

Managing Sales Burnout: How to Mitigate Burnout in Your Sales Team

22/10/2023



Burnout is emerging as a serious problem for virtually every type of employee. According to studies [from Deloitte](#), 70% of professionals have experienced burnout at the current jobs, and another 70% say they don't feel their managers are doing enough to mitigate the issue.

While burnout can occur in any industry or role, sales burnout is particularly common. After all, sales is a high-pressure landscape. Team members are constantly striving to increase their revenues, dealing with difficult clients, and struggling to live up to evolving expectations.

Learning how to manage burnout should be a priority for any business leader. Not only does sales burnout lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, and disengagement in your business, but it can cost your company up to [\\$190 billion each year](#).

So, how can you start managing burnout effectively for your sales reps?

What is Sales Burnout? The Basics

Burning out in the sales landscape doesn't just mean you feel a little extra stressed or exhausted after dealing with a complex client. Burnout is a state of [comprehensive exhaustion](#). It affects your mental health, physical wellbeing, and your professional performance.

Burnout isn't a new concept, though it is gaining more attention, as employees are placed under increased pressure in the changing workplace. The problem has persisted across multiple generations, causing illness,

employee turnover, and lost productivity in virtually every business.

Managing sales burnout starts with knowing how to recognize the symptoms of this issue in your employees, and implementing strategies for team wellbeing.

Spotting the Symptoms of Sales Burnout

Notably, sales burnout can affect different people in different ways. Some people feel physically ill or experience issues with their immunity as a result of perpetual exhaustion, others show signs of fatigue at work, and demonstrate emotional symptoms like a short temper.

While it can manifest in different ways, managers and supervisors can often detect evidence of sales burnout by looking at things like:

- **Performance metrics:** If a high-performing team member suddenly starts to miss deadlines and quotas, the problem could be a result of burnout. If lack of resources, training and support aren't to blame, the problem is probably with your work processes.
- **Reduced motivation:** People suffering burnout struggle to get enjoyment out of the tasks they usually like. They might disengage from the business, failing to take on new projects, or ignoring requests to appear in team meetings.
- **Poor focus:** When you're exhausted, it's difficult to concentrate on anything effectively. Reps suffering from burnout are more likely to make mistakes in their day-to-day processes. They might fall behind on their work, or struggle to take instruction.
- **Negative attitude:** Often, burnout affects our emotional state, making us feel more stressed, depressed, and combative. If your employees seem overly aggressive when communicating with colleagues and even customers, the problem could be burnout.
- **Lack of ambition:** All salespeople should cultivate a desire to consistently learn and grow. If your team members no longer seem to care about professional development or new opportunities, burnout could be the core issue.

Understanding the Common Causes of Sales Burnout

While the symptoms of burnout can be relatively easy to detect for an experienced manager or supervisor, diagnosing the root cause of the problem is often much harder. Professional sales burnout is often a sign that something is wrong with your business processes or company culture.

However, you may need to do a little digging to find out where the problem begins.

Common causes of sales burnout include:

1. Lack of Support

Sales leaders expect their reps to deliver exceptional results consistently, and adapt rapidly to [changing trends](#) in the business landscape. However, without the right training and support, it can be difficult for reps

to live up to these expectations.

To ensure reps feel supported and empowered, managers should invest more time into communicating with their reps. Arrange meetings to discuss their progress, answer their questions, and explore personal development opportunities. Ensure your reps feel like they can come to you to share their issues and challenges whenever necessary.

1. A Toxic Company Culture

Sales can be a highly competitive arena. Sometimes, a little competition is a good thing. [Gamified experiences](#), such as leaderboards, and challenges are an excellent way to keep staff members engaged, increase motivation, and even strengthen team bonds.

However, it's important to ensure that a competitive culture doesn't turn sour. Even in an environment where leaderboards and contests are common, employees should still feel they can trust and collaborate with their peers. Developing a cooperative environment, where everyone feels included and respected is crucial to mitigating burnout.

Avoid issues that can create a toxic environment, such as unrealistic expectations, a lack of transparency in corporate communications, or berating team members for failures.

1. Limited Tools and Resources

Salespeople need to manage a huge range of tasks every day, their schedules are often packed with demands, and they're constantly looking for ways to boost efficiency. If your team members don't have the tools necessary to do their jobs effectively, they simply can't thrive.

For business leaders, this means ensuring your employees have access to the right sales enablement resources and technology. Make sure teams can access intuitive CRM solutions to track data about prospects and leads. Use automation tools to minimize repetitive tasks like following up with customers after a cold call.

You could even consider experimenting with new tools, like [generative AI](#) to help employees create outreach messages and conduct research. If you're not sure which tools and resources will benefit your employees most, ask for their direct insights.

