

Here's a project that we've been working on for the past few months: every time you ask someone how they're doing, make a note of their answer. It won't take long to realize that almost everyone responds with a variation on, "Great—I'm **so** busy!"

We all do it: busy-bragging is just shorthand for signalling our commitment to our priorities, whatever they may be. What does it mean when the culture of a workplace equates value and productivity with punishing workloads and demanding hours, though? In the startup world, we're always racing to stay ahead of our competitors and our own ever-shifting goals. How do we keep our teams healthy, strong, and engaged while still achieving those goals? In other words, how do we keep *busy* from turning into *burnout*?

At BLANKSLATE Partners, our mission is **building better, stronger workplaces**. To get there, you need a wellness approach that addresses the root cause of burnout, not just the symptoms.

So how do you take a proactive approach to tackling employee burnout? We've outlined **7 key steps** to help you translate your company's abstract wellness goals into reality.

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## 1. Take Responsibility

Burnout can seem like an individual responsibility, not a organizational one, but [according to Eric Garton](#), that's a mistake. He notes three common culprits in corporations with high rates of employee burnout: "excessive collaboration, weak time management disciplines, and a tendency to overload the most capable with too much work." Luckily, as an employer, all of these factors are within your control.

## 2. Pulse Check

Take the time to do regular check-ins. These can take many forms, depending on your appetite: from in-depth 1:1's with everyone, to customizable online surveys. At BLANKSLATE Partners, we offer a complimentary annual pulse check to all of our clients, because it's important to get into the details with your teams. After all, most people spend more time at work than they do with their families.

Your pulse check questions will vary and should be tailored to your own business, values, and mission, but here are some key areas to address:

**Happiness and engagement:** how do people feel when they come to work?

**Goals and company road map:** do employees understand, connect with, or even know what the company's goals are? [\*What's your why?\*](#)

**Areas for improvement:** Your employees *are* your company. Trust us when we say that they have great ideas on how to improve processes and streamline your business!

## 3. Listen to “Busy”

When you're listening to your team, take the time to distinguish between *habitual language* and *fact*. Language creates: when you say that something is hard or that you're busy, work becomes hard and you become busy. Taking the time to listen to and get curious with your team's language allows you to help build solutions to reduce “busyness.” It can also help you address whether people *are* busy and *why*. Are they under-resourced or using inefficient tools? What's the root cause of the language?

## 4. Design the Alliance

One of our favourite exercises with our clients is called “Designing the Alliance”—it's how you and your team define the terms of collaborative work and communication within your

company. If, for example, your CEO is an early bird who has most of her best ideas at 3AM, your alliance should address expectations around responses to those early morning emails. The alliance supports the culture of your team and outlines your shared responsibilities.

## 5. Coach Resilience

Learn the difference between reasonable and unmanageable stress, and help your team understand how to handle this distinction as well. One of our core values at BLANKSLATE Partners is learning, and we've found it helpful to use [curiosity as a stress-management tool](#).

## 6. Stay Vigilant

Find your priorities, and say no to distractions. [Multi-tasking fragments attention and can contribute to a sense of overload](#), so make sure that you allow yourself and your team the time and space necessary to focus on your goals.

## 7. Invest in People

Benefits packages don't have to be restrictive or inscrutable. In fact, many of our clients leverage [HSAs](#) and [LSAs](#) to encourage their employees to look after their health. Small businesses often believe that they can't compete with the perks offered by large companies, but developing a wellness approach to your health benefits can give the small business owner a competitive edge. Although we won't administer your benefits plan for you, BLANKSLATE Partners *can* help you incorporate a wellness plan into your total rewards philosophy, and connect you with some of our favourite providers.

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Ultimately, your wellness strategy is defined by your own approach to the values and vision of your company. If you're having trouble getting started, remember, [we're here to help!](#)

