworkers.

When you carefully choose great managers, they make habits of offering feedback, coaching and support and helping employees achieve the right balance between work and life. They naturally create a work environment that fosters engagement and high performance while reducing burnout.

Weak managers do the opposite: They contribute to inefficiencies and dysfunction, leading to a downward spiral in team performance.

TAKE ACTION

- Develop a system for identifying great managers. What criteria and experiences indicate a candidate would be good at leading your teams?
- Give individual contributors opportunities to lead people and projects before deciding to make them managers.
- Carefully choose managers based on their people leadership talents, training, desire to manage others and proven success managing others.
- Give individual contributors a path to advancement that doesn't require them to be a manager.

Remember That Managers Suffer Too

Many employees who suffer from burnout are managers. Their jobs are chaotic, and they are constantly "stuck" between managing their employees and fulfilling requests from their boss.

Managers report more stress and burnout, worse work-life balance, and worse physical wellbeing than the individual contributors on the teams they lead. Gallup analytics show that 32% of managers report feeling burned out at work very often or always, compared with 27% of individual contributors.





A closer look at the [manager experience](#) illuminates why managers are at an even higher risk of burnout than their boss and those they manage. Among the biggest challenges of the job are unclear expectations, a heavy workload, distractions, stress, competing priorities and performance challenges.

How can we expect managers to build an environment of high engagement and wellbeing when they are more burned out than the people they manage?

TAKE ACTION

- Give a realistic job preview to people considering a management role so they know what to expect.
- Teach managers to identify issues that drain them and how to make a plan for getting back on track.
- Check in regularly. Ensure managers feel fully supported and have what they need to manage their work, stress and people.

Top Challenges and Perks of Managers

CHALLENGES	PERKS
 Unclear expectations	 Voice and involvement in decision-making
 Heavy workload and distractions	 Autonomy and control over their work
 Job stress and frustrations	 Collaborative work environment
 Less focus on their strengths	 Opportunities for development and career advancement
 Frustrating performance reviews	 Motivating pay incentives

03. Design Your Employee Experience to Reduce Burnout


Organizations can systematically target burnout by improving their employee experience.

The employee experience encompasses the entire journey an employee takes with their organization. It includes all of the interactions an employee has with the organization throughout the **employee life cycle — seven critical stages** during which organizations have the most influence on the employee experience, from their applicant experience to when they exit the organization.

The employee experience also includes relatively constant aspects of the employee experience shaped by employees’ relationships with their **manager**, the clarity of their **role**, the value they bring to their **team**, their **workspace** and their **wellbeing**.

These key experiences shape organizational culture.





Talented employees *want* to work hard and be productive. All they need is the support of great managers and an exceptional employee experience. When organizations meet these needs, they empower their people to be highly productive *without* becoming burned out.

TAKE ACTION

A foundational step for enhancing the employee experience is having human resource leaders audit their talent optimization practices throughout the employee life cycle to determine whether they prevent or promote burnout. For instance, do you hire people who are proven to be a great fit for the role and prepare them to succeed through exceptional onboarding and development? Are your employees' opinions considered and the performance expectations for their role clear and within their control? Do your managers treat employees fairly?

Consider using the best practices below, along with those mentioned earlier in this report for the 15 factors, to improve your employee experience and mitigate burnout.

Talent Optimization Practices That Reduce Burnout

Life Cycle Stages	Best Practices	Burnout Causes and Cures
ATTRACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide realistic job previews to prepare candidates for the demands of the role. 	
HIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire for fit to role to ensure that employees have the natural capacity for the job. 	
ONBOARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an exceptional onboarding experience — employees who strongly agree that their onboarding process was exceptional are twice as likely to strongly agree they are able to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal commitments. 	
ENGAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture of high engagement — actively disengaged employees are four times as likely as engaged employees to say they very often or always feel burned out at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfair treatment at work (1)* • Make everyone's opinion count (8) • Make work purposeful (9)
PERFORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer ongoing, meaningful feedback, which motivates employees and helps them be more effective at fulfilling their job responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place performance expectations and metrics within employees' control (11)
DEVELOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strengths-based development to teach employees how to do more of what they do best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on strengths-based feedback and development (10)
DEPART	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition employees to the right role. • Ensure that employees leave feeling appreciated for contributions. 	

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the order of the 15 factors highly related to burnout, as discussed and numbered in this report.