1. Lack of Recognition

While most of us do our jobs for more than just a pat on the back from management, lack of recognition can gradually reduce feelings of engagement and motivation. Most salespeople measure their success based on their quota attainment. However, they also need regular guidance and insights into how well they're performing on a day-to-day basis.

Ensuring you connect with your employees regularly to offer feedback and recognition helps to preserve their wellbeing. It gives them a chance to identify the methods they should continue using, and look for new ways to overcome their weaknesses.

Creating a feedback chain also ensures you can collect valuable information from your employees, about the kind of training they think they need, or the problems they encounter in their role. This paves the way for more intelligent decision making.

1. Expectations aren't Clear

It's easy for sales managers to assume they're setting clear expectations whenever they give their reps a quota to meet or a target for revenue generation. However, most sales professionals need more guidance than this. They need to understand the vision, mission, and values of the company, how their performance will be scored beyond revenue attainment, and how they should act.

Setting clear expectations doesn't just mean telling your sales reps how much you want them to earn. It means ensuring they have the resources and guidance they need to achieve their goals. Provide tips on strategies to use, guidelines, and sales scripts to assist your teams.

Additionally, remember to ensure any expectations or goals you do set for your employees are realistic and attainable. While challenging your sales professionals is fine to a degree, demanding too much can leave your reps feeling overwhelmed.

1. Limited Professional Development

As mentioned above, sales reps are constantly looking for new ways to improve their skills and become more effective in their roles. To achieve their goals, they need access to the right tools for professional development. Failing to provide your teams with training solutions such as webinars, courses, and other educational tools means they can't optimize their skills.

Crucially, it's important to focus not just on developing your team's hard skills, like cold calling techniques, but also their soft skills, such as communication and [emotional intelligence](#). Consider experimenting with different strategies for professional development for your teams.

You could offer staff access to learning communities like the HardSkill.Exchange, or provide each team member with a mentor they can turn to for help and guidance.

How to Help Reps Recover from Burnout

Understanding the common causes of sales burnout ensures you can implement measures that keep the risk of overwhelm and increased stress for your employees to a minimum. However, sometimes, in spite of your best efforts, teams can still end up 'burned out'.

When this happens, you need a strategy for helping your staff members recover, rediscover their passion, and boost their engagement levels. Here are three ways managers and supervisors can help teams recover from sales burnout.

1. Foster a Positive Team Culture

Developing a strong team culture both helps to reduce the risk of burnout, and help affected employees recover at the same time. When employees are part of a company with a collaborative, supportive, and innovative culture, they're more likely to thrive.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to cultivate and maintain a strong team culture in an environment with such high levels of competition. Plus, hybrid and remote working strategies are leading to greater disconnects between employees.

To boost your chances of success, look for ways to actively unify your teams. Host regular meetings that encourage everyone to share their insights and challenges. Encourage team members to regularly rest and recover, by setting boundaries for work/life balance. You can even invest in gamified training experiences and competitions to help bring staff closer together.

1. Commit to Open Communication

One of the biggest reasons so many employees struggle with burnout, is they believe asking for help, or admitting they're overwhelmed is a sign of weakness. This is particularly true when managers and supervisors hold their employees to unreasonable standards.

The only way to overcome burnout, and prevent it from affecting additional employees, is to foster open communication. Share educational resources and mental health documents with employees that show them how to recognize the symptoms of burnout in themselves.

Ensure they have a direct point of contact to reach out to if they're struggling with their workloads, and never berate a team member for asking for help. Be willing to work flexibly with your employees and commission-based sales teams, to help them thrive in the workplace.

1. Lead by Example

Leaders, such as sales supervisors and managers, guide and steer the behavior of the rest of the sales team. Employees look to leaders in the business for more than just guidance on how to [navigate the sales process](#) or connect with prospects. They also mirror their behavior.

With that in mind, think about the kind of behavior you're modelling for your employees. If you refuse to invest in work-life balance, and constantly work overtime, they may think they need to do the same. If you never admit when you're struggling with a project, they may feel they're unable to communicate their issues to other members of the team.

Show your employees how to commit to protecting their wellbeing by maintaining reasonable schedules, knowing when to switch off, and sharing information about your own struggles.

Overcoming Sales Burnout

Burnout is more than just a trending topic in today's professional world; it's a serious problem, affecting employees at all business levels. Allowed to fester, burnout can significantly reduce your sales and revenue,

lead to higher absenteeism and cost your business a fortune.

However, though burnout is common in the sales landscape, it's not something you can't learn to manage and overcome. With the tips above, you can spot the signs of burnout, diagnose the root causes, and implement strategies to preserve employee wellbeing.

Want to learn more about mitigating burnout and empowering your teams? Get insights from the experts at the [Hard Skill Exchange](#).

Axiomere Team