



**UNIFILLER**  
LINXIS GROUP

A Company of the



**LINXIS**  
GROUP

# **PREVENTING BURNOUT AT BAKERIES AND FOOD PLANTS**

A White Paper by Unifiller Systems Inc.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 Introduction: Recognizing Burnout
- 02 Causes of Work Burnout
- 03 The Effect of Burnout on Bakery or Food Operations
- 04 Tips for Mitigation Burnout
- 06 Final Note





## INTRODUCTION: RECOGNIZING BURNOUT

Burnout is frequently understood as work-related or work-induced stress and fatigue. It is being increasingly discussed in the present-day culture, but it's not exactly a new concept. According to Healthline, the condition of burnout was officially coined in the 1970s by psychologist, Herbert Freudenberger (Freudenberger, along with psychologist Gail North, also outlined the [12 phases of burnout](#)). The website also offers an accurate depiction of what burnout is, describing it as “a severe stress condition that leads to severe physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion”.

Why is burnout such a hot topic of conversation and how is it relevant to bakeries and food plants? Well, according to a 2019 survey conducted by [The Sleep Judge](#), people who work in the Accommodations and Food Services industry are at the highest risk of experiencing work or occupational burnout.

## SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Burnout commonly outwardly manifests as:

- Exhaustion
- Irritability
- Apathy
- Isolation

Inwardly, people who experience burnout may experience:

- Escape fantasies, such as quitting your job or moving away
- Mental illness, such as anxiety or depression
- Physical illness or ailments (the stress of burnout can weaken the immune system, causing insomnia, loss of appetite and stomach problems, headaches, etc.)

It's important for employees and managers alike to recognize when they might be starting to burn out, and it's especially important for the leaders to pay attention for signs of burnout in the employees they're responsible for. Ever heard of the phrase, “A team is only as strong as its weakest link?” This definitely applies to bakeries and food businesses that aim to provide top quality products and service.

However, the best (and long term) solution is to go one step further and prevent work burnout from happening in the first place. Preventing burnout begins with an understanding of the things that cause it in the first place.



## CAUSES OF WORK BURNOUT

### NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Jennifer Moss, award-winning author of *Unlocking Happiness at Work*, states that our mental wellbeing “always comes back to relationships.” In her [article on Harvard Business Review](#), she expounds on this as the root cause of burnout:

*“Friendships at work — whether in person or virtual — can be the difference between surviving these extremely stressful events, or burning out entirely.”*

Moss’s claim does have some evidentiary support. When the Sleep Judge did a poll on the [causes of work-related burnout](#), 25 percent of the 1000 respondents said that their burnout is due to a dysfunctional workplace. 12 percent say it’s due to conflicts with coworkers, and 11 percent cite an overall feeling of a lack of control as the driver. These causes all point to negativity in the interpersonal sphere of the workplace.

In line with these findings and Moss’s claim, a detail worth noting in The Sleep Judge’s survey is that people working in the Accommodations and Food Services industry tend to be more prone to experiencing mental burnout as opposed to physical burnout: 21 percent of respondents recorded experiencing the former while 18 percent recorded experiencing the latter.

### INEFFICIENT PROCESSES

Apart from work culture and relationships, causes of burnout may stem from inefficiencies in the bakery operations. Examples may include disorganized processes and staffing shortages or problems. How might these factors come together to influence the progress of your bakery/food plant?



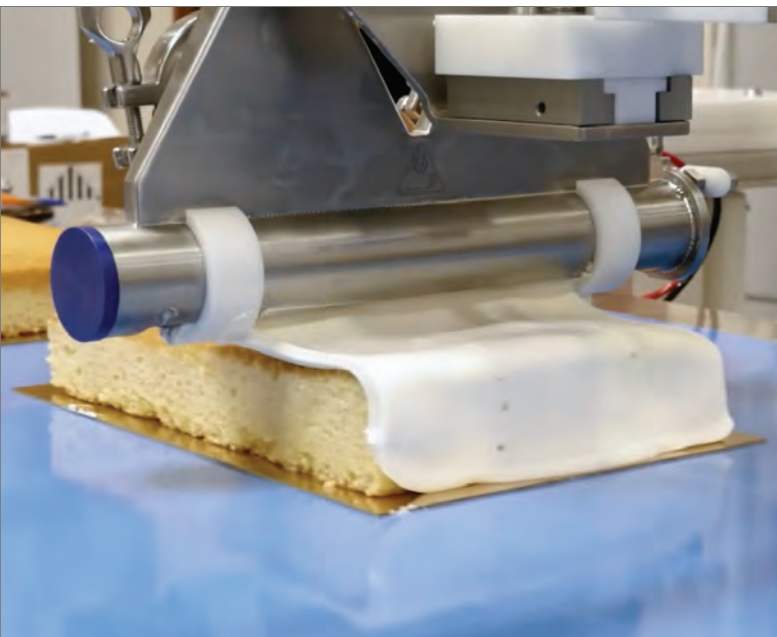
## THE EFFECTS OF BURNOUT ON BAKERY OR FOOD OPERATIONS

Individual and personal consequences on employees, or even managers, typically look like:

