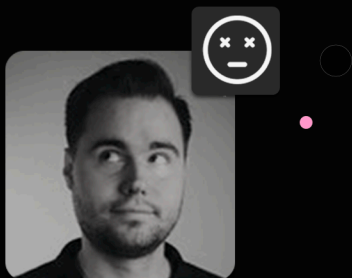


STATE OF IT

The Impact of Remote Work on IT Professionals

A Whitepaper by Electric





Executive Summary

Electric surveyed 138 IT professionals to discover the impact remote work is having on them since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. At a high level, the results indicate the majority of IT professionals are left feeling burnt out as a result of working longer hours, having smaller budgets, receiving more helpdesk tickets from employees, and taking less PTO than they would have in years prior.

Out of the respondent IT professionals, 74% of those surveyed indicated they felt more burnt out in the form of either emotional, physical, or mental exhaustion since the start of the pandemic.

It is important to consider that for many organizations, IT professionals played an integral role in managing the immediate shift to remote work at the outset of the pandemic. Further, their support will be critical to enabling remote work and enhancing business continuity virtually as the pandemic continues.

Due to the pandemic, remote work suddenly became an increasingly large part of most organizations' realities. Research from [SHRM's COVID-19 Business Index](#) indicates 64% of US employees are now working from home. Compare this to the fact that only 7% of workers in the U.S. had access to a "flexible workplace" benefit or telework prior to the pandemic according to a report by the Pew Research Center based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent [National Compensation survey](#).

The pandemic led to a near lockdown globally in compliance with stay-at-home orders, and businesses had to look for alternatives to preserve business continuity. This forced many companies to adopt remote work frameworks in order to keep business running.

Ensuring that IT professionals do not feel burnt out will be key to the success of remote work as it is likely going to be a large part of most companies' reality for the foreseeable future. As a result, businesses should take the proper steps to combat burnout in order to keep their IT teams feeling productive and happy, which will, in turn, help preserve business continuity.

Findings:

Examining Factors like PTO & Departmental Budget on IT Professionals During the Pandemic

Below, we take a look at how factors like paid time off and departmental budgets have been impacted since the outset of the pandemic. Our results below indicate that respondent IT professionals are working longer hours and if they have taken PTO, it's less than they would've at this point in years prior.

Despite IT being integral to the enablement of remote work, budgets have either decreased or stayed the same with only 24.6% reporting they've increased to meet the rising needs of remote work.



71% of IT professionals are working longer hours since the start of the pandemic.

Of those, **83%** reported they are working 11-50% more than they normally would.



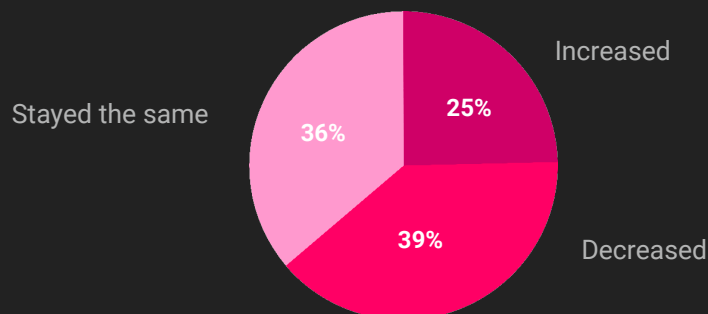
44% of IT professionals have not taken any PTO since the start of the pandemic.

72% report that if they have taken PTO, then it is less than they would've taken at this point in previous years.



75% report their budgets have either decreased (39%) or stayed the same (36%).

IT Budget Since the Outset of the Pandemic



Findings:

Examining the Nature of Work for IT Professionals During the Pandemic

Below, we can get an understanding of the nature of work for respondent IT professionals since the outset of the pandemic. Overall it seems respondents have taken on more responsibilities with 72% reporting they've had to perform tasks not previously part of their role. Further, the results below indicate that many respondents (67%) have had to go into the office to perform an essential task.

We have also included additional breakdowns of the most common ticket requesters by employee level and the most common tickets by nature of the task itself.



72% have taken on new responsibilities since the outset of the pandemic that were not part of their role previously.



67% have had to go into the office to perform an essential task.

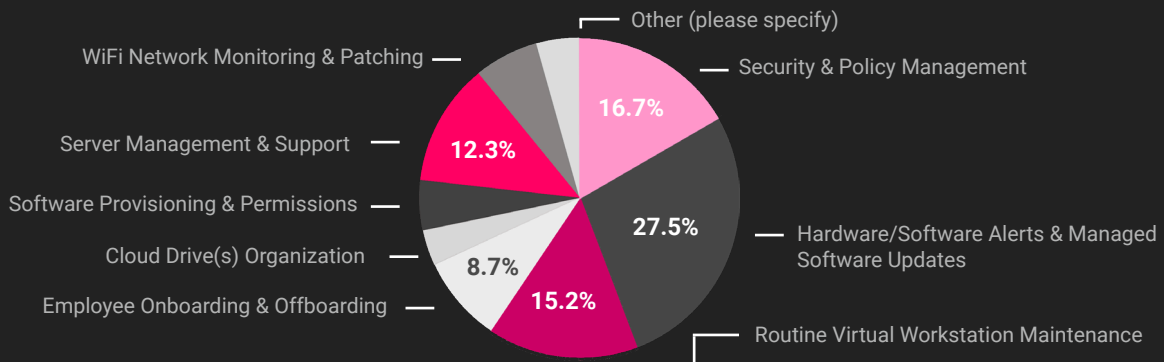
- Of those, **82%** report it being more than once.



