

4 Ways to Fight Employee Burnout With Automation

7 min read



Employee burnout is a real threat to business operations.

Key Takeaways

- **The Signs Of Burnout:** Manifestation of physical symptoms (chest pains, increased heart rate, panic attacks, headaches, nausea, weight loss, or weight gain)...
- **4 Automation Trends to Combat Employee Burnout:** any repetitive task that's currently performed by humans in your business can most likely be automated by leveraging smart software and cutting-edge machine learning technology...
- **Measure Your Burnout-Busting Success:** As you take steps to automate processes and reduce employee burnout, you should be able to measure the positive effects of these changes on your productivity and employee happiness by tracking...

How so? It indicates a real lack of employee satisfaction and engagement. Burnout is also a strong indicator of employees who are at risk of leaving their jobs, meaning businesses with burnt-out employees tend to have higher turnover rates than those whose employees are energized and engaged.

This means that employee burnout is not only bad for your employees (i.e. your most valuable asset) but **also quite costly for your business.**

Employee burnout has been on the rise. Surveys from the American Psychological Association (APA) found that, across the board, workers in the United States experienced increased rates of burnout in 2020 and 2021 ^[1]. According to the APA's survey:

- 79% of respondents reported experiencing work-related stress in the previous month.
- 3 in 5 workers experienced negative impacts as a result of their work-related stress such as lack of motivation, energy, interest, and effort at work.
- Significant numbers of workers also reported experiencing cognitive weariness and emotional exhaustion.
- Nearly half experienced physical fatigue as a result of work-related stress.

What Is Employee Burnout?

Mayo Clinic defines employee burnout (also sometimes called job burnout) as, "a special type of work-related stress – a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity." [2]

What Are the Signs of Burnout?

Signs and symptoms of employee burnout include:

- Mental exhaustion
- Emotional exhaustion
- Physical exhaustion
- Increased absenteeism
- Disengagement
- Increased sensitivity to feedback
- Isolation
- Manifestation of physical symptoms (chest pains, increased heart rate, panic attacks, headaches, nausea, weight loss, or weight gain)
- Decreased productivity

How Automation Helps to Alleviate Employee Burnout

Automation can be used to alleviate employee burnout in several ways:

- Eliminating repetitive processes
- Streamlining workflow
- Increasing efficiency and clarity in communication
- Removing recurring roadblocks and frustrations
- Reducing opportunities for human error
- Decreasing on-the-job stress

4 Automation Trends to Combat Employee Burnout

There are several ways businesses can automate; any repetitive task that's currently performed by humans in your business can most likely be automated by leveraging smart software and cutting-edge machine learning technology. The following four categories of business operations have become veritable automation trends across industries.

1. Workflow Automation

When looking at the various workflows that take place during every process within your business, look for repetitive or menial tasks. For example, paperwork filing, form completion, or data entry are typically considered repetitive.

Read More: [How Recognition and Rewards Impact Employee Engagement and Performance](#)

These types of tasks slow down workflow, diminish employee engagement, and also leave lots of room for human error. Most of these types of repetitive tasks that gum up business operations and reduce employee happiness can, thankfully, be automated.

2. Communication Automation

In addition to repetitive tasks, certain types of communication can also become repetitive and time-consuming for employees whose talents and energy could be better spent on higher-value tasks. For example, sending out a mass e-mail campaign or mailing communications to clients can be a terrible waste of employee time when they have to handle the job manually.

There are, however, lots of software programs available for streamlining communication processes both outside of your business and inside the office. Instead of communicating policy changes one by one, these types of messages or department/business-wide reminders can be automated to save time and energy.

3. Accounting Automation

Accounting automation is another major automation trend that can help to combat employee burnout – and not just in your bookkeeping and accounting department. Yes, automating repetitive back office tasks will take a significant burden off of your back office employees by mitigating their fear of making mistakes and eliminating repetitive (i.e. boring) tasks.

