SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE: A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO WORKLOAD AND WELLBEING

Presented By

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Sustainable Workforce: A Manager's Guide to Workload and Wellbeing

Introduction

Navigating workplace challenges with limited resources requires a focus on staff well-being and high-impact work. This guide provides strategies for managers to support their teams, manage workloads effectively, and prevent burnout—all while fostering a sustainable and productive work environment.

What is Burnout? [WATCH THIS]

Section 1: Key Principles of Sustainable Work

1. Foundational Principles for Well-being & Efficiency

Workplace Well-Being

Why? Supports mental health, increases engagement, and fosters a healthier work environment.

How? Integrate wellness into decision-making (Okanagan Charter principles), encourage work-life boundaries, and model healthy workplace behaviors.

Encouraging Autonomy

Why? Increases job satisfaction and efficiency by fostering ownership and trust.

How? Shift to a coaching leadership style, empower staff to make decisions, and provide necessary training and support.

Leadership Accountability

Why? Managers modeling desired behaviors (e.g., work-life balance, effective prioritization) builds trust, reinforces organizational values, and encourages staff adoption. How? Leaders actively demonstrate healthy work habits, adhere to established processes, share their own strategies for workload management, and visibly prioritize well-being.

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2. Optimizing Workflows & Collaboration

Process Optimization & Efficiency

Why? Reduces frustration, eliminates redundant work, and improves productivity.

How? Implement process mapping, automate repetitive tasks, and review workflows regularly. Seek external perspectives and best practices from colleagues in similar roles or at other institutions for fresh ideas and analysis.

Collaborative Opportunities and Overlap

Why? Leveraging collaborative opportunities and departmental overlap enhances staff well-being and workload by reducing redundancy, fostering knowledge sharing, building community, optimizing resources, improving problem-solving, boosting engagement, and enabling proactive workload management.

How? Implement this through process audits, cross-functional teams, shared platforms, inter-departmental knowledge sharing, cross-training, liaison roles, performance incentives, and strong leadership buy-in.

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3. Understanding Workloads & Advocating for Staff

Workload Assessment

Why? Provides managers with data to support workload balancing and advocacy.

How? Use simple time/task tracking tools for a set period, ensuring flexibility and transparency in reporting.

Process Mapping & Task Prioritization

Why? Identifies bottlenecks, reduces frustration, and prevents staff from feeling overwhelmed.

How? Conduct collaborative mapping sessions, offer prioritization training, and provide tools to help staff focus on high-value work.

Advocacy & Resource Allocation

Why? Strengthens the case for workload redistribution and additional support.

How? Use data-driven insights to advocate for policy changes, present trends to leadership, and document workload concerns.

Recognizing & Addressing Overwork

Why? Early intervention prevents burnout and turnover. How? Hold regular check-ins, establish anonymous feedback channels, and foster a culture where staff feel safe voicing concerns.

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4. Practical Workload Management

Prioritization & Time Management

Why? Prevents burnout, improves focus, and ensures staff are working on high-impact tasks.

How? Conduct regular task reviews, use prioritization frameworks (e.g., Eisenhower Matrix) to define and focus on what "high impact" specifically means for your department's goals, and provide training on time management techniques (Pomodoro method, time blocking, delegation).

Meetings & Deadlines

Why? Minimizes disruptions, allows deeper focus, and reduces last-minute stress.

How? Establish clear agendas, enforce meeting-free time blocks, set realistic deadlines with buffers, and implement structured review processes.

The Power of "No"

Why? Empowers staff to set healthy boundaries, prevents overcommitment, and protects focus on critical tasks, directly reducing workload and burnout.

How? Encourage and empower staff to politely decline or defer non-essential requests when capacity is limited, provide guidance on how to say "no" effectively, and support their decisions when they prioritize.

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5. Navigating Change Effectively

Change Management

Why? Ensures successful adoption of new processes, tools, or structures, minimizes resistance, and maintains staff morale and productivity during transitions.

How? Communicate proactively and transparently, involve staff in the change process, provide adequate training and support, address concerns openly, and celebrate successes.

