



The Invisible Performance Drain

An Exploration of the Impact of Stress and Burnout on Today's Workplace

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About the Author

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Along with ten years on the faculty of the University of Phoenix, Bob has served as a special advisor to the American Productivity and Quality Center and on a number of corporate and academic studies regarding workforce trends. Since 1988, he has conducted more than 1500 speaking engagements from the towers of Wall Street to the bush of Alaska. He holds degrees in industrial arts, psychology, and education. He has earned the designation of Certified Speaking Professional from the National Speakers Association.

Common Sense Enterprises has been teaching employers how to better lead and manage their talent for more than a quarter century. Formerly the Center for Generational Studies, our team has specialized in four specific aspects of the talent equation:

- Recruitment & Retention of Employees
- Managing Cross-Generational Teams
- Improving Daily Workplace Decisions
- Preparing for the Workforce to Come

Over the years, our clients have included Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, IBM, KPMG, Discover Card Services, Shell Oil, Lockheed Martin, International Dairy Queen, Kaiser Permanente, CITGO, Chevron USA, the Food Marketing Institute, Searle Pharmaceuticals, Super 8 Motels, Ace Hardware, Major League Baseball, the Professional Golfers Association and a host of other household names, associations, government agencies, and educational institutions. Throughout these efforts, our focus has always been on the client’s bottom line. After all, developing top talent produces top returns.

Michelle feels pulled in too many directions. Even with an extra hour of clearing emails in the evening, she's never caught up. If you ask, she'll say she feels overwhelmed at least half the time.

Miles feels the same way, but for different reasons. It's not the number of tasks. It's the people. Getting promoted to customer experience manager sounded great at first. But now he's doing his old job and overseeing 15 other people who may or may not show up for work.

Then there's Tasha. She enjoys the challenges of underwriting, but she's lonely a good portion of the time. When she joined the agency, she could network with those around her. But since the pandemic, she's been "marooned" in her apartment staring at a screen all day. Since her boss prefers text to talk, even questions and conversations take place via the keyboard.

These and dozens of similar scenarios describe the typical work-life for millions of Americans. The disruptions of the past several years and the resulting workplace stress have combined to cost firms billions of dollars every year. But much of these costs are unseen, since they have subtle impacts on individual performance and productivity.

The purposes of this paper are three-fold. First, to identify the reasons for this phenomenon. Second, to enumerate the impact of this loss on performance and productivity. Third, to offer a model employers can use to guide their efforts in overcoming the workplace overwhelm within their organizations.

But first, a caveat. As of 2024, there are approximately 161 million individuals in working in the US marketplace, according to the US Department of Labor.¹ Of these, approximately 100 million are what can be considered knowledge workers, or people who think for a living.²

The vast majority of surveys conducted regarding stress and burnout use knowledge workers as their sample. Why? Because these individuals are typically more identifiable and accessible to those conducting this research. As a result, we need to be careful about how we extrapolate these findings to the remainder of the workplace. In other words, the work attitudes of workers in retail, manufacturing, transportation, and so on, may vary considerably because of their experiences on the job.

Part One

Changes to the Rhythm and Routine of Work

The pandemic, and its resulting shut-down, massively re-ordered work rhythms and routines, especially for those whose jobs can be completed from anywhere. Individuals working in the plants, the stores, the restaurants, the warehouses, and the hospitals returned to those facilities within in a relatively short time.

For knowledge workers, the experience has been far different. Once they adapted to working from home, they realized that work, as a location, was no longer as relevant. In fact, the majority believe they are more productive as remote workers than they are

in the office.³ Annie Dean, the former Head of Remote Work for Facebook, put it best for many when she observed that, “Our sense of place has been permanently altered.” It hasn’t just been the economic shutdown that caused these changes, however. This unexpected upheaval also compelled many to take stock of their beliefs about what they do for a living and the role work plays in their lives. This has resulted in considerable disengagement from the notion of careers since 2020.

