BEATING AP BOREOUT:
HOW TO RE-ENGAGE YOUR TEAM WITH AUTOMATION

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BOREOUT: WHAT IT IS & WHY IT MATTERS

While many people are familiar with the term "burnout," its lesser-known cousin, "boreout," can be just as pernicious and pervasive in the workplace. The psychological and physiological symptoms of burnout and boreout are surprisingly similar, but where burnout is related to being overworked, boreout is the feeling of being underwhelmed, unchallenged and uninspired by monotonous tasks.

Ruth Stock-Homburg, Professor of Management and Human Resources Management at the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany, describes boreout as "a crisis of meaning as well as a crisis of growth [that has] a negative impact on innovative work behaviour[1]."

EFFECTS ON WORKERS

In a society that emphasises productivity and glorifies busyness, workers suffering from boreout can enter a vicious cycle of demoralisation that can lead to:

- Listlessness, depression
- Anxiety, insomnia
- Irritation, cynicism
- Headaches & other ailments

EFFECTS ON BUSINESS

Bored workers are twice as likely to leave as those who aren't[2], putting a strain on resources and contributing to several detrimental effects such as:

- Lost productivity
- Higher costs
- Fewer growth opportunities
- Negative impact on culture

1 Stock, Ruth Maria (2015). "Is Boreout a Threat to Frontline Employees' Innovative Work Behavior?" Journal of Product Innovation Management. 32 (4): 574–592. doi:10.1111/jpim.12239. ISSN 1540-5885.
2 2016 Udemy Workplace Boredom Study, Battling Boredom Blues: How to Engage Today's Workers. Udemy for Business (2016).

ARE YOU BORING YOUR AP TEAM?

Gallop's State of the Global Workforce: 2022 Report found that roughly 80% of employees are either not engaged or actively disengaged at work[3]. Accounts payable (AP) employees that do not have the tools and resources to perform well end up costing the company — especially in organisations where paper-based, manual processes still prevail.

MANUAL DATA ENTRY

Repetitive tasks make up much of AP's workload, such as the manual data entry and invoice verification. In addition to being costly, the potential for human error is greater, especially in stressful situations like at month-end closing. Even if the employee is highly experienced, making mistakes only adds to feeling discouraged.

INVOICE APPROVALS

When manual AP processes are the norm, invoices are usually relayed to an approver before payments are made, which often involves lost invoices and/or approver delays. This can lead to disagreements with suppliers, adding to an already stressful atmosphere, as it will take even more manual AP tasks to solve the problem.

MATCHING PROCESS

Incoming invoices need to be matched with the corresponding POs and goods receipts. When done manually, it's just more tedious and time-consuming work. Should the sales volume increase, the team will need to be expanded and new staff trained. The associated costs are high and do not necessarily add value to the business.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In manual and paper-based processes, important insights such as the number of invoices that contain PO references, reception methods, or other KPIs like DPO remain obscured. This not only deprives staff from understanding their own performance, but also hinders the identification of areas of improvement or error reduction.

3 State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report, The Voice of the World's Employees. Gallup (2022).

HOW AUTOMATION CAN PREVENT BOREOUT

Given the negative effects that boreout has not just on AP staff but businesses as a whole, it is up to management to keep an eye out for any boreout indicators and to find feasible solutions. By relieving staff from tasks that can easily be automated, AI-driven automation solutions can provide a large chunk of the prevention.

With powerful AI technology behind them, AP departments can focus on their most valuable assets: their employees. Automation is often thought of as something that "replaces" workers, when in reality, it can be used to:

ELIMINATE MUNDANE TASKS WITHIN AP

AI technology forms the foundation of AP automation solutions — capturing invoice data, suggesting actions, detecting unusual amounts or auto-rejecting non-compliant invoices and more. As a result, AP staff are free from the mundane tasks that cause boreout and have more opportunities for upskilling and career advancement.

EMPOWER YOUR TEAM WITH ANALYTICS

Intelligent dashboards with real-time KPIs allow AP users and finance leaders to customise metrics that are displayed on their interface in easy-to-read graphs and reports. This allows every action to be more strategic and value-added — giving team members a greater sense of purpose and empowerment in their daily activities.

NURTURE COLLABORATION WITH DIGITAL TOOLS

Tools such as a convenient online supplier portal and mobile application let AP staff easily collaborate, both internally and externally. This frees up time for higher value tasks, such as account reconciliation, exception and dispute resolution, audit and year-end preparations, and process improvements or training.

CONCLUSION

Accounts payable can be a minefield of dull and repetitive work, from printing a never-ending stream of invoices to chasing after others to get payment approvals. The quick fix of finding more challenging tasks for employees affected by boreout will not, however, remedy the underlying issues. Reshaping the workplace to prioritise employee well-being means finding innovative solutions that optimise processes, offer visibility and business-wide efficiency.

The advantages that AI-driven automation creates for the AP process allows businesses to begin implementing positive changes for their employees, their customers, suppliers and especially the company's overall efficiency and profitability. Providing the right tools will enable everyone to succeed. This kind of vision generates positive-sum growth: When your company succeeds, the entire business ecosystem wins.

ABOUT ESKER

Esker is a global cloud platform built to unlock strategic value for finance and customer service professionals, and strengthen collaboration between companies by automating the cash conversion cycle. Founded in 1985, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. Our customers use our cloud solutions to increase the efficiency, productivity and visibility of their Procure-to-Pay (P2P) and Order-to-Cash (O2C) processes.
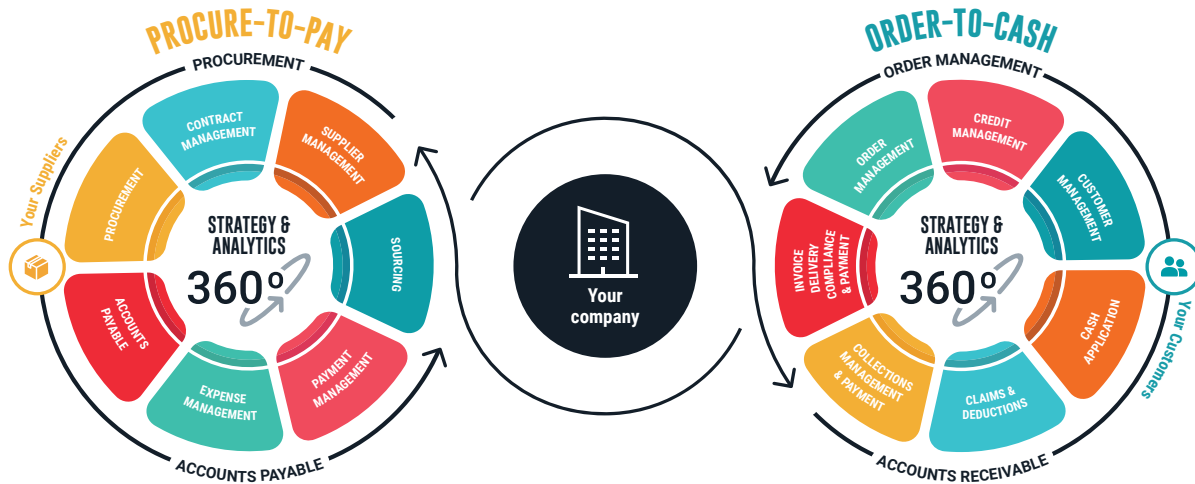
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