Read More: [Been Burned by Outsourcing Before? Let's Talk about It.](#)

Back office automation, however, can also improve the happiness of employees in other departments, as well, because accounting automation can be used to automate tasks such as expense reporting and categorization, time tracking, reimbursement requests, estimate generation, and invoicing. It can also streamline the payroll process, simplifying and personalizing the way employees get paid.

4. Document Organization Automation

If you store your company's documents and forms in a network folder that all employees can access, these folders can quickly take on a life of their own, becoming highly disorganized and stressful to use. That's why the automation of document organization and file naming conventions has become increasingly popular in business. You no longer need to worry about determining which documents are the most up-to-date and which forms are outdated or knowing where to find a document when you need it.

Sure, a small search for a file might seem like only a minor annoyance in the big sweep of things, but minor inconveniences build up and become major roadblocks and sources of stress. Doing anything you can to mitigate any minor stumbling block in your employees' workdays will go a long way to improve their happiness and satisfaction on the job.

Fight Burnout Through OUTSOURCING.

By moving tasks to an outside expert, organizations can free up their employee's time to focus on more high level, profit driving tasks.

How to Energize and Engage Your Employees With a Successful Automation Rollout

Any change – even a change that is intended to improve your employees' work life – is typically met with resistance. Humans are, after all, creatures of habit. We get comfortable with the way things are and naturally fear changes because we are afraid of the unknown future they present. So, when implementing automation in your business, consider the following tips to ensure the changes help to alleviate burnout, instead of inciting more anxiety.

1. Lead by Example

Be sure you and the rest of the leadership in your company are on the same page about the new changes and automation coming to your operation. Be sure to revise your operating framework to include workflow and strategy updates that reflect your newly automated systems. Automation needs to be implemented as company-wide programs – not as projects assigned to individuals – to ensure continuity throughout the [organization](#) and even in the face of potential employee turnover.

2. Collaborate

When transitioning from manual to automated workflows, involve your employees from the very start. Talk with them about the processes they would like to automate or the roadblocks they encounter in their daily workflows. Ask them what slows them down, frustrates, or bores them. Discuss your ideas and options for beginning to automate processes and take their feedback to heart.

Read More: [Workplace Culture: What It Is and Why It's Important For Your Business](#)

3. Fast Track Employee Buy-in

You can also help to fast-track employee buy-in and collaboration to mitigate resistance to the changes by recruiting employees at all levels as members of an automation task force. This task force can help to "evangelize" the upcoming changes, explaining how they will help improve workflow and combat employee burnout.

4. Take Baby Steps

Overhauling several steps in your operation could be overwhelming to employees because, even though the ultimate goal of automation is to make work easier, the changes still

require learning and adjustment. So, big changes are more difficult to swallow than small, incremental changes. So, take baby steps, automating one process at a time to avoid accelerating burnout as a result of changing too many things too quickly.

5. Redefine Roles

As employee time frees up thanks to newly automated processes, be mindful about how you redefine the roles of your employees. Consider their individual talents, career goals, and interests when deciding what sort of higher-value, more meaningful tasks they can now use their time to focus on.

6. Rethink the Workload

Additionally, remember that your employees were potentially facing burnout before you implemented these changes.

If your employees were previously feeling overwhelmed with more work than they could reasonably accomplish in a regular workday, then consider allowing them to enjoy carrying a slightly lighter load.

Instead of redefining their roles and time, maybe you simply allow them to continue performing the [manual tasks](#) that remain from their original job descriptions while catching their breath, decompressing, and reengaging in the workplace.

Measure Your Burnout-Busting Success

As you take steps to automate processes and reduce employee burnout, you should be able to measure the positive effects of these changes on your productivity and employee happiness by tracking a few key metrics such as employee retention rates, ROI on labor, planned-to-done ratio, revenue per employee, customer satisfaction, and profit margins.

Most importantly, with burnout under control, you'll be at the helm of a great, positive place to work, managing happy and engaged employees and attracting top talent to your organization.

[1] <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-burnout-stress>

[2]

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>