



The Phoenix Shift: A Leadership Blueprint for the Meetings and Events Industry

A Phoenix Unleashed White Paper for Building Sustainable Success in the Meetings and Events Industry



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Part 1

The Wake Up Call! The Burnout Crisis No One Talks About

The meetings and events industry is at a crossroads. Since 2020, workloads have intensified, expectations have escalated and the cost of delivering flawless experiences is taking a profound toll—on individuals, teams and the industry itself. But burnout is not inevitable. It's a signal. A red flag waving at leaders, planners, and clients alike, urging a different way forward.

Burnout is no longer a side effect of working in this industry—it has become the default operating system for thousands of professionals. Our research—including surveys, focus groups and personal interviews with over 300 event professionals—reveals staggering insights:

- 83% of planners report feeling burned out 70–100% of the time (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).
- 72% are considering leaving the industry due to stress (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).
- Many work 50–60+ hours per week, sacrificing personal time, relationships and health (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).

These findings echo larger workforce trends. Gallup (2023) reports that nearly 76% of professionals in high-stress industries experience burnout, while the American Psychological Association (APA, 2023) connects chronic workplace stress to long-term health issues. McKinsey & Company (2023) adds that burned-out employees are 2.6 times more likely to be actively looking for new jobs.

Despite these alarming statistics, burnout remains normalized. Many planners are conditioned to equate exhaustion with excellence, fearing that admitting burnout will jeopardize their credibility. This culture of silent suffering is eroding creativity, undermining productivity, and quietly pushing top talent out of the profession.

This white paper explores a new paradigm: high-impact performance without sacrificing well-being. It challenges outdated systems that reward overwork and reveals what's possible when organizations prioritize sustainability, equity and human-centered leadership. From



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redefining KPIs to embedding recovery into timelines, it outlines practical, scalable strategies for organizations of all sizes.

It also calls for a shift in professional identity. Planners are not simply task executors—they are strategic contributors. By owning their value, setting boundaries, and embracing new leadership models, they can reshape how the industry perceives and supports their work. The path forward is a partnership: between professionals, leaders, clients, and stakeholders across the event ecosystem.

This is not just a report—it's a rallying cry. Phoenix Unleashed is leading a movement to evolve the events industry into one that thrives on performance without burnout. One where planners are seen, supported, and respected—not only for what they produce, but also for the value they bring.

The next generation of event professionals is watching. Will they inherit a culture of exhaustion or a blueprint for sustainable success? The time to shift is **now**.

The Burnout Epidemic in the Events Industry

Burnout in the meetings and events industry is not a fleeting issue—it is a deeply entrenched reality that continues to be ignored. While the industry thrives on precision, creativity, and seamless execution, it has yet to account for the human cost behind these outcomes (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Our research confirms that 83% of planners report feeling burned out 70–100% of the time—a figure that reflects a systemic failure, not individual fragility.

Professionals are overworked, underappreciated, and—too often—the first to be let go in times of uncertainty. The culture of perfectionism and “whatever it takes” has evolved into a model where sacrificing well-being is expected. The emotional and mental toll has reached unsustainable levels—not just for planners, but for the full ecosystem: vendors, contractors, AV teams, venue staff, and on-site partners.

At the core of this crisis is a lack of shared responsibility. Planners are undervalued by many of the organizations that depend on them. But more than that, clients, executives, and industry leadership often perpetuate unrealistic timelines, misaligned expectations, and



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transactional relationships that extract performance without investing in people. And within planning teams themselves, burnout is both endured and perpetuated—a reflection of just how normalized the problem has become.

This white paper does not just illuminate the cost of burnout. It invites a new conversation about value, performance and sustainability. Burnout isn't just bad for people—it's bad for business. It limits innovation, leads to higher turnover, and reduces the quality of events. And when professionals operate in survival mode, everyone loses.

The data is clear, but so is the opportunity. We can create high-performing teams without burning them out. We can redefine what excellence looks like. But that will require leadership that values people as much as outcomes, and planners who step into their strategic value, not just their delivery roles. Small agencies and independent planners need just as much advocacy as large internal teams—and this shift must be scalable, inclusive and collaborative.

Phoenix Unleashed is committed to more than just naming the problem. This is the first in a series of solutions designed to spark collective change. Together, we can rewrite the future of the meetings and events industry—where performance and well-being are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing.



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Part 2

Research Findings and Real Voices

The Reality of Burnout

Burnout among event professionals is no longer an isolated concern—it is a systemic failure impacting planners, vendors, support staff, and the entire event ecosystem (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Through a comprehensive study involving over 300 professionals—via surveys, focus groups, and personal interviews—Phoenix Unleashed has uncovered not only the scale of burnout but also its root causes and widespread consequences. While the industry celebrates innovation and flawless execution, it often ignores the invisible toll on the people who make it all happen (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).

