

# Strabane Chronicle Business

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## The Great Exhaustion



### LET'S TALK MONEY

SHAUN MCGLADE

**F**our years have now passed since the Covid-19 pandemic which transformed our working lives in an unparalleled way with many people now working from home resulting in new ways of communicating such as Teams or Zoom meetings largely replacing face to face meetings.

Contrary to business expectations at the time, productivity soared, with many companies finding that this new model of working, instead of experiencing reduced output from their staff they witnessed increased productivity.

However, an over-reliance on technology led to many feeling drained and isolated by working remotely with a global trend identified in 2022 coined, "The Great Resignation"; (as discussed in one of our previous articles on the four-day working week) where record number of people world-wide quit their jobs.

The latter half of 2022 saw the push towards a widespread return to the office resulting in conflict between management seeking a return to full on-site working and workers who have found a greater work-life balance by working remotely.

Often a compromise of hybrid working has ensued, but this process has led to another global trend where employees are now feeling burned out by the changing face of working life, termed the 'Great Exhaustion.'

Many people have found that they are now exhausted by the relentless blurred lines between home and work, feeling that they can never properly switch off from work to the



The work / life balance is sometimes more difficult to achieve.

detriment of their mental health with recruitment firm Robert Walters reporting that one in every three professionals in Ireland are now "very often" suffering from work-place related stress.

The constant need to be in 'on' mode leads to mental overload, our brains were not built for this constant state of productivity and because of this something has to give and more often than not many people have found that their mental health has deteriorated as a direct result. Glorifying this productivity and business can lead leisure being perceived as a luxury for the idle and rest as a sign of laziness or weakness; further amplifying

chronic stress.

Is there a solution?

On an individual level, people could adopt proactive strategies to reclaim their well-being and restore balance in their lives. Setting boundaries with technology such as implementing digital detoxes and establishing designated screen-free periods. Embracing mindfulness practices, such as meditation and yoga, can help cultivate present-moment awareness and reduce stress levels. Additionally, fostering genuine connections with others and prioritising meaningful experiences over constantly being tethered to a device can greatly improve stress levels.

However, I do feel that as much as an individual can try and implement these strategies, if the culture at work is one that people are expected to be contactable outside of contracted working hours, then this greatly diminishes the person's ability to implement strategies to improve their life-work balance. Therefore, companies have a major responsibility because the work culture that prevails can have a major trickle-down effect on its staff. Strategies that could be implemented could include no contact by e-mail/phone after a set time, or an explicit agreement that there are no expectations for e-mails to be replied to outside of working hours. If there

are clear perimeters around this then this may allow people to reclaim their time at home as actual quality time (as opposed to replying to a work e-mail at the side of a pitch while you miss your child score a goal!), therefore beginning again to build up those boundaries between home life and work that have become very obscured in the past number of years.

● If you wish to discuss any matters raised in this article or if you have any other questions, feel free to get in touch with a member of the team at SMCG Ltd on the contact details shown and we would be happy to help.



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