



RewardGateway
the employee engagement people



A Company-Wide Approach to Tackling Employee Burnout



Alex Powell

Director of Client Culture and Engagement | Reward Gateway

When the pandemic started to impact businesses, adrenaline kicked in and many organisations channelled that energy into great initiatives and behaviours that helped connect, recognise and support employees. Fast forward six months and that energy is fading – both leaders and employees are telling us they're tired.

Looking beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, employee burnout is a phenomenon even the best businesses experience. So where does that burst of strength come from? How can leaders, managers and employees discover the surge of energy within and pass those feelings of motivation and productivity throughout the business?

Employees not only expect employers to play a role in supporting good mental health, employers also have the power and tools to make a positive impact and *prevent* employee burnout.

What is employee burnout?

While we are all likely familiar with the signs and symptoms of employee burnout, it might surprise people to learn that it is included in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases as an occupational phenomenon. WHO defines burnout as:

A syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised by three dimensions:	1	feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
	2	increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
	3	reduced professional efficacy.

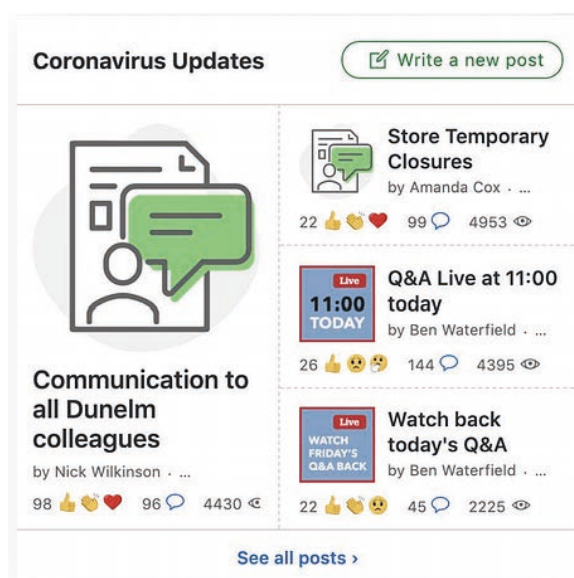
Here's a look at how all levels of your business can nurture long-term motivation, productivity and connections by tackling employee burnout:

Senior Leaders

Your senior leaders are the face of the organisation. And while they once may have been hidden in a boardroom or just a picture on a plaque, during a pandemic there's never been a more important time to show the human side of your leadership team and drive connections on a more personal level. Here are a couple ways to do that:

Talk about mission and values: Those companies that were able to pull together during the early days of the crisis often did so regarding their mission and values. Give your people a rallying cry. A reason to reinvigorate. Our client, ABC Medical, spoke in a recent webinar about how employees' commitment to the medical needs of the customers they served brought their team together like never before. Personally, I lean on Reward Gateway's mission of Making the World a Better Place to Work as a reason to stay committed even when balancing the needs of stuck-at-home kids and my job.

Connect directly with employees: Employees are looking for connection more than ever before. Remote work actually provides an opportunity for leaders to directly connect with employees in new ways. It may not have been possible to bring your whole company together for face-to-face meetings, but how about a live, web-based company update direct from the CEO?



The screenshot shows a social media feed titled "Coronavirus Updates" with a "Write a new post" button. The feed contains several posts:

- A post titled "Store Temporary Closures" by Amanda Cox with 22 likes, 99 comments, and 4953 views.
- A post titled "Q&A Live at 11:00 today" by Ben Waterfield with 26 likes, 144 comments, and 4395 views.
- A post titled "Watch back today's Q&A" by Ben Waterfield with 22 likes, 45 comments, and 2225 views.
- A post titled "Communication to all Dunelm colleagues" by Nick Wilkinson with 98 likes, 96 comments, and 4430 views.

At the bottom of the feed is a "See all posts" link.

Dunelm, a home-goods retailer with nearly 10,000 employees, livened up its CEO updates by asking frontline employees for questions and topics. To add to the human, personal connection, the update changed from written to video.



