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likely aren't getting enough sleep.

Paul McDonald • Mar. 19, 2019



Just about every manager has seen it around the office at various times: a symphony of yawns, stretches and unfocused gazes on employees' faces. Some of your staff likely aren't getting enough sleep.

Seventy-four percent of professionals in a [survey from our company](#) said they often work when tired. People tend to be less productive and more prone to making mistakes when they aren't well-rested. When it comes to your accountants and auditors, that brings serious risks.

Full personal lives, ever-increasing workloads and constant connectivity make it

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accounting employees aren't operating heavy machinery during office hours, tired workers are prone to falls and other mishaps, including car accidents during their commute. Chronic sleep deprivation could also lead to burnout and breakdowns.

- **Work impact** — When people are tired, they have a hard time concentrating and remembering information, and foggy thinking leads to poor performance, subpar judgment and on-the-job errors. A [2016 RAND Corporation report](#) found workers' lack of sleep costs the U.S. economy up to \$411 billion a year.

What's keeping them awake?

If your staff members are regularly yawning on the clock, consider the underlying reasons. Is the fatigue a result of an overload of personal responsibilities? The heavy workload you've assigned them? Chances are it's a combination of both. Many people who skimp on sleep do so to meet the demands of daily life or because they're stressing about a work or personal issue.

How to help tired employees

As a manager, you have the power to help employees balance their home and office responsibilities. Here are five suggestions:

1. **Open lines of communication.** Meet with individual team members regularly to check in on project statuses and whether they need more support or extra resources. It's always better to be proactive about an issue like fatigue rather than dealing with it after employees become burned out or make costly mistakes.
2. **Prioritize work-life balance.** Consider offering assistance in the form of flexible work hours and telecommuting options. Carefully monitor workloads, and don't let staff become overburdened. Here is another area where [communication](#) helps: Work-life balance and workload levels should be recurring agenda items in one-on-one and team meetings.

3. Protect staff members' time. You might think nothing of sending out late-night

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and encourage everyone else to do the same.

5. Bring in extra help. [Tax season](#) and year-end activities are a fact of life in a public accounting firm, and such times are notorious for their long hours. When there's too much for your full-time staff to handle, interim accounting professionals can step in and reduce the load. Get ahead of the situation by planning for peak periods.

Working tired is not sustainable. Employees will eventually reach their breaking point and become sick or quit. The bottom line: Fatigue is bad for both your staff and your firm. Wake up to this widespread problem, and proactively give your workers the help they need.

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Paul McDonald is senior executive director at [Robert Half](#), the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 30 years in the recruiting field, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.

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