The data reveals a troubling misalignment between the performance the industry demands and the actual capacity for sustainable delivery. **83% of respondents report experiencing persistent burnout**, describing a continuous state of mental and physical depletion (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). This is not the natural result of passion—it is the outcome of long hours, rapid turnarounds, and little to no time for recovery. Chronic burnout diminishes decision-making capacity, heightens stress responses, and increases long-term health risks (Psychology Today, 2023). These conditions ultimately compromise performance, creativity, and resilience—the very things the industry depends on.

Even more pressing, **72% of event professionals are considering leaving the industry altogether** due to chronic stress and lack of support (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). While many still feel deeply connected to their work, they no longer see a viable path forward. As burnout pushes out highly experienced talent, the industry risks a loss of institutional knowledge and leadership depth. Gallup (2023) confirms that burnout increases the likelihood of job turnover by 2.6 times. Without intervention, this attrition trend will create a long-term talent crisis (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).

But burnout is more than exhaustion—it's operational dysfunction. Over 60% of respondents cited long hours and unrealistic expectations as the primary drivers of burnout (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Many planners are logging **50 to 60+ hours per week**, often across nights, weekends, and holidays. Despite their dedication, they feel like they're constantly falling behind. This toxic standard—where exhaustion is mistaken for



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excellence—perpetuates a cycle that rewards overperformance and punishes rest. Research from Harvard Business Review (2022) shows that prolonged overwork leads to lower job satisfaction, reduced innovation, and mental fatigue.

What's more, this pressure doesn't stop with planners. The downstream impact is clear: **AV teams, venue staff, production crews, and travel directors** are often asked to deliver under the same unrealistic conditions—with fewer protections and even less visibility (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). The absence of regulated breaks, fair scheduling, and overtime compensation reflects an industry-wide gap in human sustainability. Similar burnout patterns in sectors like healthcare and finance have led to structural breakdowns and high-cost turnover (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

The culture of silence makes this crisis worse. Professionals who attempt to advocate for fairer conditions are often dismissed or penalized. Others fear reputational damage and remain quiet. The APA (2023) confirms that overwork-focused environments discourage transparency, reinforcing mental strain. In our research, planners reported being removed from forums or penalized for even raising the topic of burnout (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Suffering in silence has become a badge of honor—but it's one we can no longer afford to wear.

The implications are clear: without a new approach, the events industry will continue to drain its own talent, dilute creativity, and fall short of the performance it promises. But burnout is not a necessary byproduct of success—it's a **clear signal that the system must evolve**. Planners want to perform at a high level—but they need an environment that supports, not sacrifices, their energy, ideas, and well-being.

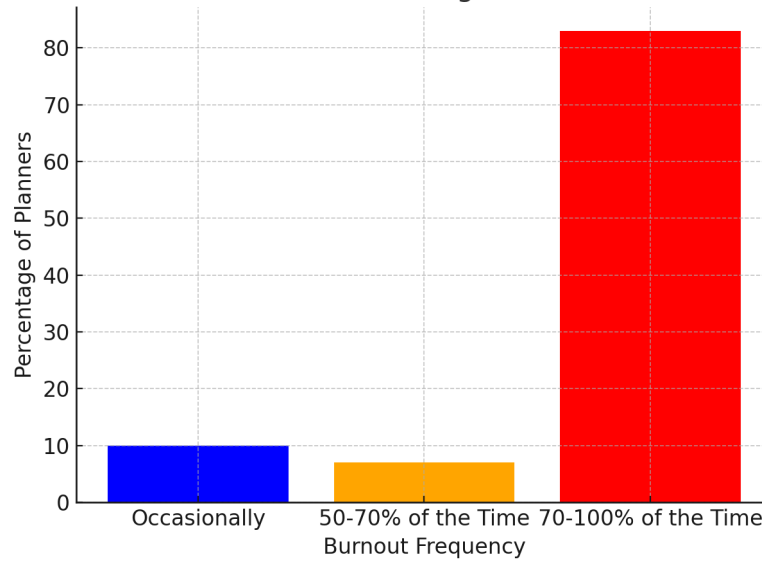
This is not just a crisis—it's a turning point. The findings in this report are more than a warning—they're a map forward. The next section outlines real, actionable solutions to reimagine performance: not by doing less, but by doing it differently. With better leadership, structural support, and strategic planning, the events industry can deliver high-impact experiences **without burning out the professionals behind them**.



