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Burnout in the Workplace:

**Three Curative and Preventive Solutions to
Effectively Decrease Its Prevalence.**

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Executive Summary

Stress in the workplace is no new thing, but constant stress with seemingly no outlet leads to burnout: an envelope term for the physical symptoms caused by employees feeling a lack of control, feeling swamped by minutiae, and feeling encumbered by the endless pressures of work (Boyd). These ailments, among others, include headaches, high blood pressure, stomach issues, and trouble sleeping, and the repercussions of burnout extend far beyond the employees themselves (Mayo Clinic). According to the American Institute of Stress, workplace stress causes over \$300 billion in financial costs due to workers' compensation, medical costs, accidents, and absenteeism (Boyd). While this is a daunting issue, taking definitive action to ensure the contentment of employees can save a corporation a lot of money and increase worker productivity. This white paper will provide insight into the issue of burnout in the workplace and provide three solutions for American corporations to effectively diminish its presence.

Burnout is, in large part, due to the amount of control employees feel they have over their job. When an employee feels that they have more control of their job, they are more likely to thrive. When they feel that the job controls them, the stress begins to mount (Boyd). Therefore, one solution to decreasing workplace burnout is to increase employee autonomy. When the right balance of autonomy is achieved, managers and employees engage in a mutually sustainable relationship that limits burnout (Maylett).

Burnout is also caused by managers, because they have a lot of influence on employees' perception of their job. By simply recognizing this, in addition to actively changing their leadership methods, managers can help decrease employee burnout (Harvey). The second solution will detail how managers can recognize the symptoms of burnout and outline specific changes for managers to implement to increase employee satisfaction. When employees are satisfied, their stress levels, and thereby, burnout will decrease (Harvey).

The effects of burnout are felt by many, but not everybody who is affected is comfortable to talk about their problems. The final solution proposed by this paper will focus on destigmatizing mental health issues and promoting environments where mental health can be freely discussed such as meetings with help groups and mental health professionals. In fact, corporations that implement such programs see improvements in employee health and performance (American Psychiatric Association).

Burnout is a problem that spans across all industries, and its effects are felt more in today's fast-paced world than ever before. While there is no guaranteed way to completely eliminate burnout, American corporations can definitely decrease its ubiquity by using these three curative or preventive solutions in conjunction with one another.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Burnout: Background and Problem Discussion	6
History of the Term “Burnout” and Its Manifestations	6
Issues of the Recent Burnout Epidemic	7
Changes In Workplace Culture and Employee Expectations.	7
The Role of Today’s Advancing Technological World In the Workplace	8
Solution 1: Increasing Employee Autonomy	10
Introduction to Increasing Employee Autonomy	10
Why Employees Want Autonomy and Employers Should Too	10
Advantages of Increasing Employee Autonomy	11
Disadvantages of Increasing Employee Autonomy	11
Solution 2: Increasing Corporate Involvement	12
Introduction to Increasing Corporate Involvement	12
Advantages of Increasing Corporate Involvement	12
Disadvantages of Increasing Corporate Involvement	13
Solution 3: Destigmatizing Mental Health and Providing Resources	14
Introduction to Destigmatizing Mental Health and Providing Resources	14
Advantages of De-stigmatization and Environment Implementing Mental Health Programs	16
Disadvantages of De-stigmatization and Environment Implementing Mental Health Programs	16
Conclusion	17
Works Cited	18

Introduction

The advent of technology, among other things, has made all parts of our world run at a much faster pace, and the workplace is not exempt from this anomaly. According to the American Institute of Stress, 80% of workers say they experience stress on the job and 75% of workers believe they experience more on-the-job stress than the last generation (Boyd). Financial analytics company, The Motley Fool, corroborates this sentiment: “[employee stress levels have] climbed nearly 20% in the past three decades” (Backman). It is evident that stress is prevalent and on the rise, and so are its accompanying effects such as burnout, the focus of this paper. While burnout is common in all environments across the world, the scope of this paper is limited to burnout in the workplace in the United States.