Many of these individuals have developed different accommodations for personal needs such as childcare, elder care and other family-related challenges. With the cost of these services skyrocketing, many are faced with a tough choice. Do they continue to work and spend an increasing portion of it on these needs or do they leave the workplace and become primary caregivers? Mercer Consulting has found that 78% of Generation Y have caregiving responsibilities for children and 74% of Generation X balance care for both children and aging parents.⁴

Those working remotely have also realized how much time and treasure they save by not commuting to an office five days per week. These savings have become especially important for the millions struggling with the increased costs of living. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the cost of living has increased an average of 4.5% annually since 2020.⁵ When asked to return to the office, they have asked why. Most employers have been unable to come up with a reasonable justification. This has created an ongoing tension between the two parties that has yet to be resolved.

Then there’s technology . . .



While we were well into the digital transformation, the pandemic spurred these developments to a new intensity. The explosion of virtual communication is just one example. Zoom® became the essential communication tool for millions in both their personal and professional lives. They spent hours of daily screen time interacting with co-workers and colleagues. Then they spent the evenings and weekends catching up with family and friends. Of course, it wasn’t just Zoom they had to master. As they worked with customers, vendors, and others, they had to know the ins and outs of Go-to-Meeting®, Teams®, Skype®, WebEx®, Slack®, Google Meet®, and the rest.

The compelled introduction of all this technology has transformed the way millions communicate. But it has also burdened workers with having to develop an entire layer of technical expertise. This steals energy and focus that would be used in other parts of the job.

Add to this the flood of “must-have” apps and processes foisted upon us all every day. Even something as simple as ordering a Happy Meal® can require 10 steps at a McDonald’s kiosk. Not only does the average

person need job specific skills, they have the added burden of mastering the navigation of endless apps for purchasing everything from business services to bananas. Collectively, it is easy to understand why the majority of workers now feel overwhelmed or even burned out at least a portion of many days. Nearly 75% of US workers have suffered from burnout and the associated symptoms as a result of their current role according to Ringover.⁶

The Shift to Asynchronous Communication



This migration to digital communication has also changed the way workers communicate. Email, texting, and other software-based processes have assumed a primary role in how we interact. This has changed the nature of we relate. As with the impact of any new technology, this has been a mixed blessing.

On one hand, a good deal of non-timely communication can be relegated to these conveniences. On the other, spontaneous interactions that allow for quick questions, urgent conversations, off-the-cuff consultations and personal chats has been diminished, some would even say discouraged. Many have embraced this as a way to save time and interact more

efficiently. But for others, this loss of spontaneous interaction has resulted in the loss of time to build and deepen personal relationships. As one person put it, “Yes, we can save time by sending a text or email. But we don’t have the chance to develop the friendships and trust I think are essential between coworkers.”

The shift to remote and hybrid work has made the distinction between synchronous and asynchronous communication even more pronounced. The result of this shift has manifested in several ways. First, the flow of normal communication, in many cases, is delayed. This is in spite of the promise that daily decisions would be made more expeditiously. It is not uncommon for issues to take several hours to be resolved simply because one or more of the individuals involved does not respond to emails, texts, or messaging apps in a timely way.

Where picking up the phone used to take care of many issues in a two-minute conversation, there is now pronounced hesitation to initiate phone calls among many young professionals.⁷ As a result, workers can find themselves managing numerous incomplete tasks while waiting for responses. Constantly balancing these issues drains the essential blood glucose (sugar energy) they need to navigate during demanding days.

Another outgrowth of asynchronous communication has been the pronounced increase in loneliness reported among many due to the proliferation of remote and hybrid work. When Mercer Consulting asked “*Did you experience feelings of loneliness A LOT OF THE DAY yesterday?*” 20% of workers answered “Yes.”⁸ On one hand, millions

have welcomed the flexibility of working from home for several of the reasons mentioned above. On the other, those without established professional networks long for the opportunity to connect with age peers and seasoned colleagues. While there may not be an empirical means for measuring loneliness in the workplace, it can be reasonably assumed that this is having an impact on productivity, performance and employee turnover.

Part Two

Productivity and Performance: Are We Measuring the Right Things?