Managers

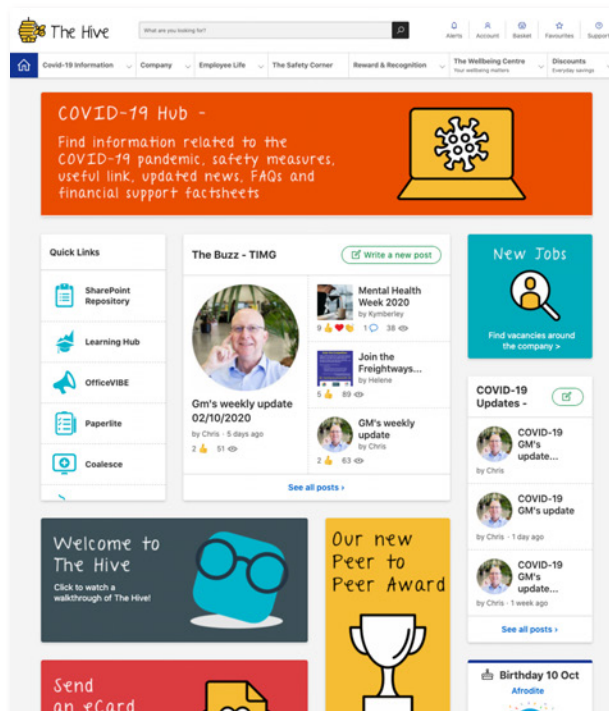
Your managers are critically important to keep business moving during a challenging time like we're in right now. Managers are the connectors in the business, they help Senior Leaders understand what is truly happening across teams and, if given the right autonomy, can pivot quickly to reduce employee disengagement across their teams. Here are a couple ways managers can help create the environment for more productivity:

Recognise across departments: Many of us have never said 'Thank You' so much as we have in recent months. The last thing we want is tired teammates that start to take much deserved recognition for granted. Whenever possible managers should elevate great work so it can be celebrated outside of their teams.

Our own CEO, Doug Butler, told me that if a team at Reward Gateway is under stress or achieving results, he wants to know so he can reach out personally and give them credit himself. This can be especially important coming from someone like the CEO, who many may feel are 'up on a leadership pedestal' and not as connected to the frontline employees.

As a bonus, focussing on the success of others is a powerful way to reduce the stress and fatigue that managers are feeling.

Ask for feedback and be agile: As leaders, we need to listen more than ever before to ensure we aren't wasting time on efforts that no longer make a difference. For instance, maybe the approach of the school year is leaving parents feeling unprepared and they have ideas about how work can help them maintain balance into the future. Whether you are asking for ideas in your employee one-on-ones or using pulse surveys like many of our clients, feedback is key.



Within the first two months of launching its recognition and reward programme, TIMG and its sister companies Shred-X and Med-X's employees sent more than 1,200 eCards through its platform, 'The Hive.'



Employees

Your employees may be feeling utterly powerless right now – they’ve been on a rollercoaster of job security, disruptions to their everyday schedules, at-home stress and other stressors that are piling up day after day. But employees can use this time to inspire change in their organisation so it creates the environment where they can do their best work.

For employees: If you need support and have ideas for improvement, use your voice and advocate for those changes! One of the most frequent requests I hear managers make is for employees that spot a problem to bring them a solution.

In this time of change, there may be opportunity to make changes that wouldn’t have worked before. For instance, you could implement a flexible schedule in a call centre. We’ve seen clients make it work when it wouldn’t have before.

Here’s a quick tip to get your manager or leader on board: Start your request with a focus on how your idea will help. ‘In order for me to support customers more consistently...’ That will make it easier for others to hear your idea!

At Reward Gateway, we use our employee engagement platform, “boom!”, to host a dedicated ‘Speak Up’ page. Employees can ask questions directly to the Leadership Team and expect quick responses because addressing employee feedback is crucial to moving our mission forward.

Get involved: It may feel counterintuitive to tell a tired workforce to do MORE, but we have seen that shaking up your task list can make that list easier to tackle. Many organisations are setting up clubs to keep people connected - a women’s group, a cooking club, etc. No clubs you are interested in? Set one up! While many of us have gotten accustomed to less connection in our day, our brains get a boost from interaction. Don’t rely on the same old meetings to keep you connected and engaged!

15 ideas to improve company culture and prevent burnout

Along the road to 'the new normal,' many organisations have found fun and innovative ways to strengthen and improve company culture, while boosting morale during challenging times. Beyond what we've outlined in this highlight, here are 15 more quick ideas to get the wheels turning:

1	Interrupt meetings to sing happy birthday	9	Open up a parent group
2	Write up 'Thank You Thursdays' to highlight special moments of recognition	10	Open up a pet-parent group!
3	Encourage sleep! (And share tips on better ZZZ's)	11	Have employees submit their own 'WFH Cribs'
4	Start a book club or book benefit programme	12	Promote a photo competition (landscapes, scenes, pets, etc.)
5	Host virtual trivia Fridays	13	Share workday playlists
6	Promote company-wide 'unplugged' hours	14	Intro a surprise guest on team meetings (authors, local celebrities, etc.)
7	Gift employees with WFH bundles	15	Choose the best Zoom background challenge
8	Introduce Mindfulness Moments		

In this ever-evolving world, we don't know what is coming next. All we know is that we have to do what we can to support our workforce and keep going. Acknowledging that your employees, your managers and yes, your leaders are just plain tired is the first step in building a stronger, more engaged business that's ready for whatever the future brings us.



Need help reinvigorating a burned out workforce? Reward Gateway solutions help connect, recognise and support employees to boost morale and productivity when you need it most.

www.rewardgateway.com | +44 20 7229 0349 | info@rewardgateway.com