Since the term was coined in the 1970s, burnout has been garnering an increasing amount of attention. In order to make headway on such a vast issue, managers and employees must be mindful and assess their situations. Workplace burnout is an immense problem, and this paper strives to provide the historical background of burnout along with three solutions to potentially decrease its presence. The three solutions in question are increasing employee autonomy, increasing manager awareness, and destigmatizing mental health and providing resources. The advantages and disadvantages of each solution will be presented to provide corporations with the information to make a subjective decision on the best course of action to tackle burnout.

Burnout: Background and Problem Discussion

Almost every employee has or will face an issue with burnout at least once in their professional life time. In the ever evolving, fast-paced, technological world of today, employees are feeling even more pressure to be the first ones to get the next big thing to market, to solve issues at a moment's notice, and to get quality products in their customers' hands quicker than ever before. Whether coming from job duties or from personal issues at home (that then spill over at work), burnout in the workplace is becoming increasingly prevalent. With mental health illness becoming less stigmatized and treatments gaining ground, it seems that people are starting to pay more attention to and are recognizing when burnout and distress are happening in the workplace.

It is likely that both employers and managers have experienced burnout themselves, and therefore can understand the harm it causes. Burnout not only affects the employee, but the organization as well. After noticing the effects of workplace burnout, employers and managers can work to find solutions that will help combat these issues head on. This could be anything from examining each employee's workload to establishing company-based employee assistance programs. Companies should set mental health distress caused by burnout as a top priority of concern because it can cause substantial revenue loss as a result of decreased productivity, increased employee absenteeism, and more frequent workplace accidents (Boyd).

In order to understand why burnout is more of a cause for concern today, and why solutions with positive impact are necessary, one first needs to look at how (and when) the term "burnout" was coined and some of its main manifestations. It will then be beneficial to look at two of the overarching reasons for the major rise of employees experiencing burnout today. These two general explanations for burnout becoming a recent epidemic include how workplace culture has changed from the past, and the role of today's ever evolving, fast-paced, and advancing technological world. By understanding how the expectations of employees have changed, one can see the need for companies to put this issue at the top of their list.

History of the Term "Burnout" and Its Manifestations

"Burnout" has more than likely been occurring for longer than we know in one way or another. However, the term "burnout", as we know it today, was not coined until the 1970s. According to an article by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care, on the National Center for Biotechnology Information database, "burnout" was introduced by Herbert Freudenberger, an American psychologist, who, at the time, used the term to describe "the consequences of severe stress and high ideals in 'helping' professions." This is because people in these professions would frequently be "'burned out' -- exhausted, listless, unable to cope" (U.S. National Library of Medicine). Today, we have seen that burnout can happen to anyone, in any profession, at any time.

While the origin of the term “burnout” is not completely certain, American psychologist, Herbert Freudenberger, is credited with creating the term to describe people in “helping professions” as “exhausted, listless, and unable to cope” (National Library of Medicine).

Despite burnout in the workplace becoming significantly more prevalent since the 1970s, there still isn't a clear definition of what burnout really is. According to a Deutsches Arzteblatt International article, found in the U.S. National Library of Medicine database, there has been little research and few high-quality controlled studies into “burnout syndrome” and therefore extensive

analysis is needed in order to establish a scientific basis, criteria for diagnosis and classification, and how it should be most accurately treated (Kaschka, et al.). Therefore, there has yet to be an agreement on which symptoms are considered burnout and which are not. However, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, most definitions share a similar idea of three main areas of symptoms which are considered to be signs of burnout. The first main area is *exhaustion*, in that people feel drained physically and emotionally of energy, are tired and bogged down, and are unable to cope. Exhaustion can also encompass many physical symptoms. The second is *alienation from (work-related) activities*, where people find their jobs increasingly stressful and become cynical about their work environment and coworkers, and become numb and distant. The third main area of symptoms is *reduced performance*, in that burnout mainly affects everyday work tasks, where people become very negative about their duties, have difficulty concentrating, and lack creativity and motivation (U.S. National Library of Medicine).

Knowing how the term “burnout” came to be, its general definition, and its main areas of symptoms can aid in one's understanding of how it has become a substantially increased cause for concern today. Consequently, having a general understanding of the definition of the issue, can help guide people to acknowledge how the change in workplace culture and our fast-paced, advancing technological world, are two factors that have contributed to the recent epidemic.