The impact of all these changes has resulted in a significant drain on both productivity and performance. Unfortunately, the terms productivity and performance are used interchangeably many times when referring to work. Part of this is the result of manufacturing-era research methodologies used by both state and federal agencies to report on outcomes. This practice muddies employers' ability to measure output. Sure, you can measure the productivity of factory workers by the number of widgets they make. But how do you measure the productivity of insurance adjustors, for

instance, when the number of claims they process can vary widely by the day or week?

For knowledge workers, measuring performance is a more reasonable solution. Counting the number of claim forms completed, for instance, is only one element in evaluating the desired outcome, and not a relevant one at that.

We would be better off setting an expectation that completed forms will be error-free, and submitted in a timely way and that adjustors will use their experience and critical thinking skills to work efficiently and effectively. Will some do it differently than others? Sure. But as long as their work meets or exceeds the expectations, why care about their individual approaches?

One of the challenges with this and other scenarios, of course, is that with the ongoing worker shortages and labor force reductions, employers need to monitor work volume more closely to ensure individual contributors are not overwhelmed. Unfortunately, the increased work volume many workers are experiencing is a significant contributor to the stress they complain about.

If we are to recapture lost performance due to these factors, employers will need to engender a culture of mutual trust. Workers will need to trust that employers will allow them to work in the most efficient way possible, provide them with adequate time and resources, encourage them to use their best judgment, and allow for the flexibility many need to balance work and personal needs. Employers will need to trust that those working for them will put in their best efforts, regardless of where they work (office, remote or hybrid), contribute their

best ideas, and view the job as more than the present paycheck. With the changing beliefs about how people view the role of work in their lives, employers are concerned that these “contractual” attitudes are leading to higher turnover and more detachment among those they employ.⁹ (More about this later.)

What is the Cost of Overwhelm in Today’s Workplace?



These costs can be divided into two broad categories. It is not the purpose of this paper to drill down on specific numbers. But here is a brief explanation of each.

Direct Expenses – These include healthcare for those suffering physical symptoms, mental-health support for those suffering from emotional challenges, absence from work, and errors and mistakes costing the organization measurable amounts, the cost of replacing employees who depart due to stress or for a less stressful opportunity elsewhere.¹⁰

Indirect Expenses – The elements in this category are, by their nature, more diffuse. In other words, they cannot be quantified by actual dollar cost. These include disruptions in the flow of decision-making, self-limits on creativity due to fatigue, lack of confidence

in making both minor and major decisions, possible damage to customer relationships, delays in completing work, possible impairment of vendor and collegial relationships, incivility, and mistakes that impair the organization’s desire for productive outcomes.

Then there is the cost to alignment and teamwork. When people feel stressed and overwhelmed, it becomes significantly more difficult to support organizational goals. While it is harder to measure these indirect costs, it can be argued that they are a multiple of the direct costs mentioned above.¹¹

Overwhelm and Burnout: Are They the Same?

Let’s pause here, briefly, to discuss the difference between overwhelm and burnout. While many use the terms interchangeably, there are distinct differences in how they manifest. Dictionary.com defines burnout as fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity.¹² It is generally associated with physical symptoms that can include chronic fatigue, head colds, insomnia, overuse or abuse of drugs or alcohol, and/or a retreat from everyday interactions. A more comprehensive explanation can be found [here](#).

While both burnout and overwhelm share some of the same symptoms, feelings of overwhelm are not generally as intense and are more episodic. (I will stipulate that the word overwhelm is a verb. To be exacting, the two words, “feelings of” should be added in front of the term. But

for the purposes of simplicity, I, and others, refer to these feelings as “overwhelm.” Hence, we want to “overcome overwhelm.”)

There is also somewhat of a cultural consideration. Many employees are reluctant to say they are “burned out” for fear of implying that they are incapable of doing their jobs. Being thought of as being “overwhelmed,” however, is something we all have experienced. As a result, it is a safer term when discussing the stress they feel. (It has also been my experience that employers are reluctant to admit that anyone on their staff is burned out because that implies the firm might be responsible. But it is okay to say that employees are stressed or overwhelmed because everyone faces that at times.)