Section 2: Practical Toolkit for Managers

This section provides actionable strategies and research-backed tools to help managers navigate workload challenges, optimize processes, and support staff well-being.

<u>Sample Step-by-Step Implementation Guide</u>

A structured approach to identifying, piloting, and sustaining meaningful improvements in workload management.

Phase 1: Data Gathering – Understanding Pain Points [1-2 Months]

- Conduct task tracking to identify time-consuming and redundant activities. (1-2 weeks)
- Collect staff feedback through surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one check-ins. (1-2 weeks)
- Perform workload analysis to assess task distribution and identify areas of overload as well as areas that are successful. (2 weeks+ depending on size of team)

Phase 2: Small Pilot Changes – Testing Feasible Solutions [Ongoing]

- Implement low-risk adjustments, such as reducing meetings, introducing time-blocking, or streamlining approvals. (Time can vary on task)
- Set clear metrics for success and monitor the impact on staff efficiency and morale. (Ongoing)
- Gather feedback and adjust strategies before scaling up. (1 week)

Phase 3: Full Rollout – Scaling and Refining

- Expand successful strategies across teams and departments. (Time can vary by task/team)
- Establish continuous feedback loops to ensure adaptability. (Ongoing)
- Incorporate findings into long-term planning for sustainable workload distribution. (Quarterly/Annually)

Key Process Improvement Tools

Research-based methodologies to enhance workflow efficiency and reduce staff burden.

- Lean Six Sigma – Identify inefficiencies and streamline processes without compromising quality. (See Resources Section)
- Process Mapping – Visualize workflows to pinpoint bottlenecks and redundancies.
- Task Prioritization Frameworks – For example work on applying models like the Eisenhower Matrix to focus on high-impact tasks. The Eisenhower Matrix is a time-management tool that helps you prioritize tasks by urgency and importance.

Leadership & Management Training Resources

Essential guides and courses to strengthen managerial skills.

- Effective Delegation – Strategies to distribute tasks equitably while fostering staff growth.
  - LinkedIn Learning: Delegating Tasks, Delegation Strategies for People Leaders
- Workload Management – Tools to balance team capacity with institutional priorities.
  - LinkedIn Learning: Efficient Time Management, Time Management for Managers
- Psychological Safety & Communication – Training on creating an open and supportive work environment.
  - LinkedIn Learning: Psychological Safety, Creating Psychological Safety for Diverse Teams, How to Collaborate with Your Colleagues to Build Psychological Safety Together

Optimizing Meetings & Decision-Making

Techniques to enhance meeting efficiency and purpose.

- Running Effective Meetings – Best practices for agenda-setting, laying out meeting expectations, timekeeping, and follow-up accountability. Meeting Free Fridays.
- Decision-Making Frameworks – Models to ensure strategic, data-driven decisions that align with staff capacity.

Departmental & Institutional Workload Assessments

Structured approaches to evaluating and adjusting workloads.

- Departmental Review Framework – Assess FTE needs, redefine job roles, and ensure fair task distribution.
- Workload Audits – Regular assessments to track shifts in responsibilities and optimize resource allocation.

Time & Productivity Management

Equipping managers and teams with practical time management strategies.

- Individual & Team Productivity Training – Real-life application of techniques like the Pomodoro method, deep work, and energy-based scheduling. Empowering staff to find and block of focus time in their day.
- Technology & Automation – Identifying tools to streamline administrative tasks and improve efficiency.

Embedding Staff Well-Being into Decision-Making

Applying the Okanagan Charter principles to create a sustainable and supportive work environment.

- Workload Sustainability Reviews – Ensure changes promote long-term staff health and retention.
- Well-Being Integration – Embed policies that support mental health, work-life balance, and professional fulfillment.