Issues of the Recent Burnout Epidemic

This white paper looks at two factors of the significant increase in the number of employees experiencing burnout: how workplace culture has changed from the past and the role of our evolving, fast-paced, advancing technological world. These two factors will be discussed separately in the following sections.

Changes In Workplace Culture and Employee Expectations.

Today, a majority of employees are logging far more hours than ever before as a result of increasing global competition, a new culture of society wanting things in our hands immediately, advancing technology and devices, and the need for constant connectivity (Kraft). This newfound societal culture has brought forth increased product and business demands, with a much heavier emphasis on profit. This has resulted in unfair work treatment, unreasonable deadlines, unmanageable workloads, lack of support

from employers and managers (and even suppliers and customers too), and the expectation of constant response and communication (Kraft). This has created a generation of exhausted, overworked, and many times under-paid, burned out employees.

In conducting research, this white paper has found compelling statistics that show how expectations and demands of employees have increased from 20-25 years ago. First, by looking into the status of employees from decades before, one can see the magnitude of increased employee expectations. According to The American Institute of Stress, a 1999 government report found the number of hours worked increased by 8% in one generation, to an average of 47 hours/week, with 30% of employees working 49 hours/week. This culture of overworked employees in the United States becomes increasingly more prevalent with each year. American workers clock in more hours on the job than any other industrialized nation. Even in 2000, Americans were working more than the equivalent of an extra 40-hour work week, in comparison to ten years prior. These increasing number of hours per work week took a huge toll on employees. A survey of 800,000 workers in over 300 companies found that the number of employees that called in sick because of stress tripled from 1996 to 2000 (The American Institute of Stress).

In comparing these statistics to those of today, the number of hours worked per week, number of employees calling in sick due to stress, number of workers absent each day, and cost of unanticipated employee absences have increased even further. Today, The American Institute of Stress has estimated that more than 1 million workers are absent each day as a result of stress and burnout. The Agency for Safety and Health at Work reported that of the 550 million working days lost each year from employee absenteeism, over half are burnout and stress related. American companies are estimated to lose more than \$602 per worker, per year do to unanticipated absences. For larger companies or organizations, this could result in more than \$3.5 million in losses each year (The American Institute of Stress). In addition, when employees are absent that other employees' work or company projects depend on, further work cannot happen, which results in even larger costs. This rise in burnout isn't affecting just individual businesses either, it is also causing a significant toll on the U.S. and global economies. According to Business Insider, annual cost of burnout to the global economy is approximately \$323.4 billion. In the U.S. economy, burnout has cost an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion in health-care spending each year (Tottle).

By comparing some of these statistics from just 20 years ago to some of the statistics today, one can see the impact increased burnout has not only on individual employees or companies, but on the entire country's economy. These facts show that workplace culture has changed from the past as a result of many factors. This could be do to increased competition among employee candidates and coworkers, causing people to feel pressured to put in long hours, never take days off, and work until they drop (Dessel). An article found in Slate Magazine attributed the increase to be the result of a switch in society

to care less about the common good and more about stakeholder returns, salary increases, and being the most profitable (Chotiner). It could be caused by fewer workers' unions, decreased power of organized labor, more companies producing similar products and services, and America worshipping the marketplace. In addition, companies avoiding expenses by having one employee do the work of two, or even three people, has become more commonplace (Chotiner). Whatever the reason may be, workplace culture has changed significantly, and it's causing rises in burnout.

The Role of Today's Advancing Technological World In the Workplace

Moving on from changes in workplace culture, today's evolving, technological world is playing just as large of a role. Burnout is the result of an increasingly fast-paced and complex modern workplace.

Advances in technology, specifically mobile devices, have created an emphasis on constant response and connectivity, which has "blurred the lines between work and home life" (Wigert, Agrawal).

With a more extreme focus on profits, workers are being expected to accomplish more, with fewer resources than before. More companies across the globe are producing similar products, and there is a need for companies to get ahead in the marketplace, whether it be by pushing employees to work in unrealistic facets to gain an edge in the market, or by creating new products and services. Increased global competition and a new demand for products in our hands immediately has caused significant insecurity (Gregoire).