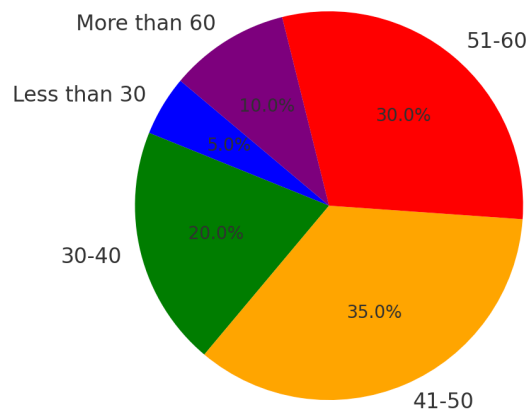
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Burnout Levels Among Event Planners



Work Hours of Event Planners





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The Lived Experience of Burnout

Burnout is more than a statistic—it's a daily reality that event professionals across the industry are living and working through (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). The stories captured in our research—spanning anonymous surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews—reveal the human cost of a system built on constant urgency, perfectionism, and invisible labor. These aren't isolated complaints—they're warning signals from a workforce under pressure.

Planners deeply love their work. They're driven by creativity, service, and the desire to deliver transformational experiences. But too many feel trapped in a culture that demands everything while offering little in return. Their words are not just venting—they are calls for reform.

“The industry has conditioned us to believe that exhaustion equals success. The more overworked we are, the more valuable we seem.”

“No matter how hard we work, it's never enough. The moment one event ends, we're thrown into another with no time to breathe.”

“If I say ‘no’ to a client, I risk losing them. If I say ‘yes’ to everything, I lose myself.”

“I've spent more nights in hotel rooms for work than in my own bed. My family barely sees me outside of FaceTime calls.”

Many professionals pointed out that burnout isn't only about long hours—it's about the lack of autonomy. Shifting schedules, last-minute changes, and the expectation to be “always on” make it nearly impossible to plan, recharge, or protect personal time (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Research confirms that people in high-pressure roles with limited control over their time are significantly more prone to burnout and anxiety disorders (American Psychological Association, 2023).

“We're expected to handle last-minute client demands like they're minor requests, but each one adds up to an impossible workload.”

“My email never stops. Even on vacation, I'm expected to check in. If I don't, I come back to an unmanageable mess.”

“I've worked every major holiday for the last five years. When do we get time to recover?”



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“The event may be over, but I’m still answering emails at 1 AM.”

Perhaps most troubling is the silence. Many planners fear that admitting exhaustion will be perceived as incompetence. Speaking up might mean losing opportunities—or being viewed as “not tough enough” for the job (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). This culture of quiet suffering has allowed burnout to thrive unchallenged. Gallup (2023) confirms that environments which glorify overwork significantly suppress employee willingness to report burnout.

“I told my boss I was struggling, and their response was, ‘That’s just how this industry is.’”

“I’ve been afraid to talk about burnout because I don’t want to seem like I can’t handle it.”

“We need to stop pretending that suffering in silence is part of the job description.”

“So many of us are drowning, but we don’t want to be the first to admit it.”

Burnout isn’t contained—it spreads. Planners openly acknowledged that they sometimes perpetuate the very cycle they’re suffering from. Whether through unconscious expectations of vendors or cascading pressure on junior staff, burnout ripples outward—hurting entire teams and supplier networks. McKinsey & Company (2023) found that burnout frequently cascades down through organizational layers, especially in high-stress, deadline-driven sectors.

“I hate that I’ve become the kind of person who expects my team to work crazy hours, but I don’t have a choice—if I slow down, we all fall behind.”

“We tell our vendors we understand their pain, but we still expect them to deliver under impossible deadlines.”

“I see my junior staff struggling, but I don’t know how to help them when I can barely keep myself afloat.”

And yet—amid the exhaustion—there is love. Planners are not asking to work less because they’re disengaged. They’re asking for systems that allow them to deliver **sustainable excellence** without sacrificing their health, families, and futures.

“I don’t want to leave this industry—I just want it to be better.”

“Burnout shouldn’t be the price we pay for doing work we love.”

