

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Strategies and Trends for the Successful Business

e-REPORT

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IDEAwatch

Tips for Growing Your Business

■ **Keep new clients from backing out of a sale** only hours or days later by taking a few simple steps to solidify client confidence. You'll want to preempt any buyer's remorse issues before they become a problem. First, share with your client the next steps in onboarding so that you can reduce any anxiety or uncertainty. Right away, model their initial level of enthusiasm and excitement, and help them feel like they made the right decision. Write a personal thank you card after the sale and include a gift, which taps into the powerful social influencer of "reciprocity."

Source: David Finkel, www.inc.com

■ **Get better results from your email marketing** by sending a video message. A new cognitive neuroscience-based study from Vidyard found that while plain text emails often caused stress in the business professionals that received them, video emails made them feel happier — and they remembered them better.

Source: www.mediapost.com

■ **Say "no" to new requests with grace, not guilt**, as described in the book *Work-Life Brilliance* by Denise R. Green. Start by creating a pause before responding, e.g., "Let me give this some thought and I'll get back to you by the end of the day." Then if you decide to decline, you can do so without using the word "no" with a friendly, sincere response such as "I wish I could, but I'm already over-committed." Offer an honest, credible reason for declining while resisting the urge to complain about being overworked. Ending with sincere gratitude can soften the decline, e.g., "Thank you for thinking of me for this important request."

Source: www.startupprofessional.com

MANAGEMENT

You Can't Put a Band-Aid on Burnout

by Tony Schwartz

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION generated headlines in 2019 by announcing that it was officially designating burnout as a "workplace hazard." Unless you've been living under a rock, you already knew that burnout has become a toxic occupational risk.

Burnout is the ultimate consequence of relentlessly rising demand, complexity, change and uncertainty. Even so, it's easy to overlook the warning signs or to find ways to rationalize and minimize them.

Do you notice that people in your organization frequently feel:

- Drained, depleted, exhausted or empty?
- Frustrated, reactive, anxious or overwhelmed?
- Distracted, scattered, spacey or bored?
- Apathetic, uninspired, disengaged or aimless?

By the time these symptoms are visible, employees and employers alike have already incurred costs that are far too high. What's been lost in the downward spiral towards burnout is the most fundamental fuel for performance: energy. You can't put a Band-Aid on something that isn't there, and the road back from burnout to high performance is a long one.

The time for employers to actively intervene isn't when their people have run out of energy, but rather when their energy begins to turn visibly negative and volatile. This is known physiologically as "fight or flight," and at The Energy Project, we refer to it as "Survival Mode." It's the state all of us fall into reactively when we begin to feel overloaded, overwhelmed, threatened or devalued.

In Survival Mode, our prefrontal cortex increasingly shuts down and the

more primitive amygdala takes over. Our dominant emotions include frustration, impatience, irritability, anger, anxiety, defensiveness and the impulse to assign blame. Internal signals include increased self-absorption, self-criticism,

Don't wait until employees run out of energy. Deal with burnout before it becomes a serious problem.

impulsivity, trouble sleeping and relaxing, difficulty thinking clearly and creatively, and feeling like a victim.

As survival emotions become more pervasive on teams, or across companies, performance progressively suffers. So does the capacity for innovation and agility, both of which are critical in a time of disruption and continuous transformation.

Burnout is the ultimate consequence of too much time spent in Survival Mode. It's when the system literally shuts down — physically, emotionally, mentally and even spiritually. At precisely the moment that organizations need more energy from their people, they get less.

The solution is both surprisingly simple and remarkably elusive. Organizations and individuals alike must pay more deliberate and systematic attention to rest and renewal. The problem is that these behaviors get precious little respect in most companies.

"More, bigger, faster" has been the mantra of free market capitalism ever since the Industrial Revolution. Rest and renewal are the provinces of slackers. The need for time off and even for sufficient sleep are often viewed as signs of weakness. In the face of relentlessly increasing demand, our shared impulse is to double down on what's worked for us in the past — to push harder, for longer, with less time off.

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■ **Settle prospects' pre-purchase doubts and uncertainties** with an FAQ page on your website. By addressing frequently asked questions up, front you can build trust and eliminate many common objections. For example, website visitors for a personal chef may wonder: "What about picky eaters or restricted diets?" "How does the cost of a personal chef compare to restaurant takeout?" and "Are you bonded?" To create a FAQ page, collect and project probable concerns, then write the content in actual question and answer format, keeping answers short and clear. Group questions in logically labeled categories. FAQs turn prospects' "What if's?" and "Do you's?" in your favor.