New technology, and specifically the emergence of smart devices, has caused Americans today to spend on average more than 8.8 hours at work each day, in addition to the time they spend checking in on work after hours, on weekends, and even on vacations (Gregoire). Because a failure to accept increased demands in responsiveness would signal a lack of commitment, employees "comply" (Gregoire).

Because society wants things in their hands immediately, in major part due to the emergence of companies like Amazon, companies are finding that their customers are expecting products and services in an unrealistic amount of time in just about every industry. With employers being more focused on profits, people are expected to get more things done in a shorter amount of time, with fewer resources, and are being pushed to increase production well beyond capacity. In a CDC publication called, "Stress in Today's Workplace", a tech company employee

reported that their employer "expects the same production rates even though two people are doing the work of three or four." They also said the company's production is so backed up, because of constant unrealistic expectations in capacity, that a majority of workers are putting in twelve-hour shifts, six days a week (CDC).

Unrealistic deadlines, increased demands, and caring more about profits than employee

Amazon provides over 10 million items for one-day shipping. This news came after retail giant, Walmart, announced that over 200,000 items are available for one-day shipping (Perez). Clearly, people want things right away, and employees have to keep up with this increased demand.

well-being has caused infrequent rest breaks, hectic routines, poor communication, more frequent workplace accidents and errors, and unsatisfactory working conditions.

With technology advancing every day and a constant flow of new products coming to market, many companies, especially tech companies, feel the pressure to make existing products even better or to come out with the next big thing. As a result, employees are feeling more stress and are putting in even more hours to try to evolve with the needs of society quicker than the competition. This can be particularly felt in companies that have been doing less in the market for an extended period of time. Companies like this, that may be creating new products or researching new ideas, see employees coming in every day, giving all the effort they have, only to know that their hard work won't pay off or be visible to the world for another five, ten, or even twenty plus years (Levinson).

In this modern workplace, the need for advances in technology, constant flow of new products, addition of more companies with similar products, and demands of larger volumes of products and services quicker than before, organizations, and therefore their employees, are continuously feeling the pressure. People are required to be more innovative, bring on a new level of creativity and motivation, and are expected to work unrealistic hours to make things happen. They are being stretched to the point of collapse from exhaustion and stressed beyond acceptable levels. This is the role today's fast-paced world has played in the recent burnout epidemic.

Solution 1: Increasing Employee Autonomy

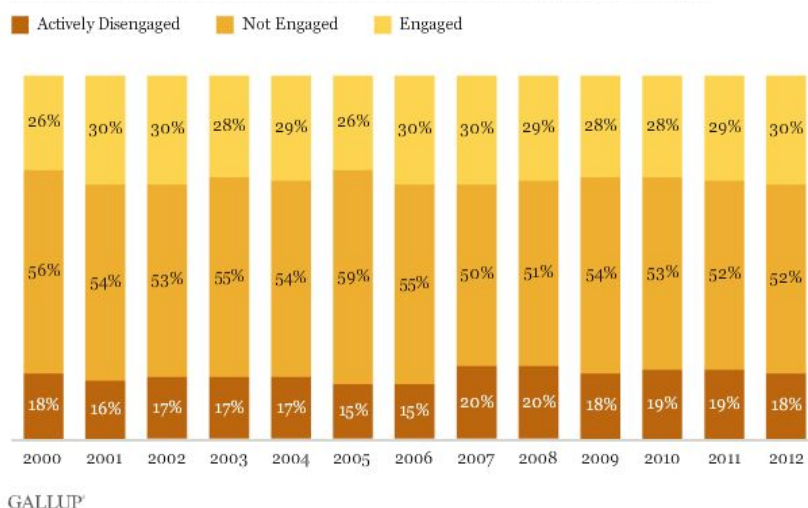
Introduction to Increasing Employee Autonomy

It is widely known that the amount of control an employee has over their work can greatly affect whether or not they enjoy it. Increasing an employee's control (within reason) over their working hours, pace, and even location, can increase employee satisfaction (Robertson). Therefore, the first proposed solution for targeting burnout is allowing workers more autonomy in the workplace. "Autonomy" as defined by Tracy Maylett, the CEO of management consulting firm DecisionWise, is "... the power to shape your work environment in ways that allow you to perform at your best" (Maylett). This is a two way street, so arguments for increasing workplace autonomy from an employees perspective and from a managers perspective will be presented. It will consequently be shown that increased employee autonomy can lead to decreased levels of burnout in the workplace.

