



Science
Societies

Zoom fatigue: Part of a bigger workforce issue

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Over the past few months, I can't tell you how many times I've declined to attend virtual family gatherings or ignored FaceTime calls from friends. That's not to say that I decline all virtual calls. But for the ones that I decline, it's not personal. Sometimes I feel horribly guilty, but after months of virtual meetings and conferences, I need a break. For the sake of my own sanity, I am not willing to spend my personal time on yet another Zoom meeting. I must prioritize my own well-being.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges in the way we communicate. Where we simply used to gather in a conference room, classroom, or any room, we are now forced to communicate virtually. At this point, it's safe to say that for some of us, we overuse various virtual communication platforms. We literally attend everything from a computer—work meetings, scientific conferences, social club meetings, parent-teacher conferences, family gatherings, and even speed dating. Human interaction is required from most of us on a daily basis. It's good for our mental health and general well-being. However, the overuse of videoconferencing platforms is exhausting. By now we've all heard the phrase "Zoom fatigue" and have a decent idea of what it is. Some of us may have even felt Zoom fatigue at one point or another. And while the use of videoconferencing platforms provides a convenient way to engage with others remotely, the fatigue we feel after using them reflects a larger workforce issue.

Challenging the Workforce Culture

The workforce, once dominated by baby boomers and Generation X, is quickly transitioning to millennials and Generation Z. Along with the change in workforce comes a change in workforce culture. At one time, employers enjoyed the privilege of attracting new hires with competitive salaries, opportunities for career advancement, and a benefits package. Employees remained loyal to employers because of the

mutual investment in the employee and company success. Today, the demanding hierarchical structure is being challenged. The priorities of employees have shifted toward a demand for a healthy work–life balance. This change in culture has redefined the workforce and has forced employers to adapt quickly. One such adaptation is that companies are extending their teleworking policies, some indefinitely. Employers need to grapple with adapting the workforce culture to retain their employees as younger generations have demonstrated they are not hesitant to resign if unhappy (Cook, 2021). While the circumstances surrounding workforce culture vary among organizations, there are a few steps that can be taken to ensure that the workplace remains productive and that employees are retained.

Prioritize Employee Satisfaction by Respecting Their Work–Life Balance

Navigating a career can be challenging. For some employees, these challenges can be exacerbated by other issues, such as responsibility for the care of young children or elderly parents and difficulty with self–consciousness, stress, and anxiety (Gupta, 2021). Over the past two years, many employees have learned to balance work and personal responsibilities. Employers need to have faith that the employees they selected can maintain a level of professionalism in completing their work. While the use of videoconferencing platforms is a great way to check in and monitor employee activities, employers should not insist that employees turn on their cameras. They should only schedule meetings that are absolutely necessary and allow adequate breaks between meetings. If an employee chooses to turn on their camera, employers shouldn't be surprised to see a partner, child, or family pet in the background. Other family members are simply in their normal habitation. These considerate actions will go a long way toward preventing Zoom fatigue and contributing to employee satisfaction.

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[Cook, I. \(2021\). Who is driving the great resignation? *Harvard Business Review*, 15 September. <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>](#)

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Gupta, A.H. (2021). Zoom burnout is real, and it's worse for women. *New York Times*, 13 April. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/13/us/zoom-fatigue-burn-out-gender.html>

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