Source: www.yudkin.com

■ **Support employees' mental health and boost company morale** with any of these budget-friendly ideas: Offer flexible, hybrid work schedules. Take a half day to go for a hike, go bowling or have an off-site company lunch. Offer discounts for wellness tests, local gyms or even pet insurance. Consider unlimited paid time off. Plan occasional half-day Fridays. Try a weekly Monday morning guided mindfulness session or team bonding exercise. Send clear work-life boundaries and make it a company-wide policy to avoid sending emails during off hours.

Source: www.smallbiztrends.com

■ **Ignore email open rates.** Apple's new iOS 15 allows users to opt in to its Mail Privacy Protection feature, which essentially blocks email senders from being able to see information on how those users interact with emails. What's ironic, though, is that the feature could cause open rates to inflate, not drop. That's because images, including your tracking pixel, will be prefetched. Apple dominates email client usage at about 40%, so your open rates will be far from accurate. Instead, you could focus on click-through rates, but those aren't always accurate either (especially for B2B) because corporate spam checkers can routinely inflate click rates by following links.

Source: www.martech.org

Americans are postponing major life changes

Results from a GfK Consumer Life study show a dramatic drop in the percentage of U.S. adults indicating that they plan to make big life changes in the coming year, such as going to college, changing their job, moving long distances, starting a family or retiring.

While the findings vary by generation — with Gen Z-ers more likely to make expected changes like starting a new job or going to college, and boomers more likely to retire — there are still overall major declines in the percentage of adults planning most changes, with the exception of moving long distances.

These postponements reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as overall economic uncertainty over the past decade since the last data were collected, and could profoundly impact marketing strategies for many consumer products and services categories, especially financial services and transportation.

"Generally, what happens when we go

through periods of trauma in society, is that everyone takes a more defensive posture and backs off consumption," says Eric Wagatha, managing director at GfK. "We saw that during the Great Recession. What's different this time around is basically how everyone was impacted by the pandemic."

It may seem unexpected that there has been an overall drop in people planning a job change when so many employers are struggling to fill positions. However, the 2011 data show that 33% of people were planning a job change, compared to 18% now. The discrepancy may lie in the fact that while a whopping 40% of the youngest workers (Gen Z) are now planning for a new job, that is counterbalanced by the reality that only 5% of baby boomers are planning to change their current employment situation, even holding off on retirement.

Source: [Mediapost.com](http://mediapost.com), Sept. 28, 2021

Hold on to employees with career transparency

Employees are incredibly restless at the moment. The so-called "Great Resignation" is the top issue for nearly every employer right now. Recent research by Lattice has revealed that one of the most potent ways to keep your employees on board is career transparency — or how they can grow in their job.

The poll of over 2,000 employees found that 43% feel professionally stuck and that their career path has stalled or slowed to a crawl. The craving for a clear path forward is especially strong

among the youngest workers; 38% of Gen Z employees are looking for jobs with greater transparency around job path and development.

Employees want to know that there's room to grow and that you'll help them get there. To be an employer of choice, communication is crucial. Listen to employees' needs and professional desires and lay out a clear growth plan. Connect on a regular basis to discuss progress and be sure to celebrate wins.

Source: [Inc.com](http://inc.com), Oct. 4, 2021

The surprising comeback of direct mail

You may think that the marketing practice of sending direct mail to prospects is a relic of the past, but widespread digital fatigue is giving direct mail a new opportunity to shine, according to new research from SG360°. In fact, 72% of consumers now say they feel positive about receiving direct mail.

Unexpectedly, younger consumers (Gen Z and millennials) appreciate direct mail more so than older generations — those born in the digital age value touching and holding paper-based promotions. They also rank higher in actions taken as a result of receiving direct mail, including making a purchase, visiting a website or following a brand on social media.

But this doesn't mean that consumers engage with every piece of marketing mail they receive. Of the 72% who feel positive about direct mail, their top reasons are "relevant to me personally" and "good deals on a product or service."

The days of mailing the exact same generic offer to as large a group as possible are over. To stand out in the mailbox, make offers tailored to the individual's interests or needs, as well as using attractive and relevant imagery and good copywriting. Maximize effectiveness by integrating your campaigns with digital methods, such as streaming video and social media.

