

Marketing burnout is real



Are you flat-out and frazzled all the time? You're not alone. New research exposes the crisis among marketing leaders. Rawinia Dolan talks us through the findings.



Rawinia Dolan
Marketing
Manager, Human
Synergistics

Business is still a badge of honour in agency and marketing life, with those who leave on time often viewed as less committed rather than recognised for their efficiency.

New research from *The Nation's Wellbeing Report 2025* by Human Synergistics reveals a hidden crisis in workplace wellbeing – one that marketing leaders can no longer afford to ignore. While productivity and high performance are essential in marketing, the increasing demands and pressures are taking a toll on professionals across all levels.

Based on insights from over 70,000 leaders, managers, and employees across New Zealand and Australia, the report sheds light on rising workplace stress and a lack of leadership support. These challenges are particularly pressing in the marketing world, where creativity and performance often come at the cost of wellbeing.

An industry under pressure

The report highlights several key issues that marketing leaders need to address.

Firstly, marketing leaders might be struggling more than they admit. While 90% of CEOs and senior leaders are committed to self-improvement, only 50% feel supported by their organisation.

Meanwhile, frontline leaders, such as account managers and creative leads, report the highest stress levels and the lowest ability to manage them. In the fast-paced world of marketing, where relentless deadlines and client expectations are the norm, these leadership gaps may be exacerbating burnout across both agencies and in-house teams.

Secondly, employee wellbeing is suffering, but few are talking about it.

The marketing industry demonstrates strong job satisfaction, with 69.28% of respondents expressing

contentment in their roles. This suggests that many professionals feel engaged and fulfilled at work.

PR professionals, however, report significantly lower satisfaction levels, with only 41.89% confident in their ability to manage stress – placing them in the bottom 10 industries for stress management.

While many marketing teams thrive in high-pressure, fast-paced environments, this may come at a cost and may not be as productive as they believe.

The *Wellbeing Report* confirms stress levels remain high across all job levels, with lower-ranked employees struggling the most. Without adequate support systems, marketing teams risk high turnover, disengagement and creative fatigue.

The pandemic hasn't helped, with learning and development falling behind since. During Covid times, many organisations scaled back leadership training, and many have yet to reinstate it. AI, digital advancements and shifting consumer trends require continuous upskilling, so the absence of structured development could leave teams unprepared for future challenges.

These findings serve as a wake-up call for marketing leaders. The data suggests that while job satisfaction remains relatively strong, workplace stress and lack of leadership support threaten long-term resilience in the industry.

What leaders can do

Marketing professionals face increased workloads, blurred work-life boundaries, and rising pressure to deliver results. To counteract burnout and promote long-term team sustainability, leaders can take the following steps:

- **Encourage work-life balance:** Establish a culture that values downtime and personal wellbeing. Leaders should model balanced work habits and actively promote wellness initiatives.
- **Promote flexible work arrangements:** Allowing remote work, flexible hours and hybrid schedules can help employees manage stress better.

▪ Create a culture of psychological safety:

Employees should feel comfortable voicing concerns about workload and stress levels without fear of being perceived as weak or incapable.

Managers are unprepared

Many marketing professionals rise into leadership roles because of their expertise in communications, branding or digital strategy. The report suggests leadership skills are expected, yet not formally developed, leading to unprepared managers struggling to support their teams effectively.

Staying up to date with the latest marketing trends and technology is essential, but organisations should also prioritise leadership development. Effective marketing leadership requires emotional intelligence, strong team

management, the ability to shape workplace culture, and resilience-building skills.

Remote and hybrid work models limit face-to-face mentorship and coaching, making leadership training more essential than ever. Without regular in-person interactions, leaders must be intentional about fostering connection, providing guidance, and maintaining team cohesion in a distributed environment.

To effectively support remote teams, leaders need to develop self-awareness, adaptability, and engagement strategies that keep employees motivated and aligned.

Can AI help?

With marketing teams getting leaner and workloads increasing, AI is becoming essential for working smarter. Tools such as ChatGPT can draft social posts in seconds, Otter.ai can transcribe and summarise meetings, and automation platforms like HubSpot can streamline repetitive tasks.

By using AI for content creation, data analysis and campaign optimisation, marketers can free up time for strategy and creativity. Embracing AI isn't about replacing human input, it's about creating space for higher-value work.

A path forward

By taking proactive steps to address workplace stress and enhance leadership skills, marketing leaders can create a more supportive, resilient, and high-performing work environment – one that allows creativity and innovation to flourish without sacrificing employee wellbeing.

Marketing leaders who embrace leadership development, workplace flexibility, and stress management strategies will be the ones who build thriving, future-proof teams in the years ahead. 🌱



Least satisfied are
PR
professionals – less than 42% say they can manage stress well at work