Why Employees Want Autonomy and Employers Should Too

People want to feel connected to their work, but according to the American Institute of Stress, burned out employees feel a lack of control over their work (Boyd). This gap is cause for employees wanting more autonomy in the workplace. The 2018 Global Talent Trends study says that 51% of employees wish they had more autonomy over their work, with options such as flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and more paid time off. All of these, employees say, would allow for a more desirable work-life balance, thereby giving them that feeling of control (Kohl).

Obviously, it is in the employees' best interest to have more autonomy. However, according to



**Figure 1(Gallup). Employee Engagement Levels
From 2000 to 2012.**

management consulting company Gallup, "actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. \$450 billion to \$550 billion in lost productivity per year", showing that employers also take the brunt of this oversight (Sorenson). This is no new trend either. A quick glance at Figure 1 reveals that employee disengagement levels have been high since early 2000. Clearly, a change is in order, and Jayson DeMers, CEO of AudienceBloom confirms that

companies should give their employees more autonomy to increase their engagement.

Increased job autonomy, however, is not a blank check for employees to act without supervision. Maylett specifically notes that correctly implemented autonomy is not “working in isolation, ... doing whatever [they] like, ... [or] working without a net” (Maylett). In general, workers will still act within the organizational confines and will still have accountability to deadlines and schedules. But within those confines, Maylett encourages “freedom of choice” and to “build trust,” allowing employees to have leeway as long as objectives are being met without issue, creating a healthy relationship between workers, their work, and the company (Maylett). The company also has obligations to maintain these boundaries and to “provide tools to reach goals,” ensuring that both employee and company are productive and satisfied (Maylett).

Advantages of Increasing Employee Autonomy

Maylett describes increasing autonomy as one of the surefire ways to create employee engagement, which will in turn reduce burnout and encourage production. By and large, this is a correct assumption, as the American Psychiatric Association’s Center for Workplace Health found that increased flexibility in the workplace generally results in higher worker satisfaction, decreasing burnout rates and improving productivity (Prudential). On the business side of things, Gallup’s State of the American Workplace Report shows that, “companies with 9.3 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee in 2010-2011 experienced 147% higher earnings per share (EPS) on average in 2011-2012 compared with their competition” (Gallup). A study of 150 Israeli employees, published in the Journal of Career Assessment, found that “job autonomy was positively related to work engagement and career commitment” and “negatively related to work burnout and emotional distress” (Littman-Ovadia, et al.). Overall, the advantages of increasing employee autonomy are that employees are more productive and content with their work which leads to lower levels of burnout and higher returns for the companies they work at.

Disadvantages of Increasing Employee Autonomy

Autonomy is only beneficial to an organization up to an extent. Certain employees, without the proper direction, can feel stressed or lost (Robertson). The State of the American Workplace Report states that these employees, “are less productive, are more likely to steal from their companies, negatively influence their coworkers, miss workdays, and drive customers away” (Gallup). This phenomenon is further explained by the Israeli study, which gave insight into the reactions of “avoidant” workers in situations of greater autonomy. They defined an avoidant worker as one who views others as “unavailable, unresponsive, or punishing” and therefore have “obsessive self-reliance, independence, and difficulties in trust and depend on others” (Littman-Ovadia, et al.). When presented with greater job autonomy, these negative workplace traits tend to be expressed at a greater rate, leading to negative outcomes such as

burnout. This leads to significant financial losses. Paradoxically, these employees actually benefit from reduced autonomy. Therefore, it is crucial for corporations to define a culture that promotes a balance between employee autonomy and managerial control.

Additionally, granting workers greater autonomy can cause cultural issues that must be overcome before an organization can move forward. A University of Birmingham Business School survey found that managers “tended to be skeptical of extending more autonomy to workers,” with the researchers theorizing that the managers believing that greater autonomy might compromise productivity (Uzialko). Even if managers are willing to relinquish some control back to employees, they still must meet the company’s obligations, making sure that workers are accomplishing tasks without being overbearing. This increases their workload and the managerial skills required, and possibly workplace stresses.

