

How to Manage Understaffed Teams Effectively

by [Steve Brown](#)  [human resources](#) [employees](#) [management](#)

Summary: As organizations continue to grapple with soaring job resignations and insufficient staffing, doing more with less has become the norm. Managing understaffed teams more effectively is important not only for enhancing productivity, but for keeping key employees from jumping ship.

Size is not always proportionate to output, particularly when it comes to the flavor of the foods we eat — just one of multiple revelations from *Fast Food Nation*, the 2001 book that pulled back the curtain on what is actually in many of the foods we eat. The chemical responsible for the taste that people associate with bell peppers is so strong that just one drop of it is sufficient to flavor the food equivalent of five average-sized swimming pools. Meanwhile, the majority of artificial flavors used in foods produced within the United States come from just a couple dozen companies found between two exits of the New Jersey Turnpike.

Miniscule amounts of artificial flavoring may pack a mighty punch, but the same cannot typically be said for small workforces tasked with completing large amounts of work. As job resignation levels continue to hover around the 25% mark over pre-pandemic levels and many organizations remain insufficiently staffed, managers need to concentrate on ways to more effectively lead understaffed teams. Doing more with less may be the new norm, but if not done right it can mean burning out or losing key employees.

Underlying factors. People's fears about the COVID threat may be diminishing, but the flood of resignations spurred by the pandemic has yet to recede. The result is an ongoing imbalance within many organizations between workforces and workloads. As many employees struggle to deal with unsustainable workloads, the outcome is often a diminished quality of work or employee burnout that can spur workers to jump to other organizations and continue perpetuating the cycle. And with finding and hiring qualified candidates proving equally challenging, plugging the gaps or temporarily redistributing work responsibilities is not enough to offset the problem. Instead, businesses need to rethink the way they approach managing teams.

Manage expectations, not people. One of the biggest mistakes that managers make is making devoted employees take up the slack when colleagues depart. A better approach is to rethink the workload that employees have to deal with by prioritizing what needs to be done in the near term and what can be pushed further out. Altering timelines allows employees to devote more time and attention to just one or two projects or tasks at a time, versus trying to juggle too many things and producing lower quality work. More manageable workloads also afford employees the time necessary to put greater thought into their work and to be more detail oriented.

For community financial institutions (CFIs) considering the addition of new products or significant technology upgrades, the first step should be to determine if adequate staffing resources are available to support such changes. When the answer is no, it may make sense to put off any major changes until they can be supported appropriately, as not waiting could potentially lead to poor customer service and lost customers. If implementation of major changes is time sensitive and can't

be postponed, managers need to be strategic in the approach they take to scheduling and make sure to pad schedules enough to guarantee that employees are able to take some time off to recharge.

Identify your biggest priorities. Prioritization for your institution may mean identifying the highest priority and most profitable clients and devoting more time and attention to them to ensure that they remain happy and stick with your organization. This can mean setting up flags to notify bankers of significant changes in a customer’s account, whether significant market volatility within an investment portfolio, or massive inflows into or out of an account so that they can reach out immediately and demonstrate to customers that they are watching out for their interests. But that doesn’t mean you should ignore less profitable customers. Just you don’t need to devote as much attention to them and can allocate less frequent personal outreach, instead supplement customer service with more automated contact such as newsletters or automated emails.

Automation. Another way that your institution can ease the burden of overtaxed employees is to identify tasks that can be automated or ones that can be dramatically reduce the level of complexity and time commitment required. For example, some potential tasks include automating data entry, teaching employees shortcuts in programs such as Excel, switching from paper forms to electronic alternatives and even simplifying time-intensive tasks that need multiple approvals. One way to help identify tasks and areas that can be streamlined is to bring in a consultant from outside your organization to conduct an audit, as having someone look at things from a fresh perspective can often be helpful.

As the saying goes, it is about working smarter, not harder. Eliminating the imbalance between workloads and insufficient workforces may not be a possibility, but some of the steps above may help to alleviate the problem a bit and help your organization keep good employees from jumping ship.

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ECONOMY & RATES

Rates As Of: 06/24/2022 07:45AM (GMT-0700)

Treasury	Yields	MTD Chg	YTD Chg
3M	1.65	0.49	1.59
6M	2.44	0.80	2.25
1Y	2.82	0.74	2.43
2Y	3.07	0.51	2.34
5Y	3.17	0.35	1.90
10Y	3.10	0.25	1.58
30Y	3.22	0.17	1.31
FF Market	FF Disc	IOER (Interest on Excess Reserves)	
1.58	1.75	1.65	
SOFR	Prime	OBFR (Overnight Bank Funding Rate)	
1.44	4.75	1.57	

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