Source: [Brandunited.com](http://brandunited.com), Sept. 28, 2021

■ Responding to bad reviews can be tricky.

Poorly worded review responses can quickly create a negative impression of your business. You'll need to keep a cool head, and show that you've tried addressing the bad review in a constructive and professional way. First, if you have a record of that customer, try connecting with them offline to fully understand the issues that led to the poor review. If you can't find contact information, leave a very polite reply thanking the customer for their feedback, assure them that you wish to investigate further and invite them to reach out so that you can work towards a resolution. For a genuinely negative experience, this should impress the reviewer with your commitment to putting things right, allowing you to ask them to update (or even delete) the original review to give a more balanced opinion.

Source: www.brightlocal.com

■ When Facebook stops working, does your business come to a halt?

As many discovered when Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp went down for most of the day on October 4, small businesses that pull in prospects, communicate with customers and sell products through social media are left without a platform to do business. Make sure that you "own" your hard-earned audience, meaning you can contact them directly without the help of social media. Begin by collecting email addresses and start a newsletter. A newsletter is an effective way of gauging customer interest in individual products and your brand as a whole. Aim to promote and inform as well as send those much-desired coupons and discounts. Furthermore, run your own website so that you can send customers to a platform that you control. Also, consider investing in customer loyalty tools and customer relationship management (CRM) software.

Source: www.smallbusinesscomputing.com

Mail delivery getting slower and more expensive

Expect longer delivery times for some letters, envelopes and postcards. And package delivery is getting more expensive for a bit.

After a year plagued with pandemic slowdowns, the United States Postal Service (USPS) could hardly be called the class overachiever. But now, it's making that lax approach to deadlines official by loosening some of its mail delivery guarantees by roughly 30%. As of October 1, the delivery standard for first-class mail and periodicals extended from one to three business days to one to five business days.

According to the agency, service times should stay the same for 61% of first-class mail (defined as regular-sized

envelopes, letters, postcards and flats), as well as 93% of periodicals (newspapers, magazines, etc.). Single pieces of mail traveling within the same region should still take roughly two days to arrive. However, mail traveling longer distances, such as from New York to California, will move slower than before and could take the full five days.

Sending mail is getting costlier, too, but just for the holiday season. From October 3 through December 26, the Postal Service will temporarily raise prices on all commercial and retail domestic packages, due to the jump in package volume during the holiday season.

Source: Fastcompany.com, Sept. 30, 2021

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When we introduce our clients to the power of intermittent renewal, it typically makes instant sense to them. It's obvious, for example, that if you keep withdrawing money from a bank account, eventually you'll go bankrupt. It's the same reason that Formula 1 drivers pull into pit stops at regular intervals to have their vehicles refueled and their tires changed. The greater the performance demand, the greater the need for renewal — even though we're inclined to do just the opposite.

This "knowing-doing gap" can lead to a range of bewildering contradictions.

At one offsite with a client, we were given the day to present our work. In order for participants to accomplish all of the goals for their time together, they met for a couple of hours in the very early morning before our workshop began, and then put in several more hours together in the evening. Their exhaustion was apparent, but no one felt comfortable calling out the contradiction.

At a second company, our mandate was to address a longstanding internal conflict on a senior leadership team by widening the lens through which they were seeing the disagreement. Very quickly, it became clear that team members were so deep in Survival

Mode that in order to focus on the issue at hand, they needed to first address the survival emotions that were standing in the way.

When it comes to making changes, the most vexing invisible barrier is the power of mindset. Most of us are deeply disinclined to challenge what we believe has made us successful, even when these behaviors begin to feel dysfunctional. This is even truer when the collective mindset — the organizational culture — supports and reinforces our current assumptions.

Burnout will only get worse so long as organizations fail to challenge the "more, bigger, faster is better" mindset. This must begin with senior leaders who have the courage to become "Chief Energy Officers," and who will serve as role models of and advocates for a more balanced relationship between spending and renewing energy. The reward, we've seen consistently, is not just better health and well-being, but also more sustainable high performance.

Tony Schwartz (@tonyschwartz) is the CEO and founder of The Energy Project and bestselling author of *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*. A frequent keynote speaker, Tony also has trained and coached CEOs and senior leaders at organizations, including Apple, Google, Sony, the LAPD and the Cleveland Clinic.



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