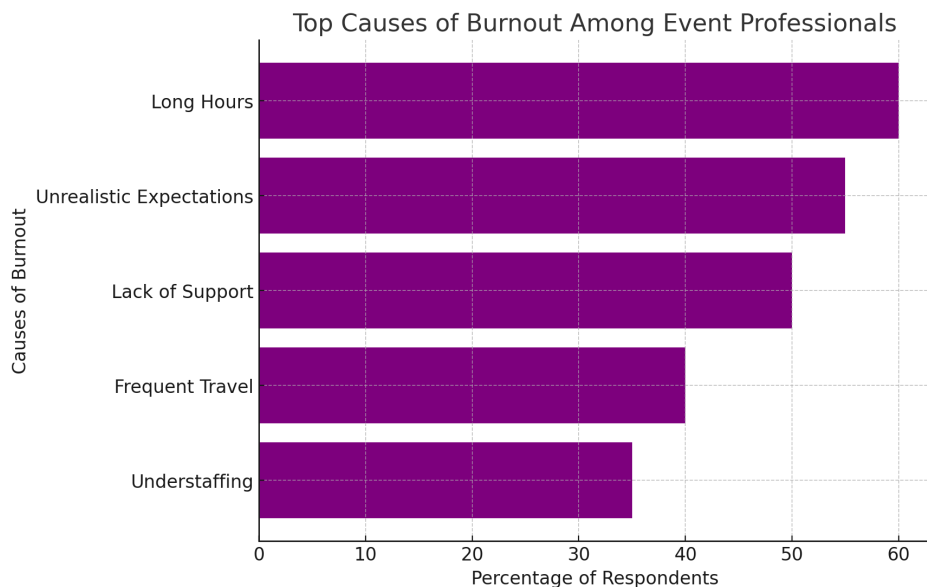


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“I want to see this industry thrive, but that won’t happen if we keep running ourselves into the ground.”

“It’s time to build an industry that works for the people who keep it running.”



These voices are not edge cases—they are the heart of the industry. Phoenix Unleashed exists to ensure they’re not only heard—but acted on. Their lived experience must become the foundation for reimagining performance: not as a grind for survival, but as a path to sustainable impact. If we want better outcomes, we must listen—because burnout has a voice. And it’s telling us it’s time to change.



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Part 3

Why Burnout is Rampant in the Meeting and Events Industry

The meetings and events industry thrives on pressure, precision, and performance. Success is measured by seamless execution and memorable experiences—but that level of excellence often comes at an invisible cost. Behind the scenes of world-class conferences, global summits, and brand-defining activations is a workforce on the verge of collapse (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024).

Burnout in this industry is not a byproduct of passion—it's a predictable outcome of outdated systems, unrealistic expectations, and a culture that normalizes overwork. Despite the well-documented stress levels, little structural reform has been made. The industry continues to demand more from fewer people, with fewer resources, and minimal safeguards.

Through extensive research, Phoenix Unleashed has identified ten systemic factors that continue to drive the burnout epidemic. Each one chips away at the well-being, creativity, and long-term sustainability of the professionals who make this industry run.

1. Unrealistic Client Demands

The events industry is known for its “whatever it takes” mentality—but for many planners, that mentality now feels weaponized. Clients routinely request last-minute changes, expect perfection on tight budgets, and operate as if burnout is a requirement for excellence. Without proper boundaries and client education, planners are left to absorb the pressure alone. *Supporting Insight:* High client-driven workloads are correlated with emotional fatigue and increased job strain (Harvard Business Review, 2022).

2. Constant Travel and Extended Hours

Unlike other industries that have adopted remote or hybrid work, event professionals are still expected to be physically present—and constantly moving. Multi-city activations, onsite demands, and weekend work have become the norm. But travel without recovery leads to chronic exhaustion, reduced immunity, and sleep disruption, making it harder to show up as a high-performing professional.

Supporting Insight: Excessive business travel contributes to anxiety, insomnia, and long-term health issues (McKinsey & Company, 2023).



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3. Lack of Support and Recognition

Despite being strategic operators, crisis managers, and experience designers, many planners are treated as task executors. Their work is often invisible until something goes wrong. This chronic undervaluing contributes to disengagement and a deep sense of invisibility, even while producing high-value work.

Supporting Insight: Employees who feel unrecognized are twice as likely to experience burnout (Gallup, 2023).

4. Understaffing and Resource Scarcity

Planners are frequently expected to manage strategy, vendor logistics, onsite execution, and reporting—often without adequate team support. Budget constraints and understaffing have pushed many professionals past sustainable limits, increasing error rates and turnover.

Supporting Insight: Under-resourced environments lead to higher burnout, reduced accuracy, and faster attrition (APA, 2023).

5. The “Always On” Culture and Lack of Boundaries

In a digitally connected world, many professionals never truly log off. Between late-night emails, weekend texts, and post-event follow-up, there’s little separation between work and life. This lack of boundaries erodes well-being and contributes to planner fatigue long before the event begins.

Supporting Insight: Always-on expectations are directly linked to lower life satisfaction and higher burnout (World Economic Forum, 2023).

