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Burnout in Accounting

86% of accountants report symptoms of stress and burnout

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Burnout as an industry problem

In 2024, CABA published a report that said 74% of accountants reported symptoms of burnout. This figure has now increased to 86% in 2026 with the recent TaxCalc report. It is clear there is a huge issue in the accounting industry, one that affects not only individuals but the firms they work in.

What is burnout?

Burnout is the result of ongoing workplace stress that has built up over time. It usually shows up in three ways: exhaustion, disengagement from work, and reduced performance.

In practice, that can mean mental and physical fatigue, caring less about the work, making more mistakes, or taking longer to complete tasks that would normally feel manageable.



How do you know if you are suffering from burnout?

Burnout often builds gradually. In accounting, busy season pressure can spill into longer-term exhaustion when there is not enough time to recover afterwards.

It can be hard to notice it yourself, as people often absorb pressure by overcompensating and working longer hours to keep up with work demands.

Often the first signs are picked up by colleagues, friends or family. They may notice that you seem more withdrawn, irritable, tired, or simply not like yourself.

How can I manage burnout symptoms?

Start by putting clearer boundaries in place before pressure builds too far. Leave work on time, ask for help earlier and delegate where appropriate. Try to take full rest breaks during the day.

If you feel overwhelmed, speak to a trusted colleague at work such as your manager/HR to see if any adjustments can be put in place.

Sometimes taking time off to rest may be the right step. A short break to recover is often far better than pushing through until you need a much longer period of time away from work.

If you are unsure who to speak to, or if symptoms are affecting your health more broadly, it can also help to speak to your GP. Your GP can talk through support options and refer you for further mental health support if needed.

How can I manage my employee burnout?

Burnout is easier to manage when pressure areas are identified early. Often the interventions that have the greatest impact on employee wellbeing are those that evaluate workload design and organisational pressure rather than individual adjustments.

Regular team check-ins help, with honest conversations about workload, deadlines and any bottlenecks. Capacity reviews should be built into normal management, especially during busy periods.

If someone is struggling, look first at what can be changed in the work itself: priorities, timelines, support, handovers, meeting load, or who owns which tasks.

Signposting colleagues regularly to the support that is available within the firm is key, which may be EAP services, or a wellbeing lead. People are far more likely to use support when they know it exists, understand what it is for, and are reminded about it before they reach crisis point.

How can I manage my symptoms of burnout as a leader?

Leaders are not protected from burnout. In many firms, they are carrying pressure from clients, deadlines and their teams all at once and can be the biggest group affected by burnout.

Again, it is important to recognise when you are struggling and need to seek help.

- Speak to peers either within your own firm or at other firms about the challenges you are going through. Senior roles can be isolating, and pressure often gets worse when you feel there is no-one to turn to.
- Ask junior team members where the friction is in the work. They are often closest to the day-to-day problems and may have different perspectives which can help solve firm issues earlier.
- Delegate earlier. Be honest about what only you can do and what should sit elsewhere. Review your diary and remove low-value activity where you can.

Protect time for higher-judgement work rather than allowing meetings and reactive tasks to take over the day.

- Create regular spaces for recovery in your diary rather than waiting for a natural break in workload. This may mean blocking out meeting-free time for deep focus and setting clear boundaries for not answering emails past 6pm.

If you keep pushing through without adjusting anything as a leader, stress and burnout can spread through the wider team as well.

Key takeaways

If work feels constantly overwhelming, something needs to change. Burnout rarely improves by being ignored. The earlier it is addressed, the easier it is to protect both your people and the quality of the work.