Automatic, Choice, and Compelled Decisions: An Important Distinction



Everyday life is a non-stop series of decisions. Whether it's choosing between meals, the route to work, the project to work on, or the meeting to attend, we are making constant decisions, some large, but mostly small. We are, however, making so many more daily decisions than even a few

years ago. When our brains can't keep up with this kind of intensity, we begin to feel stressed. When it happens enough, we begin to feel overwhelmed. When we feel like this intensity is inescapable, we feel burned out.

Numerous researchers estimate we make approximately 35,000 decisions during our daily waking hours.¹³ These decisions can be divided into three categories:

- *Automatic decisions* are those we make in order to navigate life. These are, in large part, a function of the reptilian part of our brain. They are typically unconscious decisions such as steering a car, navigating past people as one walks, and even swallowing food. They generally are made subconsciously unless they become repetitive, such as the constant switching between accelerating and braking in a traffic jam.
- *Choice-oriented decisions* are those we make out of a desire for a particular outcome. These include what to wear, what to eat, how to approach a project, or whether to speak up in a meeting. If you consciously consider the decision before making it, it is choice-oriented.
- *Compelled decisions* are those we are forced to make due to a combination of two factors – 1) decisions required to move forward with a task. These include clicking out of pop-ups on a screen, completing the fields in a required form, opting in or out of tracking cookies and scrolling

through social media posts. 2) Inescapable media and advertising messages in public environments. This includes television screens in restaurants, airports, stores, malls, and government buildings. While you may try to ignore these messages, you are still having to make a decision to do so with each and every one of them.

Automatic decisions are made subconsciously and with very little effort (think walking, climbing stairs, or eating). Outside of these, we make many more compelled decisions every day than we do choice-oriented decisions. But because we lack control over when and whether these compelled decisions arise, we feel stressed by their appearance. As a result, compelled decisions are a major source of overwhelm, and if numerous enough, burnout.

The Role of Decisions and Decision-making in Overwhelm



While it is impossible to accurately calculate the number of compelled decisions we make every day, it is possible to create a rough estimate by considering your work, your environment, and your use of digital technology.

Here's an example. In a typical hour, a person might spend 15 minutes searching online, 10 minutes scrolling through social media, 20 minutes answering emails, and another 15 composing a document. During the 15 minutes online, they find themselves navigating the endless pop-ups and suggested links that are a part of that process these days. At an average of one every 15 seconds, the person is making a total of 60 compelled decisions to simply retrieve the information sought.

In the process, their focus may be derailed numerous times by a post, video or promotion they find interesting. In the 10 minutes they scroll through social media, they might make more than 300 compelled decisions as they decide whether to read or watch each individual post. As they answer emails, they are confronted with text suggestions, auto-corrects, and pop-ups that want to show them how to use the software more efficiently. With the proliferation of artificial intelligence, this is becoming even more invasive, under the guise of being helpful. In just drafting and responding to emails for 15 minutes, the individual might have to navigate 50 or more of these compelled decisions. This same thing might be true in the 15 minutes this person spends composing a document.

To sum up – In one typical hour, the average knowledge worker may have been confronted with several hundred compelled decisions. Doing this during a ten-hour working day results in dealing with thousands of unnecessary decisions that are designed to distract your attention under the guise of helping you.

Once the person has stopped working, they will confront these kinds of distractions again as they communicate with family and friends, spend time on social media, scroll through entertainment options, or do some online shopping. Arguably, 25% or more of the decisions the average person makes are these compelled choices. And that's just those which are a product of digital technology. On top of these are the announcements and advertisements in virtually every public space, as mentioned above. It is any wonder most people complain of fatigue at the end of a day, having been forced to make thousands of these compelled decisions. This drain on our energy is not obvious, however, because it becomes a routine, if we allow it.

The Invisible Workplace Drain



At this point, you might be thinking, *“So, we’re making more decisions. What impact does that have on my workplace?”* The answer? PLENTY!