It's no surprise that many of the factors that correlate highly with burnout directly link to engagement, performance and development because experiences in those stages happen every day. Similarly, the constant factors that are important to a great employee experience within and across each stage of the employee life cycle significantly influence burnout. Consider how your employees' manager, role, team, workspace and wellbeing may be affecting their risk of burnout and which are the most important to address.

How Core Aspects of the Employee Experience Relate to Burnout

Core Aspects	Best Practices	Burnout Causes and Cures
MANAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make managers responsible for addressing burnout. They should influence others on behalf of their team regarding factors that are outside their control and effectively execute their own actions that most directly mitigate burnout: clearly communicating, providing unwavering support and listening to work-related problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear communication from managers (3)* • Lack of manager support (4) • Listen to work-related problems (6)
ROLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set role expectations and structure jobs to make work more manageable and engaging. Ensure that workload and time pressures are reasonable. Provide as much job autonomy and flexibility as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmanageable workload (2) • Unreasonable time pressure (5) • Design jobs to allow for autonomy (13)
TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teamwork and shared accountability. When people work together and support one another, workload gets lighter and challenges seem smaller. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teamwork (7)
WORKSPACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design workspaces to be as comfortable and inviting as possible. Employees need spaces for both gathering and getting away from the buzz. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce noise and interruptions (12) • Audit your workspace lighting (14) • Provide collaboration spaces that are inviting (15)
WELLBEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make wellbeing part of your culture. Incorporate the five elements of wellbeing into regular conversations and work practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career • Social • Financial • Community • Physical

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the order of the 15 factors highly related to burnout, as discussed and numbered in this report.



Establish a Burnout-Free Work Environment

Burnout is a growing problem that leaders need to take seriously. Its prevention requires manager and organizational alignment — because employees are less likely to experience burnout when their *holistic* workplace needs are met.

Employees should feel supported and recognized for their work and connected to their team and manager. Just as important, employees need to have clear, meaningful goals that are within their power to attain, and they should have a positive, comfortable work environment.

When people are surrounded by a supportive manager, team and environment that meet their needs, their engagement soars, and they naturally flourish and perform well over the long term. That's beneficial for employees — who enjoy healthier, happier lives. It's also beneficial for organizations that seek sustained, long-term productivity, retention and growth.

Ultimately, a workplace where employees can feel and perform their best is a win-win-win — for the company, its workers and its customers.

Connect With Gallup

In today's fast-paced workplaces, supporting employees well is *far* easier said than done.

Fortunately, Gallup knows more about how to create an exceptional workplace culture than any other organization in the world.

Gallup combines decades of global research with today's latest data science to empower leaders with transformative advice and analytics.

We help leaders answer their most pressing questions, such as:

- Does our workplace culture mitigate or propagate burnout?
- How does burnout affect our productivity, turnover and retention?
- Do our managers know how to coach and support employees?
- Do our performance metrics motivate employees to do outstanding work?
- Do our selection methods identify innate manager talent?

Discover how Gallup can help you reverse and prevent burnout and support a thriving workplace culture that fuels performance excellence and appeals to talented job candidates.

Learn more at gallup.com/workplace.

Appendix

Most data in this report came from Gallup Panel studies conducted Jan. 29-Feb. 15, 2016; May 23-June 13, 2016; July 25-Aug. 15, 2016; Sept. 24-Dec. 4, 2018; and Sept. 3-16, 2019. Our analyses included 24,522 respondents who were employed full-time by an employer. Data from external sources and previously published studies are cited throughout the paper.

Gallup launched the Gallup Panel in 2004 as a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. households that are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) and address-based sampling methods. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel.

Gallup randomly selects Panel households using outbound phone interviews that cover both landline and cellphone households. Panel members agree to participate in an average of three surveys per month via phone, web or mail. There are no incentives or financial rewards for taking part in the Panel, and individuals may remain in the Panel for as long as they would like, given they continue to participate. Monthly attrition averages approximately 3%.

The Gallup Panel includes approximately 100,000 individuals. Currently, 80,000 Panel members complete surveys via the web. Gallup recruits new members on an ongoing basis to replenish demographic segments that have left the Panel.



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GALLUP®

World Headquarters

The Gallup Building
901 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

t +1.877.242.5587

f +1.202.715.3045

www.gallup.com