

Peer Coaching - The Silver Bullet to Beat **Work-from-Home** Burnout



Contents

Introduction	03
WFH Burnout – The Problem Is Real	04
Work From Home Challenges	05
The Role Of Peer Coaching	08
Why Organizations Need To Build A Coaching Culture	12
Conclusion	13
About Numly	14
References & Acknowledgement	15

About This Document

The pandemic forced companies across the globe into large scale adoption of Work from Home and Remote Work practices for its workforce. Ensuring employee engagement, employee experience and employee development during this time became a challenge that most companies struggled with. Work-from-home burnout has become a common cause of concern. What kind of coaching and training can help improve employee engagement in the new normal of hybrid work environments? This whitepaper gives you a deep insight on how Peer Coaching offers an innovative solution to these challenges by pairing coworkers as coaches and learners, across organizational processes.



Introduction

While we finally put 2020 behind us, the new year did not sweep out the new normal with the one that we were familiar with. The pandemic year has extended, while zoom meetings, WebEx calls, and kitchens turned into classrooms, and home offices continue to be a part of our present reality. What started as a temporary solution to keep the COVID crisis under check has become the greatest workplace experiment – never before has remote work been executed at this scale across the globe, across industries, sectors, and enterprises both large and small.

While working from home in pajamas, the freedom to do household chores anytime, being available to look after family at home and the bonus of not having to commute to the workplace were attractive draws initially, many people soon started experiencing the phenomenon called “work from home burnout”.

WFH Burnout – The Problem Is Real

Millions across the world made the sudden transition to remote work and while most organizations were worried about productivity, they are now more concerned about a more long-term risk - employee burnout.

As the lines between work and personal space blurred in new and unusual ways, the delineation of boundaries, coupled with news of economic slowdown, shrinking job markets, and major layoffs, led to more stress. Most employees struggled to preserve healthy boundaries between their professional and personal lives. Working all the time became a way to establish productivity, loyalty, and devotion to the organization.

Drawing lines between the professional and personal space is difficult even in the best of situations. The current situation simply does not allow for this to happen. As such, we are witnessing the rise of work-from-home burnout.

A year of dealing with the pandemic, working from home, social isolation and a climate of uncertainty have led the burnout risk to jump to 33% from the former 5%. While burnout risk has been increasing year on year, it spiked in March 2020 when the COVID crisis announced itself and continued its northward trend since.

Globally, employees are mentally and physically exhausted, especially as the end of the pandemic remains uncertain.

- Research shows that more than two-thirds, or **69%** of employees, are experiencing burnout symptoms while working from home, up by almost **20%** from a similar survey conducted in May 2019.
- Another survey conducted by Flex Jobs and Mental Health America (MHA) reported that **75%** of workers experienced burnout and **40%** of those polled related the same to the COVID crisis.
- 37%** of the respondents stated that they are working longer than usual since the pandemic started.
- The survey also goes on to show that **18%** of those employed are struggling with mental health issues as compared to **5%** before the pandemic.



Work From Home Challenges

Burnout is a psychological symptom that results from long-term, job-specific, physical and emotional exhaustion from interpersonal stress. It has a significant impact on performance at work, employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction levels.

The quantitative, emotional, and mental demands of this pandemic-driven remote work become the fuel that feeds work-from-home burnout. The remote work situation introduced by the COVID crisis has led to a 'role overload', especially as employees double up as teachers and full-time caregivers.

The work from home challenges also does not take a cookie-cutter approach for everyone. It manifests differently for different departments and job roles.



For New Hires

The remote work environment has also made it hard for the new hires to build the right connections with their team members and with the organization. While employee onboarding has moved online, sub-optimal experiences make it hard for the employees to organically integrate themselves into the organization's culture, rituals, attitudes, and methodologies.

The absence of physical interactions makes it difficult for new employees to connect with the company culture, establish work relationships, build strong connections, identify and leverage growth plans, and discover the right pathways to demonstrate value. It can also become overwhelming to identify the channels to build a strong professional network within the organization to aid professional success.



For Sales Team

The shift to remote working has been difficult for those working in sales. The rules of engagement have experienced a complete overhaul and salespeople have had to execute tasks like conducting demos, holding negotiations, delivering presentations, and closing deals online. While physical meetings are a no-go, they still have to make sure that their productivity and numbers are not impacted.

Most sales teams have had to figure out ways to meet their sales projections and targets, collaborate, and remain on their growth trajectory while operating from a remote setup. Given the competitive nature of sales, managing trust within the team in the absence of physical interactions also contributes to disengagement and internal strife – all of which contribute to burnout.



For Managers And Leaders

Remote working has also not been a cakewalk even for the more seasoned players. Managers and leaders have also had to recalibrate their management and leadership styles to suit them for the pandemic era while working remotely.

Leaders have to focus on building trust, shared purpose, and organizational resilience. They have to improve their communication skills, become more approachable, accelerate human-machine collaboration to support people, identify whether to restructure or realign the workforce, identify new revenue streams, and refocus the business. Along with this, leaders also need to work on increasing their emotional intelligence to become more empathetic towards the challenges of the workforce.