6. Emotional Labor and Crisis Management Fatigue

Planners are not just logistical leads—they’re emotional leaders. They hold space for executives, clients, attendees, vendors, and team members under pressure. The emotional toll of this role—especially during on-site challenges or client crises—leaves many depleted, anxious, and stretched far beyond their roles.

Supporting Insight: Emotional labor is a key predictor of exhaustion, anxiety, and long-term burnout (Psychology Today, 2023).

7. The Pressure of Flawless Execution



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Events are one-time-only performances. There are no second chances. That standard creates enormous pressure to anticipate and manage every detail, often leading to hypervigilance, perfectionism, and anxiety. And while mistakes may be minor, the self-criticism professionals carry is major.

Supporting Insight: Perfectionism-based work cultures have the highest risk of chronic stress and burnout (BHS Online, 2024).

8. Financial Instability and Pay Disparities

Despite their high-value expertise, many event professionals experience financial instability. Independent and freelance planners are often paid less than in-house staff, despite taking on more risk and responsibility. Organizations frequently undervalue external talent, negotiating lower rates while avoiding the costs of benefits or PTO. Even salaried planners report stagnant wages and a lack of compensation for overtime.

This financial inequity is not just organizational—it's cultural. Planners themselves often fail to advocate for peers, unintentionally reinforcing undervaluation within the industry.

Supporting Insight: Wage gaps, inconsistent income, and financial insecurity are leading indicators of burnout and turnover (MIT Sloan, 2023; Resourcing Edge, 2024).

9. Limited Career Growth and Advancement

For many planners, the role becomes a professional plateau. There are few leadership pipelines, minimal mentorship, and a perception that planning is an execution job—not a strategic one. This lack of upward mobility leaves many talented professionals feeling stuck, unseen, and ultimately burned out.

Supporting Insight: Career stagnation increases disengagement, performance dips, and burnout symptoms (Entrepreneur, 2024).

10. Industry Culture That Glorifies Overwork

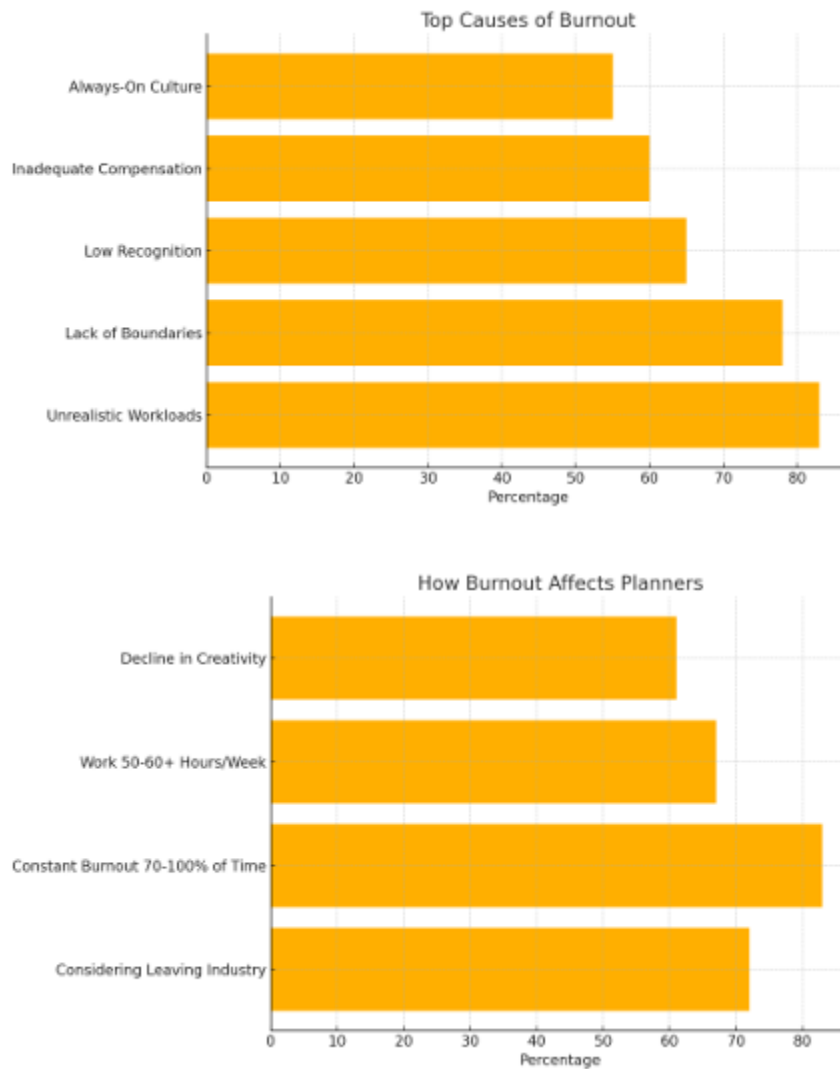
Perhaps the most insidious driver of burnout is the culture itself. Overwork is worn like a badge of honor. Exhaustion is celebrated. Boundaries are stigmatized. This toxic mindset reinforces the idea that planners must sacrifice their well-being to be seen as successful.

