



**Courier produces useful, inspiring content for modern entrepreneurs. Our Friday newsletter features stories on living better and working smarter.**

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## Friday 10th July

Against a backdrop of anxiety and burnout, we've looked into what positive steps you can take for your company and staff – and how you can overcome it yourself. Plus, [on the podcast](#) we learn business lessons from the founder who went from building a summer-inspired internet radio station and a DTC sunglasses brand to launching a financial planning app for young would-be homeowners.

## ① **How companies are fighting burnout**

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The World Health Organisation [recognised](#) burnout as an 'occupational phenomenon' last year – long before much of the world started working from home, when the line between professional and personal time started to fade even faster. Today, employees in the US are logging three hours more per day than before lockdown, and the working day in France, Spain and the UK has extended by two hours, according to several new reports. Data also shows a spike in work between midnight and 3am. Around 73% of working professionals [reported](#) being burned out in April compared to 61% in mid-February.

Thankfully, some employers are tackling burnout culture head on. The Denver-based software company FullContact, for example, gives workers \$7,500 to go away on the condition that they do so off-grid. Heldergroen, a Dutch design firm, lifts its desks to the ceiling between 6pm and 9am. Even giant companies like Volkswagen have silenced email servers once the workday ends in recognition of the growing problem.

'Many policies are more like coping mechanisms,' says Christina Maslach, an American social psychologist. 'But instead of people having to leave the workplace, we need to build and maintain healthy working environments.'

At Bulb, a provider of renewable electricity and gas for UK homes, the team has introduced a digital mental health platform to help employees improve their wellbeing. The company

also builds camaraderie with work-free Slack channels and events like quizzes, karaoke and bake-offs.

Sander Veendendaal, Heldergroen's creative director, even invited employees to rewrite their employment contract; only salaries were fixed. Company turnover increased and absenteeism plummeted. 'To combat burnout,' says Sander, 'you have to do two things: create meaningful work and give people back their freedom.'

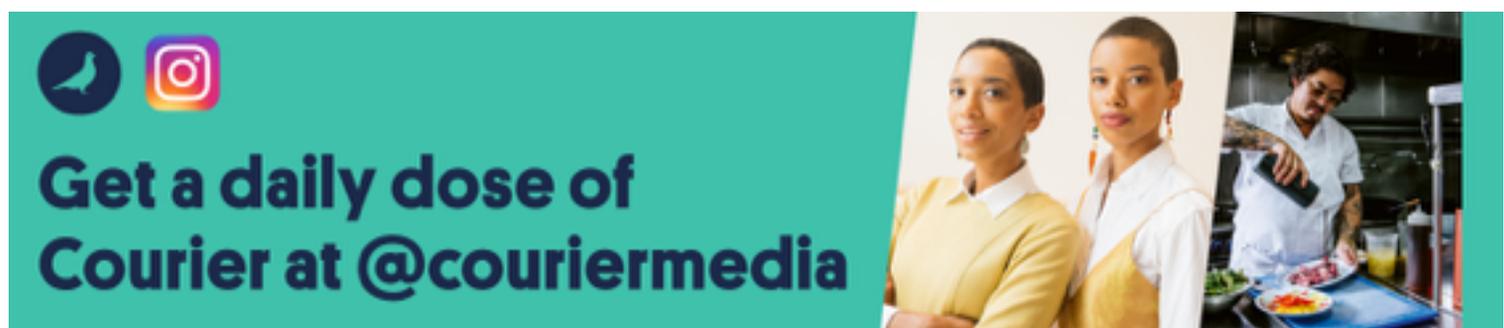
## ② Snoop culture

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On the other side of the coin, companies are ramping up the use of software to monitor what employees working from home are doing all day. The biggest software tracking companies in the US are reporting record profits, with some of them tripling previous sales figures.

For the uninitiated, staff monitoring companies like Hubstaff track employees' mouse movements and keyboard strokes while recording all the websites they visit. Others like Time Doctor download videos of employees' screens while they work. These tools can even make a computer's webcam take a picture of the employee every 10 minutes (say cheese!). If workers are idle for a few minutes, a pop-up might appear warning them that they need to start working again or their workday will be paused, leading them to have to work longer hours or see their pay cut.

While such software is pretty effective at ensuring high levels of productivity, there are much wider issues at play. Burnout, of course. Plus strained relations between employees and their bosses. We caught up with a cinematographer at a production company in LA, who says she worries tracking brought upon by the coronavirus will destroy morale. 'It's horrible and it's making us all not want to work for the company anymore,' she says. 'There are only 10 of us anyway, so is it really necessary? It's also making me crave going back to the office. Who knew?'



## ③ Beating burnout – from the experts

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Whilst companies are bringing in measures to support employees and monitor productivity, tackling burnout is largely a personal experience. We spoke to a few experts – whose phones have been ringing off the hook lately – to give us some practical tips to help minimise its impact.