They have to drive a growth mindset across the enterprise and walk the talk when it comes to being flexible, agile, and empathetic. It is critical for them to be open to “learning intelligence” – an intentional approach to seek help and learn to leverage the expertise and experience of others.

Managers also have to identify the optimal method to connect with their teams, streamline communication channels, identify and motivate their team members, lead the path to collaboration, and deliver enablement when they need it. They have to build their emotional intelligence to lead successful teams by identifying their explicit and latent needs and make sure that their team members remain productive and engaged without taking that Big Brother approach.

For HR Teams

In the face of constant flux, HR teams have had to work hard towards creating a model that focuses on helping organizations derive greater value from talent. HR teams have thus had to function as the critical enablers of work, become analytically more sophisticated to reduce swim lanes and silos that stand between elevated employee experiences and better talent performance.

The COVID crisis has led to an almost increased pressure on HR to deliver enablement at work, design work policies that are relevant to this remote age, drive diversity and inclusion initiatives, and keep employee wellbeing at the heart of HR policies.

The imminent push towards HR3.0 has also accelerated, and HR teams have to now deliver an experience-centric design around employee performance and talent performance management. They also rethink upskilling and reskilling needs of the organization and align learning and development initiatives with organizational goals.

The Role Of Peer Coaching

Most organizations have embarked or accelerated their digital transformation initiatives to meet the needs of employees. Whether it is tools to enable collaboration or techniques to improve productivity, there is a solution to help employees manage their work commitments.

However, organizations are still wondering how they can help people manage this new normal and prevent burnout. Peer Coaching, in this time, can be a vital tool to help people build resilience, address issues at hand, become more solution-driven and creative, and drive the behavior change needed to increase agility to manage difficult times.

Peer coaching is a process where professionals, managers, executives working at different levels with different competencies come together to form an environment of trust that facilitates and encourages learning by sharing ideas and reflecting on existing practices in the workplace. The holistic, non-authoritative, and non-judgemental nature of peer coaching makes it suitable to help the workforce manage their work from home challenges.

Here is a look at the role of peer coaching in the organizational narrative.



Build Resilience

Resilient organizations can capably manage challenging situations and bounce back after a crisis. Along with risk management, organizations have to focus on building the resilience of their employees in the face of constant disruption, volatility, and change. Building resilience demands some strategic shifts in thinking and adopting new mindsets that encourage looking beyond the obvious or self-serving explanations. It also demands the capacity to explore different alternatives, perspectives, and solutions.

By building self-awareness, peer coaching helps employees to understand themselves better. We are far more likely to listen to and implement suggestions from friends rather than from those giving them from a place of authority.

It helps them stay along the path of continuous learning and allows organizations to build critical skills such as leadership, innovation, communication, self-management, positive mindset habits, and situational awareness - all of this drives organizational resilience

Smoother Onboarding

With everything virtual, the onboarding exercise has to be impactful, engaging, and contextual. This exercise has to ensure that it helps the employees get all the relevant and important information required for them to be successful at work and hit the ground running. Providing correct, relevant, and contextual information is essential to ensure that the new organizational asset is set up for success.

Instead of a day-long onboarding session, peer coaching helps organizations set the right tone with the employees. Peer coaching helps employees assimilate the organizational culture by providing the guidance needed to navigate the formal and informal networks within the organization.

It helps employees understand the dynamics and the rules of engagement within the organization, whether it is by helping them identify how success is measured or identify who to seek help from.

Since peer coaching is a continuous interaction, it helps new employees shift seamlessly from being the outsiders to insiders of the organization by giving them guidance on how to build the right connection, identify their strengths, and how to leverage them to become more visible in this remote workplace.

Build Trust Within The Team

It can be difficult for organizations to display how invested they are in their employees. With annual parties and fancy perks now a thing of the past, organizations need to show authentic commitment towards their employees. Peer Coaching acts as the antidote and becomes a crucial tool to help in building trust bridges across the organization.

Peer coaching enables skill development, and drives employee growth plans using contextual coaching thereby helping organizations demonstrate their commitment towards the personal development and career growth of their employees. Employees then reward organizations and team members with higher levels of trust.

Provide Support

Peer coaching can give employees the exact support they need to navigate the organizational and personal challenges. It can help organizations plug the skills gap and power their upskilling and reskilling initiatives and, consequently, enable employees to improve their career trajectories.

Peer coaches can also help employees improve their critical skills such as collaboration, empathy, communication, and the like, to not only excel in their professional obligations but also to thrive and excel as individuals. This coaching can be a valuable tool to support diversity and inclusion initiatives and ensure that these initiatives do more than just pay lip-service.

Foster Transparent Communication

Building and honing communication skills are essential in today's remote work environment. Organizations have to ensure that there is clear and transparent communication across all verticals and departments within it.

Peer coaching can help engineering teams collaborate better, salespeople communicate more effectively, and managers and leaders deliver their message clearly and emphatically.