- Diminished loyalty to the company
- Injuries and stress
- Poor overall work performance (including reduced productivity, less attention to detail, prone to errors and poor judgment)
- Lack of job satisfaction
- No work/life balance

In the case that burnout is a company-wide problem, the individual consequences of burnout tend to create larger problems that impact business-level operations. This may turn into:

- High employee turnover, which leads to more money spent on hiring
- Employees taking more sick days and reducing the personnel available
- Quality control issues
- HR issues





## TIPS FOR MITIGATING BURNOUT

While there are things employees can do to take care of their mental health, the responsibility of preventing work-related burnout ultimately falls on the organization's leadership. According to [360training](#), burnout is the reason for the food industry's annual turnover rate of 70 percent. That's a lot of money being lost to hiring and replacing these employees. To avoid this, let's look at three ways you can prevent burnout at your bakery or food plant.



**1. Cultivating a good workplace culture** is the best way to prevent burnout, and the journey to achieving this begins with [empathetic leadership](#). In action, this looks like:

- Ensuring proper and full breaks
- Ensuring duties are as evenly allocated as possible
- Setting reasonable expectations
- Giving employees agency and opportunities to grow
- Being fair and transparent
- Acknowledging good work

**2. Implement as much process standardization to avoid problems.** Standardizing process controls involves establishing standard operating procedures (SOPs) and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), because doing so would provide the following benefits:

- Improve clarity between equipment operators and promote overall productivity
- Guarantee product quality and increase production rates
- Reduce food waste and inventory costs
- Help operators monitor and review data daily
- Prevent bad trends/habits from becoming the new normal





**3. Automate production wherever possible and necessary.** Bakery and food production is not easy labor nor is it always interesting. Repetitive and monotonous tasks can take a toll on a person's mental health (especially if they are working long shifts every day), so why not let a machine take over instead?

During a time in which consumer demands for [snacks](#) and [baked goods](#) have increased but food businesses remain restricted by COVID-19 health and safety rules, automation also proves to be a safe solution in meeting these production needs while maintaining physical distancing and sanitation requirements.

Looking outside the context of the pandemic and at practical day-to-day business operations, automation also offers benefits that could help food and baking manufacturers meet their business goals. A real-life example is [Palermo Bakery](#) that utilized automated machines to great success, and that is mainly due to automated systems offering benefits that can:

- Enhance productivity. Automated systems create much higher output compared to human workers and can therefore assist with meeting increased product demand.
- Tighten quality control. Leveraging automated production lines and equipment would ensure high-quality products at a consistent rate.
- Assist with more precise data collection using computer technology.
- Flexibility and versatility. Automated machines are suitable to small production spaces, as they are built compact and mobile and are versatile in application.
- Reduce labor costs and fortify staffing shortages, as well as minimize the risk of employee strain or injury.





### FINAL NOTE

During this time during which the COVID-19 pandemic remains ongoing, it's not unusual for tensions to be running high. Mental health is more important than ever. There are, thankfully, ways to [take care of your mental health](#) when in the midst of stress, but guarding your bakery against the dire consequences of burnout would be most efficient at preventing a host of problems further down the road.

Empathetic leadership goes a long way to building a resilient company and work culture. It is in the management's best interests to prevent burnout from happening, simply because a strong, healthy team requires less managing. When people are physically and mentally capable of taking on the tasks at hand and when they are encouraged to work to their strengths, there's a much higher chance that they will be motivated to produce excellent work.

#### Sources:

[https://hbr.org/2020/09/preventing-burnout-is-about-empathetic-leadership?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter\\_monthly&utm\\_campaign=leadership\\_not\\_active&deliveryName=DM99330](https://hbr.org/2020/09/preventing-burnout-is-about-empathetic-leadership?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter_monthly&utm_campaign=leadership_not_active&deliveryName=DM99330)

<https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/working-in-this-profession-likely-means-you-experience-work-burnout>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/tips-for-identifying-and-preventing-burnout#whats-burnout>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/signs-you-are-headed-for-a-burnout-at-work>

<https://www.compeat.com/blog/five-major-causes-of-food-service-industry-burnout/>

<https://www.360training.com/blog/how-prevent-server-and-manager-burnout>

[https://getpocket.com/explore/item/six-ways-to-stay-healthy-when-you-re-stressed?utm\\_source=pocket-newtab](https://getpocket.com/explore/item/six-ways-to-stay-healthy-when-you-re-stressed?utm_source=pocket-newtab)

*This White Paper is written by: Peggy Liu and graphically designed by: Victoria Gunning*