



CAN YOU SPOT BURNOUT?

by Laura Hamill, Ph.D.

limeade®

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 The truth about burnout
- 4 Fostering an engaged workforce
- 5 Authentically supporting employees
- 6 Strengthening managers
- 7 Too much of a good thing?
- 8 From on fire to... burnt out
- 9 Burnout has big consequences
- 10 Burnout vs. disengagement
- 11 Tips for battling burnout



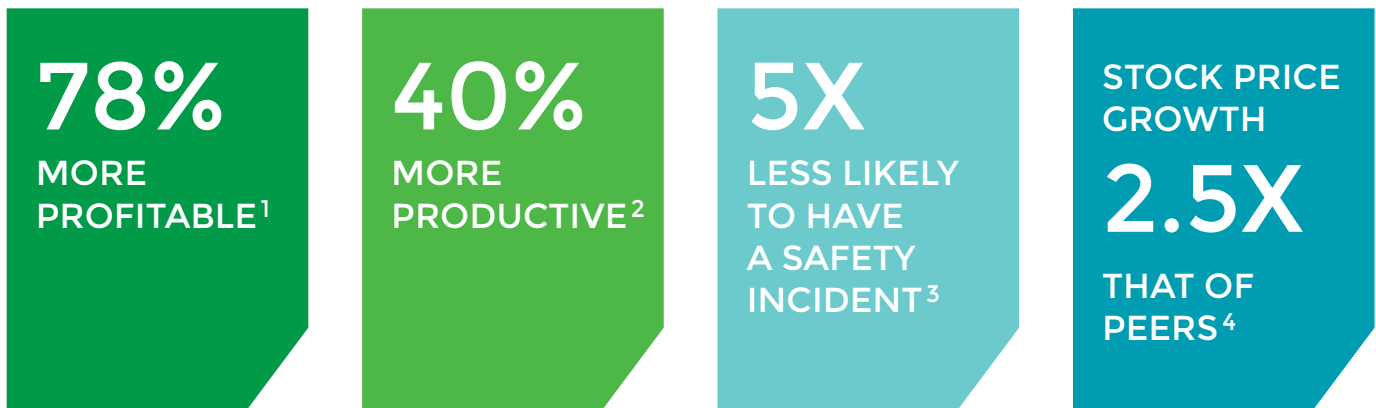
THE TRUTH ABOUT BURNOUT

EMPLOYEES HAVE TO BE ON FIRE TO BURN OUT. BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN THEY'RE FEELING THE HEAT?

Engaged employees drive real business results. Engaged employees are energized, enthusiastic and focused. They enjoy their work, help boost productivity, performance and growth.

Ultimately, engagement is good for people and for business.

AFTER ALL, COMPANIES WITH ENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE:



Engagement isn't reserved for specialty jobs with mind-blowing benefits and an exceptional pay check. It's totally possible to be engaged in any role, at any level. Anyone can love what they do and be truly excited about their work.

But can there be too much of a good thing? Definitely.

Read on to learn how to foster an engaged workforce and the danger of expecting employees to sustain high levels of engagement.

FOSTERING AN ENGAGED WORKFORCE

Engaged employees feel a deep connection and sense of purpose at work that creates extra energy and commitment. It's obvious why employers want to foster engagement, but it's a challenge to know exactly how to do this. After all, employee engagement is currently hovering around 32 percent and has remained low for the past two decades.⁵

THE MISSING LINK: WELL-BEING

Employee well-being drives engagement, and vice versa. When employees are engaged in their work, they feel good and live with a sense of purpose.

Employees with higher well-being are twice as likely to be engaged in their jobs.⁶ These employees enjoy their teams more, are more loyal and recommend their company as a great place to work.⁷ When employees have high well-being AND feel supported by their organization, it's a win for everyone.

WELL-BEING ↔ ENGAGEMENT

Well-being and engagement are statistically related, but exactly why is unknown. Do people with higher well-being handle stress better? Or do they have a stronger sense of purpose at work?

Here's where researchers are going next:





AUTHENTICALLY SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES

The best way to foster employee engagement and well-being is to support employees. And the best way to support employees is to focus on managers. Managers are the most important way employees feel supported by their organization.

Most employees say their immediate managers matter more than C-suite leadership when it comes to well-being support. But often, managers don't understand how to talk with their employees about well-being.⁸

And it's not just about well-being. Managers play a big role in employee engagement. In fact, they account for up to 70 percent of variance in employee engagement.⁹ And employees who rate their manager as excellent are five times more engaged than employees who rate their manager as poor.¹⁰

THE EIGHT CRITICAL DRIVERS FOR SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES:



STRENGTHENING MANAGERS

Managers play a critical role in ensuring employees have a great experience. They're not only responsible for the career path of the employee, they're responsible for bringing the company values and culture to life.

Now that we know managers help foster employee engagement and well-being, the next step is to help managers understand how to do this.

A great place to start is with an understanding of the strongest drivers of engagement, including:¹¹

- I like my work and have challenging but achievable goals
- I give my work my all and have a reasonable number of hours
- I'm realizing my potential and learning new things
- I'm able to use my greatest strengths and my abilities fit well with my role
- I feel valued and respected
- I feel like I'm making an impact
- I work a reasonable number of hours and spend my time wisely
- My manager and organization support me

Managers who strive to create these conditions for their employees will be more likely to have employees with high well-being and who are truly engaged.



TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

With a great culture, a supportive manager and a job that provides meaning and purpose, employees are more likely to feel engaged at work. This is when employees really thrive. But it's a fine line. Highly engaged employees are at risk for burnout because its not possible to sustain high levels of engagement over time.

Burnout is a prolonged exposure to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job. It's defined by:¹²

EXHAUSTION

I'm so tired

CYNICISM

I'm so fed up, I just don't care anymore

INEFFICACY

I'm not making a difference

Burnout results in low productivity and high turnover — especially turnover of the most talented and productive employees.



BURNED OUT

In order to be burned out at work, an employee has to be highly engaged. The employee has to be all in and care deeply to get to the point of feeling burned out. This means that top performing, highly engaged employees are at the highest risk for burnout. And these are the employees that employers can't afford to lose.

Burnout happens when a highly engaged employee begins to have low well-being without any support from their manager or organization or they aren't able to resolve it for themselves. And sadly, this is a result of the pressure and lack of support from the employer.

Most companies think of burnout as a personal issue because it shows up so differently for each person who is experiencing the cycle of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. The reality is that burnout is really an organizational issue.

HERE ARE THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF BURNOUT:¹³

- Overload — workload and time
- Pressure
- Role conflict and ambiguity
- Lack of support from managers
- Lack of feedback
- Lack of participation in decision making
- Lack of fairness and equity
- Values disconnect
- A “broken” psychology contract

BURNOUT HAS BIG CONSEQUENCES

Burnout is associated with absenteeism, intention to leave the job and actual turnover. But for people who stay on the job, burnout leads to lower productivity and a negative impact on team members. Often times, burnout is “contagious.” It can spread toxicity across a team or spillover into people’s home life.¹⁴

PERSONAL:

- Lower productivity
- Stress-related health issues
- Increased substance abuse
- Can precipitate anxiety, depression and decreases in self-esteem

ORGANIZATIONAL:

- Reduced organizational commitment
- Absenteeism
- Intention to leave
- Actual turnover



BURNOUT VS. DISENGAGEMENT

While both disengaged and burned out employees are at high risk for turnover, burnout is not the same as disengagement.

Disengaged employees don't care about the work and the organization. They're not committed. They see work as just a job.

Prolonged burnout can result in an employee who is disengaged.

COMPARE THIS TO HOW SOMEONE FEELS WHEN THEY'RE ENGAGED.



BURNOUT

"I have cared so deeply for so long without a break from stress, that I have become depleted and cynical."



DISENGAGEMENT

"I have given everything to this job."
"I am past the point of caring or I have never cared at all."
"This is just a job."



ENGAGEMENT

"I am energized by and connected to this job, so much so that I get purpose from it."
"This is way more than a job."

TIPS FOR BATTLING BURNOUT

The good news is that burnout is preventable. With strong managers and an understanding of what causes burnout, employers can more readily prevent their top talent from burning out. Here are four ways to help prevent burnout today:

1. PROVIDE RECOVERY TIME

Everyone needs a break to recover. People rest their bodies after a workout but continue to push themselves to the limits at work. This is not only unproductive, it leads to burnout. Managers should adjust workloads and be aware when someone has been going full throttle in overdrive for too long. That said, recovery time or breaks just help deal with the symptoms of burnout but they don't provide a real solution. Make sure managers focus on the root causes too.

2. FOSTER A WELL-BEING MINDSET

How people think about situations has an impact on their ability to handle and recover from them. What's stressful to one person can be energizing to another — it's subjective. For some, stress is enhancing and exhilarating, while for others who have more negative association with stress, it's debilitating. When you know how people think about stress, you can help them cope with it and prevent burnout. Have managers remind

people to keep a positive outlook and ensure employees are taking time to take care of themselves.

3. BUILD SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

People are wired to be social. And the more we can rely on each other for support, the better off we are. In fact, social support positively relates to important factors that impact stress, health, well-being and engagement. Employers have the unique opportunity to foster community among employees by boosting team support and social networks. These social connections will help employees get the support they need and help guard against burnout.

4. PURPOSE

Helping employees connect to their purpose is key for burnout prevention. When people have a real emotional connection to their work, they're more connected to the company and their purpose. This helps put things into perspective when work gets hectic. One way to do this is to emphasize the ways in which an employee's work makes other people's lives a little bit better or easier. Communicate how an employee's work is connected to the company's mission and have clear goals to support employees in finding and staying connected to their purpose.

About the author

DR. LAURA HAMILL

Laura is the Chief Science Officer at Limeade, an employee engagement platform that builds great places to work by improving well-being and strengthening workplace culture. She leads the People Team and nurtures the Limeade culture of improvement while developing groundbreaking people practices and architecting employee engagement strategies for Limeade and its 100+ enterprise customers.

Laura is also the Managing Director of the Limeade Institute, which keeps a pulse on the latest employee well-being and engagement trends. She earned her Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology from Old Dominion University and a B.S. in psychology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Laura lives in Woodinville, Washington, with her husband, two children and a very large dog.



The Limeade Institute team consists of researchers with doctorates in organizational psychology, psychometricians, business insights experts and data scientists. The Limeade Institute will continue to launch research reports and share findings on employee engagement and well-being.



Limeade integrates well-being, engagement, inclusion and social recognition software into one seamless experience that brings workplace culture to life and helps employees and companies feel more connected.

TOGETHER, LET'S CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK.

Get in touch, we'd love to talk.

limeade.com



limeade®