Solution 2: Increasing Corporate Involvement

Introduction to Increasing Corporate Involvement

Another way to help employees avoid burnout is through involvement of company leadership. Managers are in place to help their teams be the best they can be, so checking in with their employees and ensuring they are in good headspaces is an important part of the job. In this section, arguments for and against company involvement in assessing employees' mental health will be presented. This solution will prove, that when implemented correctly, employer and managerial involvement can help lead to decreased levels of workplace burnout.

In 2018, Accenture conducted a study on the number of people affected by mental health challenges in the workplace. They found that nine in ten people “said they had been touched by mental health challenges in some way” ... “by either their own health or by issues faced by a family member, friend, or colleague” (Harvey). Only one out

The following statistics are from the Harvard Business Review

- *9/10 touched by mental health in some way... through friend, family, coworker, or self*
- *¼ feel they have seen positive change in how their organization is handling mental health*
- *Employees are “more than twice as likely to say they love their job” and “also more likely to stay with their employer for at least the next year” when mental health is prioritized (Harvey)*

of every four workers said “they had seen any positive change in their workplace’s efforts over the past two years to show that mental health is important for everyone” (Harvey). Clearly, mental health is an extremely prevalent issue that has found its way into the workplace, and employees are noticing how their employers are handling it.

One solution to helping managers accurately lead their employees is through a leadership program that uses clear and consistent standards and expectations for how to lead employees while keeping mental health and wellbeing a top priority. This program includes education workshops for managers on how to recognize signs of burnout and mental health distress and how to address these problems with the employees of concern. These workshops can help managers assess and then connect employees to a company-established employee assistance program or another beneficial outside resource.

It is important to take two things into consideration with this solution: how employees perceive discussing mental health at work and how employers and managers will be trained. Many employees could hesitate to express their emotions at work for fear of limiting their career opportunities or being seen as weak. Managers can ease this tension by starting the conversation, either about a personal experience or the

experience of someone close to them. Communicating just how common mental health issues are can help employees open up about their own experiences. Additionally, managers should be trained to support employees with mental illnesses effectively and with respect. Several aspects of identifying and helping an employee through an issue should be covered in the training, and boundaries should be clearly defined. This would ensure that the leadership does not overstep while being as helpful as possible.

Advantages of Increasing Corporate Involvement

There are several advantages associated with increasing corporate involvement in preventing and addressing employee burnout. Promoting good employee health practices and providing training and tools for recognition of potential concerns can result in early identification of many mental health problems, including burnout (Harvey). This early recognition can allow for the employee to be treated and therefore on their way to recovery sooner. This kind of workplace-related feedback can help employers and managers learn how they can modify the work environment and overall company culture. Including these modifications can make the workplace a more enjoyable place to spend forty hours per week. Managers and employers who value their employees' health and hold it as a top priority will undoubtedly make employees feel more comfortable in their jobs. When a company creates an environment focused on mental health, employees "are more than twice as likely to say they love their job" and "also more likely to stay with their employer for at least the next year" (Harvey). A healthy and supportive workplace can be attractive to new hires and can help companies recruit new employees.

Disadvantages of Increasing Corporate Involvement

There are also a few disadvantages when it comes to corporate and managerial involvement in employee mental health. It can be difficult for managers to know how to check in with their employees and potentially intervene if there is a serious problem, and some managers may take incorrect approaches. The leadership program would include sessions and example scenarios on how managers should appropriately address an employee when there seems to be an issue. Additionally, managers need to abide by their employees' legal rights. The program would also have sessions based specifically on ensuring managers stay within their legal limitations when consulting an employee. This area of the program would be especially important to the company, ensuring no legal action is taken against them.

Solution 3:

Destigmatizing Mental Health and Providing Resources

Introduction to Destigmatizing Mental Health and Providing Resources

The final solution proposed in this White Paper is to prioritize destigmatizing mental health issues and promote a work environment where mental health distress and issues can be openly discussed, through implementation of employee assistance and well-being programs. While this solution may be more curative, rather than preventive, an effective way to deal with ongoing burnout issues is to implement treatment solutions.

