HRInsights

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Preventing Remote Employee Burnout During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The shift to telecommuting has made it possible for employees to work while staying safe and preventing the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but it has also created a few challenges, including increased levels of workplace stress and employee burnout.

What is burnout?

According to the World Health Organization, doctors can diagnose an employee with burnout if they exhibit the following symptoms:

- Exhaustion or energy depletion
- Decreased engagement at work, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- Reduced productivity or efficacy

For some employees, the negative effects of burnout extend beyond their work life and into their home and social life. Moreover, burnout can increase an employee's risk for getting sick or developing a chronic condition.

How to Prevent Burnout in Remote Employees

Since burnout is the result of prolonged and chronic workplace stress, it's important to know how to recognize the signs of workplace stress.

While it may not be possible to eliminate job stress altogether for your employees, you can help them learn how to manage it effectively. Common job stressors include:

- Heavy workload
- Long work hours
- Lack of work-life balance
- Concerns over job security

While dealing with stress is a normal part of everyday life, and these uncertain times may be elevating your employees' overall stress levels, it's important to watch out for prolonged stress. Here are some early warning signs of burnout:

- Anxiety or depression
- Low morale
- Short temper
- Headache
- Stomach or back problems
- Fatigue

You can implement various activities to help reduce employee stress, which can improve health and morale—and productivity.

- Make sure that workloads are appropriate.
- Have managers regularly check in with employees to facilitate communication.
- Recognize and celebrate employees' successes. This contributes to morale and decreases stress levels.
- Encourage a positive work-life balance.

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- Train managers on strategies to keep employees engaged and motivated at work.
- Educate managers on the signs of employee burnout.
- Set clear expectations for working hours and productivity.
- Keep in mind that some employees will have to balance caregiving and telecommuting responsibilities.
- Be flexible and understand that not all employees will thrive while telecommuting.
- Don't task out busy work during these times to prevent heavy workloads.

While these strategies can help prevent burnout, they're not right for every organization. Be sure to carefully review each tip before implementing a mitigation strategy at your business.

For More Information

Burnout is a serious syndrome that may be affecting your employees. As such, it's important that you recognize the signs of burnout and take steps to prevent it while your employees are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information on stress reduction resources for employees, contact TechServe Alliance today.