

## HRIS an early warning system for employee burnout

Canadians live in a fast-paced society where the advancement of technology has throttled us into warp speed. For anyone living in a major centre with transportation woes, it's warp speed while carrying a set of 20-pound weights.

For employees who have survived a recent downsizing and perhaps inherited the work and deadlines of past co-workers, life can be a veritable pressure-cooker. Employee burnout is a major concern that, left unchecked, can have significant financial implications for organizations.

Employers may be able to set up and use a human resource information system (HRIS) to help with early detection of employee burnout, which may allow for the implementation of timely change that will avoid costs to the organization.

With an HRIS, it's generally possible to combine reporting components such as vacation, overtime, attendance and position vacancies. Considered independently, each of these components might not be an indicator but, when considered in conjunction with each other, they can provide clues and insights to organizational issues.

### The high toll of burnout

Employees suffering from burnout may be more involved in health and safety incidents, which can cost an organization through increased workers' compensation rates and, potentially, legal action. In the wake of an incident, a company's health and safety co-ordinator will want to know,



### GUEST COMMENTARY

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through trend analysis reporting, if there were any indications of over-extension of employees.

Similarly, there comes a point on the burnout trajectory where productivity plummets. This is augmented when output is decreasing at the same time an employee is being paid overtime. If outputs are decreasing and inputs (such as payroll costs) are increasing, that is not good financial news.

Employees faced with a consistently high workload may, ultimately, choose to leave the company. That person would obviously need to be replaced, incurring additional recruitment and transition costs to the organization.

### Forensic HRIS reporting

Overtime analysis, in conjunction with a review of employee attendance data, could assist an employer in health and safety trend analysis and general proactive monitoring of the overall climate in an organization. Is employee personal time off being taken alongside excessive overtime? Are there any trends in sick time or per-

sonal time taken, perhaps in relation to departments with vacant positions?

Monitoring and reporting on vacation entitlements remaining in the HRIS can be a means to detect potential employee burnout. Are entitlement balances being carried forward into the next year and are they excessively high? Is there a connection between vacation not being taken by employees and excessive workload? Is there a situation where overtime and personal time off are being paid to an employee while the vacation liability continues to escalate?

Tracking position vacancies is another way an HRIS can be helpful in watching for employee burnout, especially in departments where there is cross-training. Employees may be trained to cover vacant positions but an individual can only do the work of one person — if employees are doing the job of one-and-a-half people or more, it's not sustainable in the long term and is certainly detectable on an HRIS.

If significant change has been taking place in your organization and an employer is vigilant in looking for signs of employee burnout, the clues may be hiding in the HRIS. Effective reporting on various potential indicators can provide valuable metrics and put a company in a position to derail the burnout curve.

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