Supporting Insight: Workplaces that glorify hustle and overextension experience the highest rates of burnout and the lowest retention (Business Insider, 2025).



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Burnout is not just a personal problem—it is a structural failure baked into how the industry operates. The cost is already showing: mass attrition, declining innovation, and a looming talent crisis. If this continues, the industry won't be known for high-impact experiences—it will be known for how it lost the very people who built them.

Phoenix Unleashed is not just raising awareness. We're calling for action. These factors are not permanent—they're patterns. And patterns can be broken. The following section explores **what the events industry can learn from other high-stress sectors**, and how it can evolve to protect its people without compromising on performance.



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Part 4

The Phoenix Framework: Actionable Solutions & Industry Recommendations

The meetings and events industry is not just navigating burnout—it is navigating a moment of reckoning. The systems that were once seen as efficient are now exposed as harmful. The people behind the scenes—planners, vendors, and creative partners—are delivering more than ever, but often at the cost of their health, creativity, and longevity in the profession. It's time to stop asking people to sacrifice themselves for their work.

Phoenix Unleashed is redefining what performance in this industry can and should look like. Our recommendations are not abstract ideals—they are essential, tested strategies that shift the industry away from burnout and toward balance. This isn't just about fixing symptoms; it's about creating systems that actually support high performance without human cost.

Here are ten scalable, actionable solutions designed for leaders, organizations, and planners themselves.

1. Redefine Leadership: Make Well-Being a Core Performance Metric

Burnout is not just a workforce issue—it's a leadership accountability gap. Leaders must stop viewing well-being as a “soft” concern and instead recognize it as a strategic imperative.

- Make employee well-being a KPI evaluated alongside revenue, client satisfaction, and event success.
- Incorporate team burnout risk indicators into leadership reviews.

Supporting Research: Companies that center well-being report higher retention and productivity (Gallup, 2023).

2. Mandate Reasonable Workloads & Capacity Planning

Burnout is not just a workforce issue—it's a leadership accountability gap. Leaders must stop viewing well-being as a “soft” concern and instead recognize it as a strategic imperative.

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Supporting Research: Companies that center well-being report higher retention and productivity (Gallup, 2023).

3. Set Industry-Wide Boundaries for Off-Hours Work

Availability should be intentional—not assumed. Establishing industry norms will empower both teams and clients to respect personal time.

- Ban work communications outside agreed working hours.
- Require recovery days after large-scale activations.
- Define expectations for planner availability during travel.

Supporting Research: Digital boundaries reduce stress, boost productivity, and improve satisfaction (World Economic Forum, 2023).

4. Ensure Fair Compensation and Financial Equity

No planner should sacrifice well-being without fair compensation. Pay equity must become a baseline, not a negotiation.

- Pay independent and freelance planners competitively and equitably.
- Compensate all overtime, weekend, and holiday work.
- Budget for wellness and professional growth support.

Supporting Research: Equitable pay improves retention and morale in high-stress environments (MIT Sloan, 2023).

5. Rethink AI Implementation: Efficiency, Not Extra Work

AI should lighten the load—not create new ones. Currently, many tools increase cognitive friction and fail to integrate with planner workflows.

- Prioritize tools that simplify, not complicate.
- Offer onboarding and AI literacy training.
- Use AI to automate low-value tasks, not replace human creativity.



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Supporting Research: Poor AI implementation increases stress and cognitive overload (EventsForce, 2024; Sched, 2024).

6. Normalize Mental Health Days & Emotional Support

Well-being isn't a perk—it's a business-critical foundation. Mental health must be destigmatized and systemically supported.

- Offer no-penalty mental health days.
- Provide access to counseling, resilience coaching, and wellness apps.
- Train managers to spot early signs of burnout.

Supporting Research: Organizations with mental health benefits see 40% fewer resignations linked to burnout (Bishop McCann, 2024).

7. Restructure Event Timelines to Include Recovery

Sustainable timelines are not just a luxury—they're a necessity for peak performance.

- Space out events based on team capacity, not just market demand.
- Build "recovery windows" into master timelines.
- Treat rest as an essential part of performance—not a reward.

Supporting Research: Scheduled recovery periods improve cognitive performance and creative problem-solving (World Economic Forum, 2023).