Section 3: Ideas on Gaining Staff Buy-In

1. Using Staff Strengths
   - Why? Capitalizing on individual talents increases job satisfaction, enhances performance, and fosters a sense of value and contribution, leading to greater buy-in for team and organizational goals.
   - How? Conduct skill assessments or surveys, encourage staff to take on tasks aligned with their strengths, provide opportunities for "stretch assignments" in areas of interest, and regularly highlight individual contributions.
2. Addressing Concerns About Micromanagement
   - Why? Many staff members resist tracking and process improvements because they fear being overly monitored.
   - How? Present real-life examples of how past improvements helped reduce workload and emphasize that tracking is used to redistribute tasks fairly, not scrutinize performance.
3. Non-Financial Rewards
   - Why? Recognition and meaningful engagement increase staff motivation and job satisfaction.
   - How? Offer regular appreciation, career growth opportunities, and personal flexibility where possible.
4. Strong Recognition Programs
   - Why? Employees who feel valued are more likely to buy into workplace changes.

    - How? Implement structured recognition efforts such as peer-nominated awards and public appreciation.
5. Education and Development Opportunities
    - Why? Providing training helps employees see the value in process changes and fosters skill growth.
    - How? Offer lunch-and-learn sessions, mentorships, and access to professional development courses.

Section 4: Example Situations and Manager Tips with Sample Roleplay Skits

<u>Situation 1: Staff Overwhelmed by Task Tracking</u>

- Staff: "I don't have time to track everything I do—it's just more work."
- Manager: "I completely understand. The goal here is not to add stress but to make sure we have a clear picture of where your time is going. That way, we can advocate for necessary adjustments. Would it help if we limited it to just key tasks for now?"

Next Steps:

- Emphasize that tracking is temporary and for workload balancing.
- Allow staff to track only major tasks initially and review them after a trial period.

<u>Situation 2: Resistance to Process Mapping</u>

- Staff: "We've always done it this way. Why change now?"
- Manager: "I understand. The goal is not to change things for the sake of change but to ensure we're working as efficiently as possible. Let's try mapping out our processes together and see if we can identify any areas where we can make our work easier."

Next Steps:

- Encourage staff to voice concerns.
- Highlight time-saving benefits.
- Start with small, low-risk improvements.

<u>Situation 3: Staff Struggling with Prioritization</u>

- Staff: "I have too many things on my plate, and I don't know what to focus on first."
- Manager: "That makes sense—let's take a step back and look at everything together. We can figure out what's most urgent and where I can provide support. Maybe we can also push back on some deadlines or redistribute tasks if needed."

Next Steps:

- Help staff categorize tasks into urgent vs. important.
- Identify tasks that can be delayed, delegated, or streamlined.
- Reassure staff that prioritization is a team effort, not just their burden.

<u>Situation 4: Staff Hesitant to Ask for Help</u>

- Staff: "I feel like I should be able to handle this on my own—I don't want to bother anyone."

- Manager: "I appreciate your dedication, but you're not alone in this. There is nothing wrong with asking for help—it's part of making sure we all work as a team and succeed. Let's figure out what support you need so you don't feel like you have to do everything by yourself."

Next Steps:

- Normalize asking for help as a strength, not a weakness.
- Set up regular check-ins to proactively offer support.
- Identify peer collaboration opportunities to lighten the load.

Situation 5: Staff Feeling Burned Out but Uncertain About Solutions

- Staff: "I'm exhausted, but I don't even know what would make it better."
- Manager: "I hear you. Burnout is real, and it's not just about workload—it's about sustainability. Let's talk through what's feeling most overwhelming and see if we can adjust expectations, find efficiencies, or build in more breaks to help you recover."

Next Steps:

- Encourage open discussions about burnout without fear of judgment.
- Look for systemic solutions, not just quick fixes.
- Promote work-life balance by modeling healthy boundaries.

Section 5: Resources

Lean Six Sigma:

- https://it.ucsb.edu/lean-six-sigma
- https://leansixsigma.ucdavis.edu/
- https://extension.ucr.edu/certificates/leansixsigma

Wellbeing:

- https://wellbeingcollective.ucsc.edu/
- https://wellbeing.ucsb.edu/

Training:

  - UCSB Hybrid & Remote Resources for Supervisors
  - SBCC Career Skills Institute
  - Certificate Programs & Training Series
  - Practice challenging conversations by role-playing with LinkedIn Learning