62% report ticket volume has increased since the outset of the pandemic.

- Respondents indicate mid-level employees are responsible for **51.5%**, entry level employees for **35.5%**, and senior level employees for **13%** of tickets.

Most Common Tickets or Requests by Type



Understanding the Added Burden on IT Professionals



74%

feel more burnt out in the form of either emotional, physical, or mental exhaustion since the start of the pandemic.

Our research indicated that 74% of IT professionals surveyed felt more burnt out in the form of either emotional, physical, or mental exhaustion since the start of the pandemic. Compare this data from a [FlexJobs, Mental Health America Survey](#) in which 40% of workers in general say they have experienced burnout specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic—this seemingly places IT professionals at a much higher level of burnout.

Further, 71% of IT professionals indicated they are working longer hours since the start of the pandemic. In another comparison, the FlexJobs survey indicated 37% of workers in general are currently working longer hours than normal since the pandemic started.

When it comes to taking PTO, 72% of IT professionals in our survey reported taking less they would have normally at this point in the year. Combine this with the fact that 71% of respondents also indicated taking on new responsibilities and 62% of respondents indicated an increase in helpdesk tickets, it soon becomes apparent that IT professionals are clearly overworked during the pandemic. When comparing our own data with that of the FlexJobs survey, the seemingly greater toll on IT professionals should not be surprising.

For many, the pandemic in general has brought about feelings of isolation due to stay-at-home orders. Others have also [reported anxiety](#) about finances and job security due to the pandemic's economic impact—combine these general populace sentiments with the added responsibility for IT professionals of enabling the methods of remote work and the 74% of IT professionals that expressed feeling more burnt out since the pandemic is quite understandable.

From granting permissions for remote collaboration applications like Slack, Zoom, and Google Drive to ensuring devices are properly patched to prevent a breach—IT professionals play an indelible role in keeping business running smoothly. In return, this has led to IT professionals feeling overworked since the outset of the pandemic.

Defining Burnout and Determining How to Combat It

The World Health Organization (WHO) [defines burnout](#) as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that's characterized by feelings of exhaustion or energy depletion, negative or cynical feelings related to a job, and reduced professional efficacy.

WHO emphasizes this an occupational phenomenon, not a medical condition. This means burnout is not able to be cured by doctors, but rather it's up to business leaders to find ways to combat burnout when it appears and more importantly, prevent it from occurring in the first place.

Below are some recommended ways for employees to combat burnout in the workplace. Be mindful, this is not an exhaustive or list, but merely a starting point from which business leaders should consider what would be most impactful for their own respective organizations.

1.

Take time off

Some employees might think not taking time off makes you a better employee. It's understandable why workers have this fear given the state of the economy, so it is important for business leaders to emphasize from the top down that this is not the case. Taking time to step away from your computer and remember you're a person outside of your job is more important than ever when the lines between home and work are blurred the way they have been.

Taking time off from work is essential to combat burnout and allow employees the time to recharge. Worried about travel restrictions? It doesn't even have to be a full vacation like you might have taken in the past, it can be more of a "staycation." [Some companies](#) are even piloting a 4-day work week to give employees more time to recharge.

2.

Develop a routine

It's important to develop a schedule that involves [meeting your basic needs](#) like eating, drinking, and sleeping regularly. As mentioned above, the lines between home and work are blurrier than ever and most people struggle with the "work" part of work-life balance.

Schedule time each day for personal activities and have several go-to hobbies that you enjoy so you'll have something specific to do with your personal time and won't be enticed to work outside normal hours.

3.

Stay connected through regular check-ins

In work scenarios, it's important for managers to simply ask how direct reports are doing. This way, managers can assess how their teams are feeling and what energy they are bringing to the table. It's from these check-ins that leaders will be able to assess if employees are taking time to prioritize mental health which will help curb potential burnout.

Organization-wide pulse surveys can check in on the sentiment of employees and how they are feeling, if they're burnt out, or to see if there's anything more employers can be doing to support them.

4.

Identify tools or services that could streamline business tasks and alleviate employee workload

For business leaders, now is the time to keep an open mind of tools or services that you might have previously not investigated. Consider evaluating what tasks are essential for your team to carry out in house and then identify those that could be automated or outsourced to a vendor.

By getting creative and trying out new solutions, you could allow your team members to offload responsibilities that might be causing them to work extra hours and experience burnout. While there is no silver bullet, now is the time to consider how to optimize business processes for the sake of ensuring the well being of your employees.



Conclusion

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a shift to remote work that has left IT professionals feeling overworked. Moving forward, successful organizations will be the ones ensuring that their employees, especially IT professionals, do not feel burnt out.

Remote work is likely going to be a large part of most companies' reality for the foreseeable future. Even as parts of the economy begin to reopen in phases, many companies will still pursue a hybrid approach that combines remote work and physical office locations until a vaccine is produced—perhaps even further into the future. As a result, businesses should take the proper steps to combat burnout in order to keep their IT teams feeling productive and happy, which will, in turn, help preserve business continuity.