On any given day, we all wake up with finite amounts of energy and focus. As we make decisions throughout the day, this energy and focus is continually depleted. This is especially true in fast-paced and pressured-filled environments. Most knowledge jobs

consist of moving back and forth from one task or project to the next over eight to ten hours each day. While we may not move a lot physically, the blood glucose we consume making those decisions depletes these reserves, resulting in fatigue.

Add to this all the unnecessary kinds of decisions mentioned above, and you have a recipe for feeling overwhelmed. While we may be able to restore some of this sugar energy through diet and rest, what we eat and how much we rest is many times compromised by the pressure we feel to do more with less, at a faster pace, in the midst of constant distractions, and with all the other responsibilities we might be balancing at home or in our personal lives. This fatigue impacts the essential elements of work, but in subtle ways, including:

Attention – When employees feel pulled in too many directions at once, their first reaction may be to stop making decisions. This may be out of a fear of making a mistake or an inability to focus sufficiently. As a result, they may “zone out, even if it is in the middle of meeting *they* are running. They may feel frustrated, even angry, because of feeling out of control.

Critical Thinking – As with attention, feeling overwhelmed impairs a person’s ability to think critically, especially in pressure-filled situations. This includes the ability to discern the elements of the challenge, the subtle nuances involved, the larger context, steps for moving forward, and the anticipation of possible outcomes. When employees feel stressed and overwhelmed, they hesitate to engage with complex issues.

Confidence to act – Feeling overwhelmed discourages employees from acting for fear of making a mistake. If this sense of overwhelm is ongoing, it will impact their performance and can impair the performance of those around them, hurting teamwork, and relations with clients, vendors, and others with whom they interact.

Self-efficacy – Self-efficacy is the belief in oneself to achieve a certain level of performance, opportunity, or place in life. In stressful times, this self-motivation can be impaired, discouraging individuals from meeting their own desired outcomes. This discouragement, in turn, can impact relationships with others, the urge to leverage opportunities, and to act decisively. The associated frustration and disappointment can lead to the more serious symptoms of burnout.

Stamina – When people feel overwhelmed, one of the first sacrifices they tend to make is their health and physical fitness. They begin to think, “I don’t have time to work out. I don’t have time to cook a nutritious dinner. I’ll get back to balance when things return to normal.” But things never seem to return to normal. There’s always something else to do.

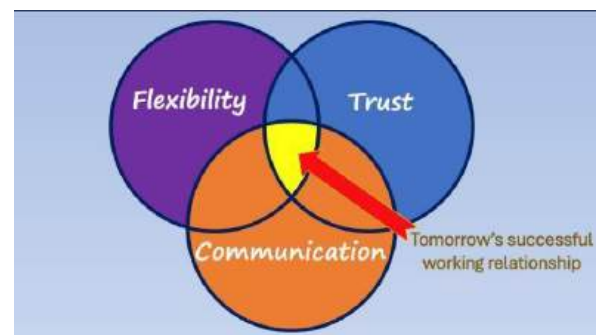
Pace of work – Even if it is not spoken, many assignments come these days with the implied, “*Take your time. Do it right. But have it to me right now.*” Taken together, all the symptoms mentioned above can combine to slow the pace of work in any environment. These challenges have impacted all of us from time to time. But with the pace and pressure in most of

today’s work environments, the incidence of this sense of overwhelm has skyrocketed.¹⁴

Part Three

Reducing Stress and Overwhelm in Tomorrow’s Successful Workplace

The impact of workplace stress and overwhelm is widespread and costly, as reviewed above. This section offers a simple model for successfully addressing the issue.



There are three essential key to reducing feelings of workplace overwhelm. Implementing them in concert measurably reduces these challenges in any organization. This requires effort at both the corporate and supervisory levels to work effectively. Consider how well these three elements relate within your workplace.