With more people seeking mental health services, they are becoming more commonplace, but our society still has a long way to go when it comes to accepting and prioritizing the health of our minds. While many companies still need to adapt, a significant number of companies have started integrating discussion of mental health distress and burnout in the workplace, with many implementing company-based treatment programs. According to an article written by Deloitte Insights, organizations are heavily invested in this area, however, their research has revealed there is a “significant gap between what companies are offering and what employees value and expect” (Gaurav, et al.).

The following statistics are provided by Rand Corporation:

- *In 2015, 69% of employers with more than 50 employees offered a wellness program*
- *75% of those programs included incentives to encourage participation*
- *Smaller firms that didn't offer programs cited lack of financial resources*

Technological innovations over the past few decades and the push toward globalization have affected the average employees disposition toward their jobs. Wireless communication, the invention of smartphones, and the internet have allowed work to follow employees outside of the office. As work/life-balance becomes increasingly skewed, and as more employees are being overworked, it is becoming a company's corporate responsibility to provide a “robust suite of well-being programs focused on physical, mental, financial, and spiritual health” in order to “drive employee productivity, engagement, and retention” (Gaurav, et al.). Organizations have focused on burnout as more of a means to protect their profits, with blame falling on individual employees for lowered performance and productivity (Gaurav, et al.). According to an article by Deloitte Insights, typically, when concerned with the adverse effects of burnout, companies have incentivized the prevention of profit loss over the long term well being of employees. The lack of working towards adequate solutions in protecting work culture from stress has had a lasting effect. Placing the blame on individual employees directly targets those most at risk of burnout and its detrimental effects. Companies need to take responsibility in making organizational changes to reduce stress caused by industry, work environment, and structural problems (Gaurav, et al.).

They should feel a sense of duty to ensure the health and wellbeing of their employees. This White Paper found a variety of examples of mental health and wellbeing employee assistance programs that have made progress in tackling this problem.

The first thing we have learned is that there are many solutions that could be implemented, and it's up to managers and employees to work together to figure out which would work best for them. One example of a mental health initiative companies could implement is a program that organizes periodic group sessions in the office with social workers and licensed mental health counselors. If employees would prefer to utilize an outside resource, larger companies could offer access to a psychiatrist, with expenses partially being covered by the company. A significant number of employees, especially those in middle-to-lower income positions, may not have the ability to pay for costly mental health services, and therefore companies could subsidize employees' therapy costs.

Another example of a mental health initiative companies could take would be to provide monthly stipends for employees to spend towards any chosen wellness-related activity. This could be anywhere from paying for a yoga class membership, a therapeutic massage, or supplementing a relaxing hobby. They could also create instruction sessions on how to tackle life's biggest problems, which could include:

- Annual or bi-annual sessions with a certified life coach
- Tips on how to manage time and work duties
- Advice on how to appropriately deal with issues with managers or other coworkers
- Dealing with personal dilemmas, such as taking care of a sick loved one, help coping with the death of a family member or friend, and dealing with familial conflicts

Klein Hall, an accounting firm, has implemented such well-being initiatives and has seen improvements in performance and employee health when utilizing these resources (American Psychiatric Association).

Companies could make a vital impact towards solving problems with employee burnout and mental health distress by forming and implementing a program or resource to help destigmatize the issue. Many people fear reaching out and asking for help, or admitting they may have something going on because of the negative stigma our society has placed on mental health illness. Companies need to make it a priority to help their employees feel open to talk about when they are feeling overwhelmed and when they think they are being asked to reach unrealistic expectations. One example of an initiative an organization has implemented to reach this goal is the Barclays Financial Services Company "This Is Me" Campaign. The company's campaign has helped to destigmatize mental health problems by creating a platform where employees are able to share elements of their personal life, and get feedback and encouragement from other employees (Eisenberg). This resource has helped encourage more of their employees to take mental health-related leaves of absence when needed, and helped the company retain talent, with more employees successfully returning to work after mental-health related leave.

Following the success of this initiative, more companies started to adopt similar resources into their own work environments (Eisenberg).

