

Are exhausted employees a call for leadership strategy?

—Prioritize to Relieve Stressed Workers—

By Donna Rawady

Overtired employees may be an understandable sign of the times. Yet prolonged exhaustion among employees could reflect a lack of strategy and/or a dysfunctional organizational culture that may threaten sustainable success.

When organizations downsized to meet economic challenges in recent years, many were left with a streamlined structure. As businesses experience a minimal or robust increase in sales, they may be finding themselves less than equipped to meet demands.

Other factors also increase stress on a workforce. Globalization generates new and threatening competitive challenges, and working across many time zones requires late hours and middle-of-the-night meetings. Telecommunications in the new millennium allows (and often requires) 24-hour accessibility.

As long as everyone understands the clear short-term and long-term vision, and sound **business** strategies are in place, most loyal employees will do whatever it takes — temporarily — to bridge the organization into better times. That is successful only as a short-term strategy. Long-term, it can lead to a decrease in morale.

Values that leaders strive to integrate into their organizations are contradicted when longer hours leave little time for family, community or spiritual activities that offer life balance.

I offer three simple strategies to these complex challenges. Stop, assess and re-prioritize your current initiatives. Establish your most immediate goals, and set future targets for remaining initiatives.

Set and communicate a course that's manageable. It is tempting to dismiss these recommendations based on short-term productivity challenges. Yet these strategies will increase odds for sustainable profitability.

Reintroduce and demonstrate the values that help people thrive. Thriving employees build thriving businesses.

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