Flexibility – The top-down, nine-to-five, five-day-a-week ethos has been central to American society for close to a century. But circumstances over the past several years have compelled both employees and employers to re-evaluate these traditions. Employees, knowledge workers in particular, have begun to challenge the value of commutation, prescribed hours, and other long-held assumptions. As a result, employers’ reliance on this way of doing

business has been upended, never to return. While many leaders have demanded that employees return to the workplace, for instance, they have struggled to explain their reasoning when employees ask why.

At the same time, some employees have attempted to take this demand for flexibility to an extreme, rather than trying to find a middle ground with the organization that employs them. Anomalous stories in the media about certain individuals designing their own idiosyncratic jobs has made matters worse. As much as we all aspire to the perfect job in the perfect circumstances, reasonable people understand there is no such thing.

A successfully flexible workplace is somewhere in between. Stanford professor, Nicholas Bloom, a leading researcher on remote and hybrid work, has found that organizations driving decision making about work logistics down to the team level have been the most successful at maintaining performance and retention.

According to Bloom, “People don’t come to work for free snacks or plush couches, but to be with colleagues. It’s social work, and includes training, mentoring, and the collaborative thinking that all companies try to center as the selling point of being in the office. Ensure your team comes in on the same days, Front-load days with in-person meetings and events. Promote cross-office Zoom meetings and “*deep thinking*” work on remote days. Relatively new hires should come in an extra day each week for mentoring.”¹⁵

While employers continue to struggle with this way of thinking, a growing body of

evidence is showing that this approach is reasonable and viable. As a rule, employers and employees generally want to find common ground. But this will remain a work-in-progress for the foreseeable future.



Communication – Effective communication at all levels of an organization is critical to its success. Left on their own, employees will choose the communication style and process they find most appealing. Unfortunately, today’s endless diversity of approaches can create chaos and, in turn, adds to workplace stress, lost productivity and turnover. This, of course, has been compounded by the overwhelming number of technological options now available.¹⁶

Digital immigrants (those coming of age before the introduction of digital communication) have, over time, settled into a set rhythm of communicating with co-workers, vendors, and customers. In fact, these habits and routines are a source of comfort and predictability. When the organization introduces a new communication platform or protocol, it is sometimes met with resistance for this reason. Digital immigrants may be reluctant to spend time learning something new, especially if they are not convinced it will work any better than the current practice or

will stick around long enough to be fully embraced.

Digital natives (those who have come of age with endless digital options) tend to embrace new applications, both out of curiosity and a desire to work ever more efficiently. Establishing corporate-wide protocols may be viewed by some as restricting their ability to work in the best way possible. In fact, there have been instances of digital natives setting up networks among themselves on organizational servers, social media, and other platforms to bypass these protocols. This is why it is critical that corporate communication practices be carefully curated and enforced after they are established.

Inconsistent messaging from the top has also become more of a topic for discussion as the veracity of leaders in all kinds of organizations and institutions has been called into question. Today's workers are more skeptical of corporate initiatives, more impatient to see outcomes, and more frustrated as leaders and managers struggle to communicate effectively and consistently with this additional scrutiny.

As mentioned above, there is also the challenge of communicating in an asynchronous workplace. It was one thing to build effective communicating with a workforce that gathered every day and communicated in real time. It is quite another with employees communicating from the office, the home or the coffee shop, using a combination of email, texts, and other virtual platforms where messages aren't answered for hours because of different time zones or other obstacles. The use of phone calls to ask a question or

accomplish a task has fallen out of favor with many of those under 35. Where the digital immigrant makes a quick call to resolve an issue, the digital native messages the person. As a result, resolution can be delayed or even derailed.



Finally, most knowledge workers have become resentful of the amount of time consumed by meetings, finding many of them poorly run and unnecessary.¹⁷ Once again, this is a contributor to stress in the workplace for many. Organizations with the most effective communication cultures find ways to significantly limit the number of meetings throughout the week.