While it should be the company's duty to tackle burnout and mental health issues head on, and work to make real strides, employees also need to work towards managing their own expectations. (Tottle) Employees can do this by utilizing personal curative solutions on their own. One way would be for employees to evaluate their options, by discussing specific issues with supervisors and reaching a compromise/solution (Mayo Clinic). Other personal solutions from HelpGuide.org, Mayo Clinic, The Muse, and Psychology Today include:

- Seek support through collaboration with coworkers, making interpersonal connections, and utilize employee-assistance programs
- Implement a relaxing activity into daily or weekly schedules and exercise periodically
- Practice mindfulness by facing situations with patience and openness
- Prioritize self-care: replenish physical and emotional energy, get good sleep and nutrition
- Reduce exposure to job stressors by resetting expectations and trying to compromise with what you are willing to and what you are required to take on
- Give to, as well as help other people
- Eliminate or reduce collaborations and interactions with negative people
- Know your breaking point and be honest with yourself about changing when necessary
- Have creative outlets
- Find meaning in work

Advantages of De-stigmatization and Environment Implementing Mental Health Programs

Companies prioritizing the de-stigmatization of mental health issues and promoting a work environment where mental health can be openly discussed has many advantages as a solution to burnout. One huge advantage is the cost savings of decreasing low productivity, absenteeism, error, employee turnover, and workplace accidents. A second advantage is that company-established employee assistance programs and on-site health professionals can reduce employees' time away from work, reducing loss of labor expenses. A final advantage is that in-house assistance programs can be extremely helpful for employees in lower-to-middle income positions, that may not be able to afford costly mental health services, that insurance often does not cover. The overall advantage of this solution is that employees will be happier, healthier, more productive, and continue to find meaning in their work.

Disadvantages of De-stigmatization and Environment Implementing Mental Health Programs

While this solution has many advantages, it can also have some disadvantages. One large disadvantage to companies implementing this solution is the cost. It can be extremely expensive to implement in-house mental health and well-being programs, and mental health services such as therapy with a certified mental health counselor or psychiatrist can be expensive. Implementing internal company resources such as these may only be feasible for companies with a vast network of employees, where benefits may outweigh the costs. Another disadvantage is that employees may be reluctant to utilize the resources due to privacy and confidentiality concerns. Because of the stigma placed on mental health illnesses and asking people for help when struggling, many people may not feel comfortable leaning on these resources, especially if managers or coworkers may find out.

While it can be beneficial for employees to take burnout into their own hands and use personal and mindful solutions to help, companies are the ones who need to make systematic organizational and structural changes. They need to be responsible for the well-being of their employees and work to make sure that they're providing them with resources that will work best to solve this crisis. While companies implementing these solutions is going to have a major impact, it is also going to take a societal movement that fundamentally changes the work environment and culture and creates policy changes and drafts laws to make substantial change, not just initiatives and programs such as these.

Conclusion

The problem of burnout is a common occurrence in our increasingly technologically driven society. Its adverse effects on business outcomes, employee wellbeing, and productivity alone demand that there be more done to combat this issue in our organizations. Over the course of this paper we have explored three solutions that are currently being implemented across organizations to alleviate the effects of employee burnout.

Solution one discussed the need for some level of autonomy for employees. While managers should have the final say about important aspects of work, having the ability to be flexible with nonessential aspects of the job lowers stress for employees. Solution two explored preventing burnout from the managerial side. This solution seeks to prevent burnout by promoting good employee health practices, identifying early signs of high stress and other mental health issues in staff, and collaborating with employee assistance programs highlighted in solution three. Solution three is most extensive in dealing with the issue of burnout. It takes the approach of having curative programs in place in an organization for when mental health and wellbeing challenges arrive in employees' lives.

All of these solutions alone have garnered relative success and each solution has their individual strengths and weaknesses. In order to improve the likelihood that an organization is successful in their effort to end high levels of burnout, we recommend a specific aspect of each of the solutions be incorporated in any final initiative. From solution one, the organization should be surveyed for potential tasks or projects that employees could potentially gain autonomy over. From solution two, one should increase managerial awareness to empower managers with the ability to recognize and intervene with tools that allow them to address developing burnout in their subordinates. From solution three, it is recommended to establish an employee wellness program that promotes a safe space for discussing stress in the workplace, mental health, and stress reducing activities that the company can subsidize. These three interventions, in conjunction with one another will address the organizational problem of burnout.

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