

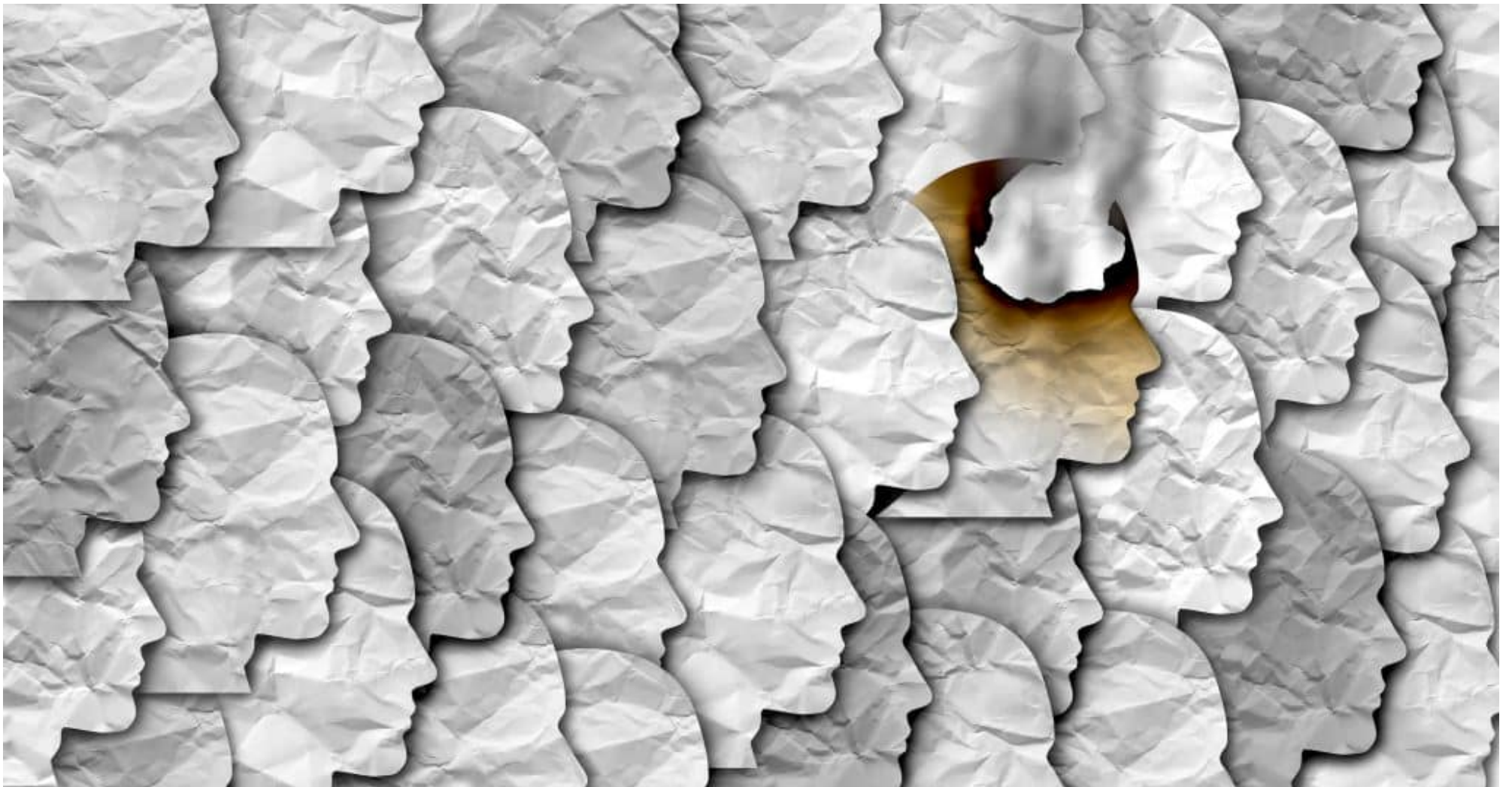
# Battling burnout: Reno executives discuss work-life balance, efficiency heading into COVID holiday season

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**E**ide Bailly LLP, a national CPA and business advisory firm with an office in Reno, has the ability to keep track when its employees working from home are actually working from home. But, in the COVID-19 era, workdays, especially at home, are no longer running on a 9-to-5 schedule.

“We’re not monitoring when people are working or not,” Lauren Sankovich, partner at Eide Bailly in Reno, told the NNBW. “We’re trying to be super flexible. As long as the work is getting done, we don’t really care. They could be working on a Saturday night and taking a Monday morning off, that is completely acceptable.”

From [working professionals with school-age children navigating digital learning](#) to the growing concerns of COVID fatigue, executives are learning new lessons in how to manage employees trying to find work-life balance, and spot early signs of burnout during a pandemic.