- **'How you start your day is so important.** When you wake up, before you reach

out into your day, check in. A one breath meditation which asks, 'How am I feeling?' Ideally, you would pause every hour or so – it might be to stroke the cat, water the plants or go for a walk.' – [Nerina Ramlakhan](#), physiologist and sleep expert

- **'Keep an eye out for how the mind and body is responding.** If you know the warning symptoms specific to you, you have more chance of nipping it in the bud. Once a week take a couple of minutes to see how you're doing against those measures. Set time in the diary.' – [Jacky Francis Walker](#), psychotherapist and coach specialising in burnout
- **'Really zoom in on what's essential** and lower the standards you've set for yourself. Set small goals.' – [Laura Giurge](#), postdoctoral researcher at London Business School
- **'Practice gratitude.** Every day, myself and my family say three things that we're grateful for before we go to bed. Remind yourself what you've achieved, rather than what you haven't.' – [Dr Punam Krishan](#), author and life coach

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**Share this with someone who might need it.**

## ④ **Reopening first, mental wellbeing second?** —

While much of the UK reopened last weekend following a four month shutdown during the pandemic, the beauty industry was left out in the cold. Thousands of self-employed nail technicians, facialists, manicurists and aestheticians who offer face-to-face treatments had been deemed too risky to reopen – until yesterday, when it was finally announced that beauticians, nail salons and tattooists can reopen from Monday. Yet the beauty industry in France, Denmark and Italy, as well as some US states, wasn't held back in this way. So what gives?

'If face to face is the problem, then why can't I have a pedicure?' says Millie Kendall, chief executive of the British Beauty Council. 'Our sector is used to strict hygiene standards; we are used to PPE. We're not the pub. We do this every day.' Millie says the government undervalues the beauty industry because of a 'systemic lack of awareness – they possibly think those intimate treatments are embarrassing'.

Beauty is big business: the industry contributes £14.2bn to the UK every year, with £30bn of consumer spending. That's more than motor manufacturing (£13.5bn), publishing (£12.9bn) and sports (£11.8bn), according to a recent survey carried out by the British Beauty Council. Yet the value of beauty extends far beyond money; for a long time, the beauty and personal care industry has advocated mental wellbeing, which since the pandemic has become increasingly important.

Facial acupuncturist Frederika van Hagen, founder of Hackney-based Sainly Skin, hasn't worked a day since lockdown began. Her clients kept telling her their skin had worsened due to the stress of Covid, which prompted Frederika to get creative. She started hosting free Zoom consultations, creating tutorials on how to do facial massage at home in a bid to alleviate some of the anxiety felt by clients. 'Facials are very healing,' she says. 'Benefits include increased blood flow, stimulation of the lymphatic system and relieving tension – especially in the jaw or neck area where we grind our teeth and hold a lot of our physical stress.'

Joomee Song, chief executive of the Los Angeles-based Faceworks Inc, agrees. 'People have been dreaming of having a moment to themselves, to lay down on a facial bed and block everything out for an hour – especially clients raising kids and having to take on multiple roles as teachers and playmates while working from home,' she says. She is currently able to treat just three patients a day in her studio; in LA and New York, personal care was reopened for business in June. 'The negative effects on our bodies of stress, both physical and mental, cannot be ignored.'

Joomee thinks governments globally should mandate personal care as essential business. 'How else do we keep our sanity without taking care of our mental health?'

## ⑤ Wellness that resonates

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Meanwhile, online wellness has been taking off – including virtual gong baths. YouTube searches for 'sound meditation' and 'sound baths' have doubled since mid-March and the market has been flooded with practitioners creating digital sessions.

Relaxation from gongs, singing bowls and other reverberating instruments – which many people find reduces pain and experts say increases neural connectivity – can now be recreated remotely. But can you get the same effect lying on your living room floor?

Sara Auster, a New York-based sound therapist and author of Sound Bath, shares some tips from making the most of the experience at home:

- Get comfortable, either seated or lying down.
- Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.
- Turn your attention to your listening. Focus on the sound and the contrast it leaves in the room after it fades away.
- Let the sounds you hear anchor you in the present moment. Try not to get caught up in judging what you hear or analysing the sounds.
- Allow yourself to feel as if your mind is expanding into the space around you, and even expanding outside of the room.
- When the recording is over, sit in silence for one to two minutes.

- Gently make small movements through your body, and slowly open your eyes. Observe how your awareness has shifted from the beginning of the practice.

## **The links**

1. Elliot, whose co-founder we interviewed [in late May](#), promised to take on the e-commerce giants with a 'no-code' solution and global reach – but failed to launch on 18th June. The company has now mysteriously shut down – and Modern Retail digs into [what went wrong](#).
2. Simone Brewster [took to social media](#) last week, accusing Swoon Editions of stealing her furniture designs. Brewster says she was commissioned to work on a cabinet range but never heard back from the company until she saw her IRL cabinets on the Swoon site. Swoon's now [apologised](#). DTC shoe brand Atoms, meanwhile, [claims](#) Adidas was... heavily inspired... by their packaging design.
3. ' [Buy Cronk. Cronk is good. Cronk is the drink.](#) ' So goes the advertising copy in an 1882 copy of the Calgary Herald for a previously forgotten drink. After a researcher found the ad and [posted it](#) on Twitter, it went viral and the recipe was discovered (involving sassafras, sarsaparilla, molasses and more). A local brewery in Calgary is now resurrecting the drink.
4. BrewDog says it'll open four drive thrus in the UK, Ohio, Berlin and Brisbane – which will act as 'beer collection points, hubs for electric vehicle deliveries & hubs for closed loop, zero waste packaging such as growlers, mini-kegs & returnable bottles.' The reaction has been [less than ideal](#), with people calling it 'unnecessary', 'a terrible idea' and the driving aspect of it 'inherently unsustainable.'
5. And beloved shop Casa Magazines [gets the New Yorker treatment](#). Read our profile of owner Mohammed Ahmed [here](#).

# Fresh starts.

## Our June/July issue is out now!



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