Trust – It could be argued that trust should have been placed as the first of these three essentials. But trust is an outgrowth of flexibility and communication in today's effective workplace. Surveys conducted by Gallup, Pew, Mercer, and others have long revealed that employees value meaning, opportunities for growth, and consistent supervision over work elements such as compensation and chances for promotion.¹⁸

When employees trust each other and the organization's leadership, performance and output increase substantially. In a macro

sense, employees need to feel they can trust that the organization and its leadership is acting in everyone's best interest. In a micro sense, employees want to believe that those overseeing their work are providing opportunities, clear and consistent direction, and have their backs, especially in challenging times.

Unfortunately, instances of betrayed trust have proliferated society over the past several years. Even if this has not been the case within your organization, the stories of scandals in other firms and institutions have made it difficult for any leader, no matter how capable, to engender faith in the corporate culture and those around them. As a result, the level of stress and feelings of overwhelm have been magnified because employees are on edge about the present and the future.



In today's demanding and distracting workplace, feelings of overwhelm and even burnout have truly become the invisible drain on performance. While many

organizations struggle to effectively address this phenomenon, there are firms making inroads into figuring it out. [Click here](#) for a continually updated collection of examples as we discover them through research and conversations with clients and others.

How can organizations across the marketplace reduce the cost of overwhelm within their workplaces? As you might expect, there is no one formula. As a leader, you can't say, "Do specifically this," or "Don't do specifically that." In fact, reducing the cost of overwhelm is something that must be done organically, and most often at the team level. The best thing managers and supervisors can do is listen to those around them and provide support and flexibility, within reasonable parameters.

The best thing organizational leaders can do is to support those practices with the resources necessary. While some leaders still believe that company policies need to hew to a "one-size-fits-all" approach for consistency's sake, this is proven to be counterproductive in today's shift from task management to outcome-based leadership.

The organizations that best adapt to this way of working have implemented tactics to reduce stress and overwhelm into their existing culture. They have not created a new culture, but have allowed the culture to evolve, based on the new ways of working and the needs of those performing the work. In any number of cases, a request by one team has spread to others as those in the culture have watched the original team thrive, improve productivity, reduce turnover, and embrace better personal balance for those involved.

Conclusion

Overcoming feelings of overwhelm among employees has become one of the dominant issues in today's workplace. If we, as leaders, are not vigilant, it will become a permanent drain on productivity and performance. But it does not have to be that way. As much as many managers and leaders complain about having to deal with this challenge, there are organizations rising to the occasion and dealing successfully with this phenomenon.

Successful organizations will respond by:

- 1) Focusing on outcome rather than process in everyday work;
- 2) Compel decisions about hours, locations, and process down to the team level in every functional area and;
- 3) Make flexibility, communication and trust the lenses through which the organization is led.

All of this will require an on-going evolution in most organizations. But these efforts will result in consistent productivity and performance, increased retention and an engaged workforce that realizes that leadership has their best interests at heart.

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

² <https://research.contrary.com/company/front>

³ <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/15259-working-from-home-more-productive.html>

⁴ <https://www.mercer.com/insights/people-strategy/future-of-work/global-talent-trends/>

⁵ <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60267>

⁶ <https://www.ringover.com/blog/worst-industries-for-burnout>

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⁹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/employees-seek-personal-value-and-purpose-at-work-be-prepared-to-deliver>

¹⁰ <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/economics-burnout>

¹¹ <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/economics-burnout>

¹² <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/burnout>

¹³ <https://go.roberts.edu/leadingedge/the-great-choices-of-strategic-leaders>

¹⁴ <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/82-employees-risk-burnout-only-120310019.html>

¹⁵ <https://fortune.com/2022/10/17/companies-winning-hybrid-work-nick-bloom-salesforce/>

¹⁶ <https://www.zippia.com/advice/mobile-app-industry-statistics/#:~:text=The%20average%20American%20has%2080,app%20downloads%20worldwide%20in%202020>

¹⁷ https://www.forbes.com/sites/lisaconn/2024/03/28/why-do-so-many-teams-still-struggle-with-bad-meetings/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailydozen&cdclid=62e003f4f9c34d13104d336e§ion=strategy&sh=2c3fb6f11c5b

¹⁸ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>