The NNBW spoke with company leaders in Reno-Sparks who weighed in on everything from work-life balance to maximizing productivity and maintaining mental wellness as the holiday season nears.

**Q: What has this year taught you about managing employees during a pandemic when many are working from home?**



**Lauren Sankovich, partner at Eide Bailly in Reno.**

*Courtesy Eide Bailly LLC*

**Sankovich:** I manage around 35 people and just making sure they don't fall off my radar and that they're getting what they need has proven to be very challenging. People can get lost in the mix because they're not reaching out as much if they can't walk into your office.

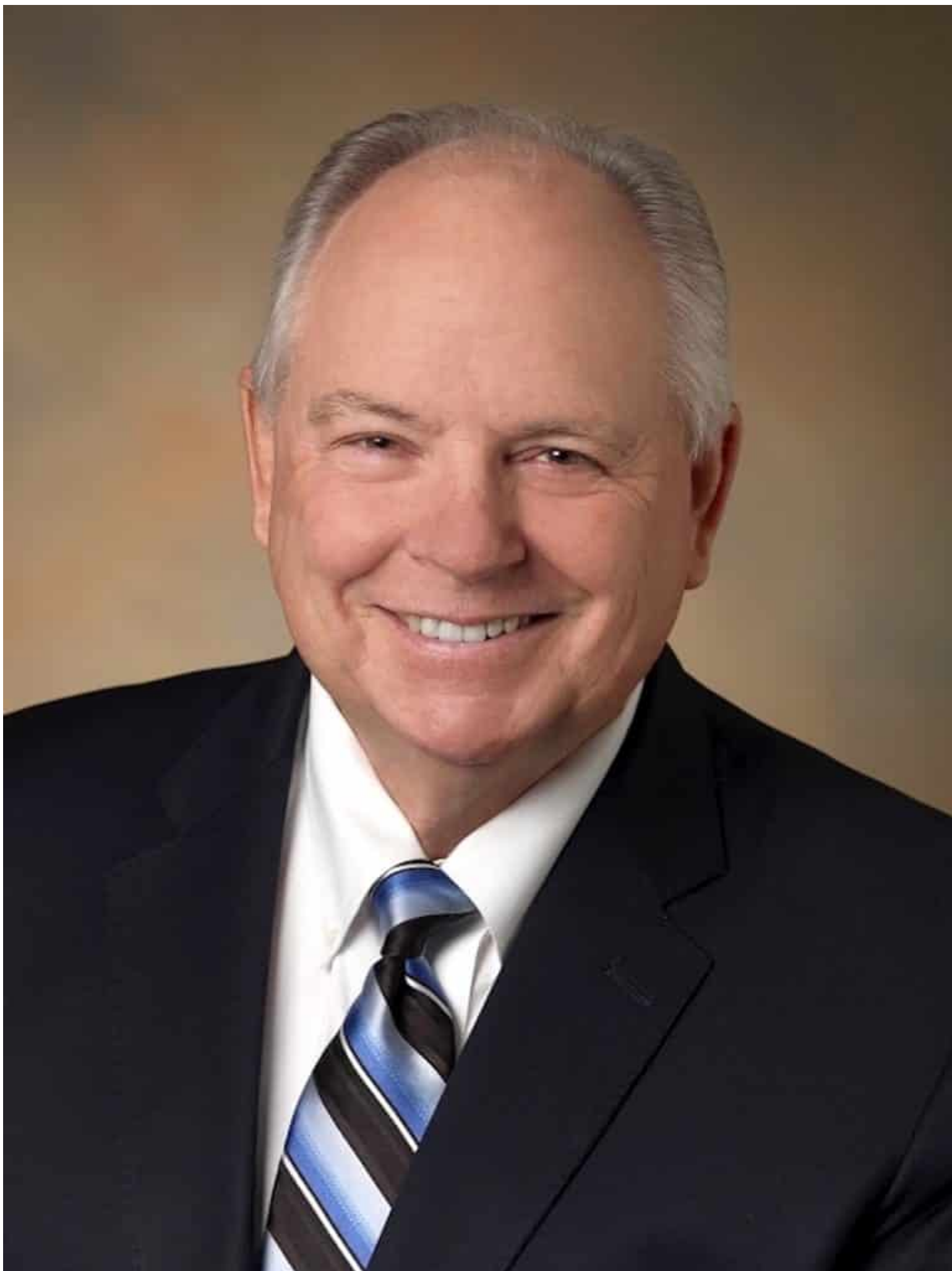


**Matt Addison, managing partner at McDonald Carano.**

*Courtesy McDonald Carano*

**Matt Addison, managing partner at McDonald Carano:** That they can be trusted to work on their own virtually and that they appreciate the flexibility. And the ones who are motivated and conscientious are more productive, because they can have more flexibility to balance their lives. So, I see that as the future. And I've been really optimistic about that as a result of the pandemic; I think it'll give all of us much more flexibility in our lives.





