

BURNOUT PREVENTION

Workshop by Oliver Biernat

Lisbon, 20 April 2013

Burnout is not yet a middle-class mass phenomenon. The majority of interviewed people does not feel over-strained or under-challenged. Nevertheless, this can change at short notice if no measures against are taken in time. Find here

11 Tips what Executives Can Do

Many medium-sized companies are quite good at encouraging their staff to work at high-performance level without being in danger to generate burnout reactions. This is why the risk indicators for an individual burnout are relatively low amongst the 14,701 employees belonging to 94 medium-sized businesses which underwent the check for the application to the employers' award "Top Job".

Surveyed employees neither felt over-strained nor unter-challenged (87%) but appreciated by their superiors (66%). They felt positive companionship (97%), identical moral concepts (97%) and justice (75%).

The risks of the Acceleration Trap

Nevertheless, the studies of the Institute of HR Management of the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) also confirms that more than half of the analysed companies (51%), seen as an entire organisation, had already stepped into the Acceleration Trap. By permanently increasing objectives which have to be achieved by their (still motivated) employees, more and more concentrated tasks, an innumerable number of newly started projects, shortened innovation circles and frequently changing solutions imposed by the management, the companies try to catch-up with the permanent competition pressure – an undertaking that will have the long term repercussions.

Going along with the acceleration trap, there is a threatening danger for the employees – and thus the whole company – to become permanently over-strained. An enduring professional workload in combination with a lack of appreciation, professional perspectives and adequate salary and a work-life balance conceived to be negative, make the burnout risk rise significantly.



Eleven recommendations for executives how to avoid being entrapped



These recommendations are addressed to executives who will be able to protect themselves as well as their employees from a threatening collapse, as long as they watch that the following recommendations, which have been set-up by the authors of the study, Dr. Heike Bruch and Sandra Kowalewski:

1. Take care of your own **physical health**.
2. Be aware of your exposed position as role model and think about the **mental health** of your staff.
3. Establish a culture of **mutual respect**.
4. Support the **recreation phases** of your staff.
5. Watch your own **work-life-balance** and the ones of your employees.
6. Establish an **EWS** (early warning system) for burnout and mental overload (e.g by holding staff interviews or surveys).
7. Set strategic objectives and communicate them. Set **priorities** and give instructions how to prioritise oneself.
8. Encourage team members to name **sub-optimize** projects and stop them.
9. Take care of a **balanced alternation** of high energy phases and recreation phases.
10. Make mental health **measurable** inside the company and communicate the results.
11. Invest in **burnout prevention** (especially by adapting the work to the employees' abilities).