8. Move From Hustle Culture to an Outcome-Oriented Culture

We must stop equating effort with value. The industry must measure what truly matters: outcomes, impact, and innovation.

- Shift KPIs from hours logged to results delivered.
- Celebrate boundary-setting as leadership, not laziness.

Supporting Research: Performance-driven cultures lead to higher engagement and reduced burnout (Entrepreneur, 2024).



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9. Prioritize Whole-Person Professional Development

True professional growth includes wellness, emotional resilience, and leadership—not just tech tools and certifications.

- Offer burnout prevention and resilience training.
- Support wellness programs: ergonomic consulting, nutrition education, physical therapy access.
- Train planners and leaders in emotional intelligence and stress response.

Supporting Research: Whole-person development improves retention, creativity, and performance (BHS Online, 2024).

10. Build a Burnout Prevention Coalition to Enforce Accountability

Systemic change requires collective action. No single planner or company can fix this alone. Phoenix Unleashed calls on the industry to create an independent, collaborative body to:

- Monitor workplace practices.
- Enforce fair labor guidelines.
- Publish annual burnout benchmarks and best practices.

Supporting Research: Industries with oversight bodies adopt reforms faster and more effectively (The Guardian, 2024; Amaha Health, 2024).

The Time to Act Is Now

This is not an abstract conversation—it's a crisis in plain sight. The people who power the meetings and events industry are burning out faster than we can replace them.

But this is also a moment of opportunity. By redefining success, prioritizing human sustainability, and shifting systems—not just mindsets—we can create an industry where thriving is not the exception but the standard.

Phoenix Unleashed will continue leading this charge. But change won't come from one voice—it will come from all of us.

Will you stand with us?

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Part 5

The Future of the Industry

Burnout Prevention Strategies from Other High-Stress Industries

Burnout is not unique to the events industry—it's a persistent issue across many high-pressure professions (Phoenix Unleashed Research, 2024). Yet, while industries like healthcare, tech, finance, and media have begun implementing real structural change, the meetings and events sector remains stuck in outdated models that reward overwork and sacrifice.

Phoenix Unleashed believes the path forward lies in adaptation. These burnout prevention strategies—proven in other high-stress fields—are not just applicable to planners; they are essential to reimagining what sustainable success looks like in this industry.

1. Healthcare: Implementing Wellness Programs and Structured Work-Life Balance

Hospitals and healthcare systems have long grappled with burnout and have responded by implementing structured wellness initiatives. These include mandatory recovery time, peer support programs, and mental health resources such as mindfulness training and scheduled rest periods (Able Jobs, 2024; APA, 2023). Caps on consecutive working hours ensure medical professionals maintain performance without sacrificing well-being.

Application to Events Industry:

- Implement mandatory recovery time after high-stakes events
- Create peer-led support networks for planners to share stress management strategies

2. Tech Industry: Promoting Mental Health Support and Flexible Schedules

Major tech firms like Google and Microsoft offer on-site counseling, designated mental health days, and hybrid work environments to reduce digital fatigue and burnout. Some companies even implement “no-meeting” days to give employees space for focused work (Harvard Business Review, 2022; McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Application to Events Industry:

- Encourage mental health days as a standard industry benefit



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- Promote flexible and hybrid scheduling for planners when feasible

3. Finance: Introducing Mandatory Time Off and Stress Management Resources

Finance firms, notorious for demanding work cultures, have started requiring employees to take scheduled time off. Organizations like Goldman Sachs have also invested in personalized coaching and subsidized therapy to prevent burnout (Resourcing Edge, 2024; McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Application to Events Industry:

- Enforce mandatory post-event time off
- Provide stress management tools and access to mental health professionals

4. Education: Encouraging Clear Leave Policies and Mental Health Awareness

The education sector has addressed widespread burnout by reducing administrative overload, adding support staff, and normalizing open mental health discussions (APA, 2023; Harvard Business Publishing, 2024; Colorín Colorado, 2024). Educators are now encouraged to prioritize recovery and well-being as part of professional success.

Application to Events Industry:

- Normalize discussions around mental health in the workplace
- Cap the number of active projects per planner to prevent overload

5. Legal Profession: Re-evaluating Work Practices and Promoting Work-Life Balance

Law firms, once defined by 24/7 availability, have shifted toward protected weekends, capped hours, and structured well-being initiatives. Some have implemented billable-hour alternatives that prioritize quality over quantity (Business Insider, 2025; BHS Online, 2024).

