

Press release
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Feeling burnt out? 8 in 10 Australian bosses say they'll cover staff to take leave

- 60% of Australian business leaders are concerned that employees are more likely to experience burnout this year.
- 85% are willing to hire a contractor to cover a full-time employee when they go on leave.
- Other work-life balance strategies include offering remote work or telecommuting (71%), flexitime (67%), permanent part-time roles (55%), and compressed work weeks (51%).

Sydney, 8 June 2021 – As the economy rebounds, businesses are ramping up their activity which is creating mounting workloads for many. However, working relentlessly is neither healthy nor sustainable, and can result in burnout.

New research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) research shows the majority (60%) of Australian business leaders are concerned that employees are more likely to experience burnout this year. This is more than double (28%) those who believe employees are just as likely to experience burnout this year compared to the previous year. Only 12% of respondents state employees are less likely to experience burnout over the coming year than previous year.

Given the challenging and disruptive personal, professional, and economic issues the onset of the pandemic had in 2020, these results point to the negative impact sustained long-term pressure is having on employees which is resulting in a higher incidence of burnout.

Employers encouraging staff to take holiday

A healthy work-life balance is cited by many as one of the most valuable aspects of an organisational culture among employees who are consistently happy in their jobs, including flexible working arrangements and vacation time. In positive news for employees, research reveals 85% of Australian business leaders are willing to hire a contractor to cover a full-time employee when they go on leave.

From a managerial perspective, encouraging staff to take annual leave is an effective strategy to reduce the risk of employee burnout. At the same time, introducing temporary support from contractors upholds productivity within the team without overburdening existing teammates with the workload of the employee on leave.

Of the 85% of surveyed business leaders willing to hire a contractor to cover a full-time employee when they go on leave, nearly half of those respondents (42%) had not previously considered this option but were open to doing so in 2021 and 43% were already doing so. This points to the employer's recognition of their employees' extraordinary contributions in the past year as well as the resulting negative impact on many staff members' work-life balance.

Aside from encouraging staff to take their annual leave, many employers are actively taking increased action to help prevent employee burnout and promote a healthy work-life balance. Other strategies companies are introducing to support an improved work-life balance among staff include offering remote work or telecommuting (71%), flexitime (67%), permanent part-time roles (55%), and compressed work weeks (51%).

“Preventing employee burnout is an organisational issue which businesses need to prioritise. After enduring more than a year of long hours and little time off, many workers are feeling burned out and need a break to relax and refresh. Running on empty can have a negative effect on employees' mental

health and well-being, and managers should make it a priority to encourage their teams to enjoy a well-deserved vacation,” says **Nicole Gorton, Director Australia** in announcing Robert Half’s latest survey results.

“Annual leave is an important part of maintaining work-life balance which can benefit the workplace overall by improving morale, productivity, retention, and reducing unplanned absences. Businesses should focus on developing an organisational culture that supports leave, or risk losing top talent – to a burnout or another opportunity. Hiring contract workers to cover permanent employees while on leave does not only allow companies to maintain productivity, it also avoids placing additional workload on the remaining colleagues or leaving a mounting workload for employees on their return,” concludes **Gorton**.

Robert Half offers five ways employees can prepare for their holiday break

- **Create an action plan** - Create a handover document that clearly describes the projects that may need attention while you’re away including what to expect, how to handle specific situations, key contacts, and any potential challenges that may arise.
- **Spread the word** - The more prepared you are for your absence, the less likely you will receive last-minute requests on the way out the door. Give plenty of notice of your out-of-office dates and who has been assigned as your backup.
- **Wrap up your work commitments** - Endeavour to keep the last few days before your holiday break free from meetings and non-essential activities so you can concentrate on cleaning out your inbox, wrapping up projects, and tackling any final assignments. Don’t forget to switch on your out-of-office reply on all devices.
- **Prepare for your return** - Consider which projects will need immediate attention when you return and allocate time to check messages and meet with your boss and anyone who served as a backup in your absence so you can get updates on what you missed.
- **Step away from the smartphone** - Emergencies notwithstanding, there should be no reason to keep checking your work email over the holiday break. Remove your email or communication channels from your phone and resist checking in with the office. The more you stay in touch with work, the less of a break you will have.

Robert Half offers four tips for helping managers prevent staff burnout:

- **Support work-life balance** - To help employees juggle personal and professional responsibilities, offer alternative working arrangements such as telecommuting or flexitime.
- **Model the example for managing stress** - Employees will see that you take your commitment to work-life balance seriously if you manage your own time effectively. Avoiding working late, taking annual leave, and not sending late-night or weekend emails can help set the right example.
- **Set priorities** - Help your team focus on critical business tasks and consider bringing in contractors to assist where necessary.
- **Share resources** - Communicate on a regular basis, promote company wellness offerings, and encourage participation in free classes and programs that support healthier lifestyles.

About the research

The annual study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in November 2020 by an independent research company, surveying 300 hiring managers, including 100 CFOs and 100 CIOs, from companies across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy and member of the S&P 500. Founded in 1948, the company has more than 300 offices worldwide providing contract, interim management, and permanent recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services, technology, and business support professionals. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

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