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Table of Contents

How HR pros can reduce and prevent burnout

1. [Adopt a consultant mindset](#)
2. [Reframe your role as advisor and facilitator, not enforcer](#)
3. [Make sure you're spending time on the right thing, not the wrong thing](#)
4. [Build community and seek out support](#)
5. [Invest in continuous learning](#)

No two ways about it: HR pros today face significant burnout due to the multifaceted demands of our roles.

We're tasked with managing employee relations, recruitment, compliance with labor laws, and organizational development — all of which require constant emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills. This high level of responsibility, along with complex interpersonal dynamics, can even lead to chronic stress and fatigue.

No wonder we're all a little frazzled.

So what do you do when the company's doing fine, but you're not?

I caught up with **Kelli Dragovich, 4x CPO and HR Heretics Co-Creator**, in a recent [webinar](#) to talk about why working in HR feels so miserable — and what we can do about it.

Working smarter, not harder: how to reduce (and prevent) burnout in your HR career

1. Adopt a consultant mindset.

If you're an HRBP, here's a pill that might be hard to swallow: you likely have little to no decision-making power. But you know what? We think that's a good thing.

Most of us have been conditioned to think it's our job as HRBPs to do everything in our power to push our People initiatives forward for the sake of our employees. As a result, many of us have become embroiled in a constant state of emotional burnout, toiling through conflict while we engage in an endless battle of wills with our stakeholders.



Many HRBPs leave in-house work because they feel emotionally drained. This is what makes consulting work so appealing: the idea of being able to detach from the decisions clients make.

The best HR consultants aren't ruminating over whether or not their client acted on their advice, so why are you? **It's time we view ourselves as expert advisors, whose purpose is to guide and advise.** Our goal should simply be to root out underlying issues so that the client (AKA our stakeholder) can make the most well-informed decision possible.

Here are two tips on how to think like a consultant:

Don't take it personally. Say a stakeholder chooses to go in a different direction — it'll happen! — you can emotionally detach by reminding yourself, *"I did my job to provide my expert opinion. And they did their job of making the final decision."*

Be protective of your time. Consultants are masters at setting and enforcing boundaries. Maybe you're on vacation or at a family event and you're getting inundated with emails. Don't make a habit of responding to non-emergencies when you're off the clock. "You train people how to treat you," says Kelli.

2. Reframe your role as advisor and facilitator — not enforcer.

HR should not be responsible for driving culture change, enforcing a high performance culture, or making the leadership team get along with each other. I'm not saying that we shouldn't play a role in these things (of course we should!) — but we need to get out of the enforcer mindset.

Instead of trying to enforce things we don't have authority over (see *tip #1*), focus on partnering with and empowering the person who actually does have the power to drive these initiatives: your CEO. Here are some examples:

Imagine you've noticed some communication breakdowns across the leadership team. Rather than play mediator, flag to your CEO that you've noticed some dysfunctional behaviors across the leadership team *and* proactively share a few recommendations; a [team building exercise](#), an EQ check-in during their next 1:1, etc.

Or, maybe you're focusing too much on enforcing high performance. Rather than pressure managers to hold their teams accountable to high standards, tell your CEO that you've noticed a trend with managers struggling to uphold performance standards. Always remember to come prepared with a few recommendations on how to approach and solve the problem — for example, informing the team of the issue, doing an expectation-setting reset, etc.



Your focus should be on advising and facilitating. That means building and maintaining strong relationships across the company.

For a deeper dive on how to navigate these conversations, grab our [Guide to Speaking the CEO's Language](#) and [HRBP 1:1 Template](#).

3. Make sure you're spending time on the right things, not the wrong things.

One telltale sign of burnout is feeling exhausted at the end of the day, even though you haven't necessarily accomplished all that much. You're likely spending too much time on the wrong things — and not enough on the right things.

The bulk of your time should be spent on high-impact work that you are uniquely positioned to take action on.

| Instead of wasting time on... | Try... |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Arguing in circles with your leadership team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategically partnering with your CEO to take action on challenges |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Doing damage control for poorly managed employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Empowering managers to navigate performance discussions themselves |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Inefficient admin processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investing in automation for those tedious admin tasks |

4. Build relationships and seek out support within the HR community.

When it comes to burnout, it helps knowing you're not alone.

Regardless of whether or not other HR professionals are talking about it, *everyone* has likely felt burnt out at one point during their career. Building a network within (and even outside) your workplace can provide emotional and professional support.

Here are some things to try:

- Seek out a mentor in the HR field
- Try participating in a few networking events — in-person or virtual
- If you're a member of SHRM or CIPD, you can participate in discussions and seek out advice there



We're biased, but we think [Ethena webinars](#) are a great place to connect with other HR folks!

5. Invest in continuous learning opportunities.

Professional development can be a huge confidence booster! Attending HR workshops, pursuing further education, and staying updated with industry trends can equip you with the skills to effectively handle any tricky situations that may arise in the future.

About Ethena

Ethena's all-in-one [compliance training platform](#) helps you check all your boxes and build a better workplace. Our product gives you a catalog of courses employees will actually like, an LMS that automates their delivery, and employee relations tools to support your team through tricky situations.

Ethena is trusted by teams at Zendesk, Pinterest, Notion, Rothy's, and more. We're backed by Felicis, GSV, Homebrew, Village Global, and other top investors, and our advisory team includes People Ops and Legal experts like Frances Frei and Leonard Shen.