**Denny Williams, Northern Nevada regional president at Meadows Bank.**

*Courtesy Meadows Bank*

**Denny Williams, Northern Nevada regional president at Meadows Bank:** I visit the branches and I visit with the employees — social distancing, masks, all that — and I just listen to them as far as what’s going on in their lives. Do they have children that are in those silly schedules where sometimes they’re at school and sometimes they’re at home? You have to start looking at flexible scheduling to make sure that they’re able to take care of their families at the same time, able to take, we have to be able to take care of the day. Flexibility is critical, absolutely critical. It helps the staff know that we’ll do everything we can to help them. And it helps the bank by being able to continue to provide our services, as well as take care of our employees.



**Joe Dutra, president/CEO of Kimmie Candy.**

*Courtesy Kimmie Candy*

**Joe Dutra, president/CEO of Kimmie Candy:** If you want to keep your employees, you have to be very flexible. You need to be flexible, but I think there are employees that abuse it. And so it does create more management for business owners to be able to really figure out if somebody is really truly afraid, or are they saying, well, this is a good opportunity for me to work at home in my underwear for the next year. I think the coronavirus has created a lot of angst in a lot of people. Management, because we're worrying about the business, and workers in the factory and on the manufacturing floor, worrying about jobs. And I think it's just a cycle that we just got to get through.

**Q: Have you worried about people getting burnt out and experiencing COVID fatigue?**

**Sankovich:** Yeah, and we've had people quit. Not only do people get burnt out but the culture has kind of become a standstill. We have no plans to get together anytime soon – the Christmas party was canceled. That's probably our biggest concern from a management standpoint: how do we people are engaged and not burn out? We're not traditionally 40 hours a week – we're probably 50-55 hours a week. So, if you're working that plus having to take care of your family that can't go to school, yes, we're very much concerned about the burnout rate.

**Addison:** It's not to be underestimated. Just give you one example, I've seen an attorney kind of go into depression a little bit and have their productivity fall way off for unexplained reasons. I fear that it's burnout; it's pandemic burnout. And I'm worried about that.

**Williams:** You can't eliminate the stress — it's there. What you can do sometimes is just let them vent and tell you how they feel about whatever and listen to them. Because you can't snap your fingers and make it go away. What you can do is just talk about 'here's what we can do for you' or 'here's some services that we can provide through our HR group.' Be sincere and listen and have empathy for them.

**Dutra:** I don't think we've seen much of that. In a manufacturing facility a lot of our workers are packaging and making candy. And at the beginning (of the pandemic) we basically let a lot of them take a lot of their PTO time off to be able to go home, spend some time with family. For our employees, we were pretty lenient in letting them take off with their family. But, in manufacturing jobs, people are worried about keeping their jobs, and tend to worry about the company still being successful because of COVID.

**Q: How do you balance the need to maximize productivity while also making sure the staff is mentally well and motivated heading into the holiday season?**

**Sankovich:** It's funny, we never really talked about vacations before; we just were always consumed with work. But now what we've talked about more than ever — this is a light time of year — is that we really, really expect employees to be taking time off from now till December. And if they don't, we will almost kind of force that conversation on them that this needs to happen.

**Addison:** The one thing that we've been really lucky about is that we had done really well during the crisis monetarily at the firm. We made a 10% cut in everyone's salary at the beginning to try to soften the impact of what we expected to be a downturn in revenue. We were able bring everybody back up to full pay and make sure that we would finance their retirement plans. And that's been a really good thing in terms of keeping morale up. We had to cancel all three of our parties in the fall, so we're very concerned about the effect of that. Those have been very historically successful events for us, in terms of keeping the staff happy and keeping everybody together, and we're going to lose that this year. But I think everybody's super happy to still have a job. And super happy to have not suffered any decline in income as a result of the pandemic. And those two things have gotten us a long ways, I think.

**Williams:** What's really surprising to me, and a lot of it has to do with this Northern Nevada economy, even though we're dealing with this pandemic, a lot of business are still doing very well. We're going to have a great year as far as loan demand and loan production. We'll try to be as much in tune with the holidays as we can be and still protect them as well. We're having a positive attitude and trying to make things as fun as you can. At the same time, we realize there's a lot of serious stuff going on. We have to have good communication, listen and respond.

**Dutra:** I think you just talk to your employees and keep them motivated. For us, this has been a tough year because of all the closures. And a lot of our distributors have lost a lot of business because of closures, bankruptcies ... the mall business is still very limited. If you walk through a mall almost anywhere, it's not packed like it used to be — and it may not be packed. I think 2020 is going to be the year that wasn't. I see that companies that make drastic changes, that change their whole model to a COVID future, I think we'll probably have problems when or if the COVID stuff goes away. I think people will get back to normal shopping, schools will be open again, people will get back to a normal life.