Drive Work-Life Balance

Peer coaching is also the missing piece of the work-life balance puzzle. Peer coaches can help employees navigate the challenges to balance work and life, identify ways to deliver greater value and help build boundaries for better work-life integration.

These coaches can help employees proactively identify their explicit and implied needs, assist them in identifying areas of improvement, cope with workplace stress, and evaluate the impediments of productivity and progress. The relationship between the coach and learner makes it easier for employees to speak up about actual issues that bother them and keep them from achieving their full potential without fearing how their challenges will be perceived.

Address The Mental Health Concerns

The relationship between the peer coach and learner is also non-judgmental. Hence, it becomes easier for employees to speak up about actual issues that bother them and keep them from achieving their full potential without fearing how their challenges will be perceived.

People are more likely to be forthcoming to reach out for help when they experience stress, mental health issues, and difficult situations and navigate them productively rather than worry and stress endlessly and move along the path towards burnout.

Drive-Up Productivity

Developing a coaching culture within the organization equips employees with higher knowledge and more skills which contribute positively towards productivity. Peer coaching empowers employees with the right tools to help them manage challenges and improve work-related outcomes and thereby becomes an indirect contributor to organizational effectiveness.

Peer coaching can help reinvigorate old skills, train employees in new skills, improve their confidence levels, and give them the tools to reach their goals. This enablement has a direct impact on employee productivity.

Why Organizations Need To Build A Coaching Culture

Given the benefits at hand and the impact that peer coaching can have on employee and organizational outcomes, establishing an internal coaching culture assumes strategic importance.

Be it to develop a healthy leadership pipeline, engage high-potential employees, help employees with performance gaps, and help managers and leaders become more effective in their roles, building a coaching culture across the organization has many benefits.

It is a great alternative to supercharge upskilling and reskilling activities as it drives behavioral change along with disseminating knowledge. It also helps organizations become more resilient, agile, and flexible in the face of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity).

However, To Integrate Coaching Into The Organizational Culture, It Is Important To:

- 🌱 Take A Data-Driven Approach Towards Coaching And Make It Contextual And Personalized
- 🌱 Ensure The Right Coach And Learner Pairing For Better Outcomes
- 🌱 Eliminate Guesswork And Capably Map Skill Requirements With Skill Development Initiatives
- 🌱 Employ Assessments Such As The 16 Personality Factor Tests And Behavioral Skill Development Tests To Identify The Exact Coaching Needs Of The Employees
- 🌱 Embed Coaching Into Talent And Performance Management To Provide Proactive Feedback For Better Performance

Conclusion

2021 is a year of strategic importance as organizations start to move out of the shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do organizations have to work towards improving business outcomes, but also have to be equally focused on building their organizational resilience and become more future-proof as VUCA becomes an indelible part of our reality.

With the pandemic, the proliferation and accelerated adoption of digital technologies has also led to the rise of new business models and supply chains. The proliferation and maturing of advanced technologies, the digitalization drives, and increasing impetus on digital transformation are leading to the creation of new roles and departments. As such, organizations have to work towards helping employees accrue the skill that will benefit them, and consequently, the organization as well.

While the world moves back gradually towards the old order, we have to accept that the days of the traditional workspace are perhaps behind us for good. The hybrid workplace, a workplace that amalgamates the traditional (on-premises) with the modern (remote, global, and distributed workplace) demands new approaches to enable productivity and performance without the stresses that lead to employee burnout.

Peer Coaching is perhaps that piece of the puzzle that will help the workforce remain connected with organizational values and goals, ensure productivity and drive profitability as we figure out the machinations of this new normal.













About Numly™

Numly™'s mission is to phenomenally improve employee engagement and talent performance through People Connections, Peer Coaching, and Critical Skills Development. NumlyEngage™ is an AI-enhanced platform that enables peer coaching as an extension of eLearning, making it possible for organizations to tap into employees' hard and soft skills and empower them to coach each other in a structured manner, while leveraging third-party learning content, expert coaches and built-in, AI-enabled, coaching programs tailored for all corporate functional groups such as Sales, Customer Success, R&D/Engineering, Women Leaders, New-hires, New Managers, etc. NumlyEngage™ helps organizations accelerate revenue, increase performance, and improve employee engagement, especially in the post COVID-19 era of working from home (WFH).

For more information, visit <https://www.numly.io/>.



References:

-  <https://www.glintinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Glint-Oct-2020-Data-Insights-Report.pdf>
-  <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/burnout-signs-have-risen-33-2020-here-seven-ways-reduce-george-anders/>
-  <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/28/remote-work-burnout-is-growing-as-coronavirus-pandemic-stretches-on.html>
-  <https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/flexjobs-mha-mental-health-workplace-pandemic/>
-  <https://www.naco.org/articles/coach-remote-workers-avoid-burnout>
-  <https://tollfreeforwarding.com/blog/stress-anxiety-and-exhaustion-the-extent-of-workplace-burnout-in-modern-america/>
-  <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>
-  https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342800932_I'm_not_Working_from_Home_I'm_Living_at_Work_Perceived_Stress_and_Work-Related_Burnout_before_and_during_COVID-19