Application to Events Industry:

- Enforce “off-the-clock” time on weekends and evenings
- Shift performance KPIs from time-based to value-based outcomes

6. Media and Entertainment: Addressing Long Working Hours and Providing Proper Compensation



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With help from unions like IATSE, the entertainment industry now enforces stricter overtime compensation, meal penalties, and shorter production timelines. For example, triple pay is mandated for workdays over 15 hours, and break violations are monetarily compensated (Los Angeles Times, 2024; Wrapbook, 2024).

Application to Events Industry:

- Ensure mandatory breaks and fair compensation for event teams
- Prevent scheduling burnout by enforcing maximum daily work hours

7. Government Agencies: Implementing Stress Management Programs

Government organizations now provide stress management training, mindfulness workshops, and greater autonomy in workflows. These changes have helped lower turnover and improve productivity among federal employees (New York Post, 2024).

Application to Events Industry:

- Equip event managers with leadership training in emotional wellness
- Empower planners to control their own timelines and workloads

8. Workforce-Wide: Encouraging Career Breaks & Four-Day Workweeks

Companies piloting four-day workweeks report improved job satisfaction, reduced sick days, and greater productivity. These models prove that less time doesn't equal less output—just smarter structuring (New York Post, 2024).

Application to Events Industry:

- Introduce “event recovery days” after major projects
- Offer flexible schedules and rotational staffing to avoid planner fatigue

9. Airline & Aviation Industry: Fatigue Management Programs

The aviation industry uses regulated rest periods and smart scheduling powered by AI to protect pilots and crew from fatigue-related errors (MIT Sloan, 2023). These measures prioritize safety and performance equally.

Application to Events Industry:

- Introduce AI-assisted scheduling tools to avoid planner burnout
- Implement “rest windows” between projects to preserve focus and energy



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10. Nonprofits & NGOs: Prioritizing Employee Well-Being Over Performance Metrics

Nonprofits are moving away from productivity-only benchmarks to include well-being indicators in employee assessments. This shift helps retain passionate talent while addressing burnout risk head-on (Entrepreneur, 2024).

Application to Events Industry:

- Build well-being and satisfaction metrics into performance reviews
- Establish quarterly burnout risk assessments across teams

The Events Industry Must Evolve

The evidence is clear: industries that make well-being a business priority don't just retain talent—they outperform their competitors. Phoenix Unleashed believes it's time for the meetings and events industry to stop normalizing burnout and start prioritizing sustainable, human-centered performance.

The systems already exist. The strategy is proven. Now it's time to take action.

Conclusion & Call to Action: From Crisis to Collective Responsibility

The meetings and events industry is standing at a defining crossroads. Burnout is no longer an occasional byproduct of the job—it has become the baseline. The cost? A workforce that is exhausted, undervalued, and increasingly walking away from a profession they once loved. But this crisis is not inevitable—it's the result of outdated business models, misaligned priorities, and a culture that has long mistaken exhaustion for excellence. This is the moment to redefine what performance truly means.

Phoenix Unleashed has listened—to over 300 voices across focus groups, surveys, and interviews. We've heard stories of planners working 60+ hours a week without recovery, of vendors being pushed to their limits, and of teams trapped in unsustainable cycles. The data confirms what those on the front lines have been saying for years: the way we work is breaking us. And yet, other high-stress industries have already begun implementing the changes necessary to sustain their people. Why should the meetings and events industry be the exception?

The recommendations in this white paper are not theoretical ideals. They are urgent, research-backed imperatives grounded in what's already working across healthcare, tech, finance, and more. Phoenix Unleashed is not here to simply diagnose the problem—we are



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here to lead a transformation. This begins by shifting our definition of leadership to include care, boundaries, and human-centered performance. It continues with organizations taking real accountability—not just for the success of events, but for the sustainability of the people delivering them.

It's time to stop seeing burnout as a planner's personal failure and start treating it as a systemic leadership issue. We need to normalize professional boundaries, rethink client relationships, and evolve our culture from one of silent suffering to one of shared responsibility. We must elevate the planner's role—not just as a logistics executor, but as a strategic asset whose value is rooted in both expertise and wellbeing.

Phoenix Unleashed is here to help lead that charge. We are committed to continuing this work through:

- Ongoing research and data collection
- Regular focus groups with industry professionals
- Predictive trend analysis to anticipate future challenges
- Education and advocacy efforts that empower planners and hold organizations accountable

This is not a moment—it's a movement. We are calling on leaders, planners, vendors, clients, and organizations to step up. Whether you're a CEO or a freelance producer, your voice and action are essential to reshaping this industry. Together, we can create a future where high performance and human wellbeing are not at odds but are deeply interconnected.

The time for awareness has passed. The time for action is now. **Will you lead the change—or will you watch the best among us walk away?**