

Article – “Quiet Quitting” and What It Could Actually Mean in Your Workplace

“Quiet quitting” started as a TikTok video describing how one employee was finding work-life balance by changing how they approached their job without actually quitting. The now-viral video has generated numerous articles and news stories, many with different takes on what “quiet quitting” actually means.

Some of these theories include:

Employees are [setting boundaries](#): The initial TikTok video defined “quiet quitting” as employees doing their jobs – no more, no less. They are good employees who do their jobs satisfactorily and maybe even above satisfactory. They work their scheduled hours, complete their job duties, fulfill work demands, attend meetings, and meet their goals and numbers. However, they do not do more than what is necessary to meet those expectations.

For them it’s about setting boundaries and not getting caught up in the unacceptable conditions some workplaces demand. It’s about doing their jobs but not taking on or feeling obligated to take on more duties. It’s about working the scheduled hours but not working nights, weekends, or over vacation. It’s about pursuing their own interests and development without confining themselves to only career or industry advancement. It’s about being satisfied in their current role and not striving to advance.

This is the [next phase](#) of the “Great Resignation”: “Quiet quitting” is seen by some as an alternative to joining the “Great Resignation.” An estimated [48 million employees](#) quit their jobs in 2021 due to various reasons: repercussions from the pandemic; wanting or needing to spend more time with family; looking for personal or professional growth opportunities; choosing to switch careers or start their own business; or searching for more flexibility, remote work, higher pay, and/or better benefits. The trend has not ended in 2022 with more than 4 million people resigning their jobs each month so far with [40% of employees](#) considering quitting their jobs in the next 3 – 6 months.

Instead of searching for a new company to provide the changes they want and need, these employees are staying in their current jobs while also taking opportunities outside of the workplace to meet these wants and needs. They may stop working extended hours or performing extra job duties to have the flexibility to spend more time with their family, focus on their health, take development courses, or, if they need more income, they may use the time to get a second job or “side hustle.”

These employees are [disengaged](#): Some see it as employees being disengaged at work, meaning they come in late and leave early, have numerous absences, work slowly, lack interest in work are easily distracted, do not communicate, and produce minimal or unacceptable results.

According to Gallup, 18% of the workforce is actively disengaged as compared to 32% who are actively engaged. The significant drop in engagement post-pandemic, especially for those that are younger than 35, is primarily due to the lack of having someone at work to care about them and their development, especially from their manager; the lack of opportunities to learn and grow; and the lack of a clear understanding of what is expected of them, especially in remote or hybrid work arrangements.

To back this up, the [Harvard Business Review](#) analyzed several surveys and responses about employee engagement and found that the managers who were the most “willing to go the extra mile” for their

employees had 62% of their employees giving extra effort on the job while only 3% are “quietly quitting.”

Actions to consider: If “quiet quitting” is impacting your workplace, there are some actions to take and things to consider.

- **Review job descriptions and work expectations:** What do you really need your employees to do? What are you paying them to do? What did you hire them to do? Ensure employees know the expectations but also that you are not expecting more than what they were hired to do. Changing workforce size and operational demands requires employees to grow and stretch but, if they are not compensated for it or need to work more hours to get the job done without acknowledgement or balance, they may push back or leave.
- **Review compensation:** Pay employees fairly for the job you want and need them to do. While not everything comes down to money, compensation and benefits are a motivating factor behind employee commitment and engagement. Recent market factors have increased pay ranges and inflation has increased employee pay needs.
- **Develop effective communication and ways to connect:** A key component of an effective working relationship is communication, especially between employee and their manager. The evolving needs of both company and employee along with the changing workplace arrangements mean that ways employees and managers communicate need to change. Whether holding regular meetings (virtual or in-person) or frequent touch-base conversations or regular performance management conversations, employees need to know what is expected of them, how their contribution is valued, and that their concerns are being heard.
- **Encourage employees to learn and grow inside and outside the company:** Along with offering employees opportunities to develop within the company and their roles, consider also encouraging employees to pursue personal interests. Bring in outside resources during work or give them time off to take classes or give them a stipend to pay for outside courses.
- **Avoid “quiet firing”:** “Constructive discharge” is a term to describe when employers make the workplace hostile or unsupportive in order to drive employees away. “Quiet firing” may be less aggressive but have the same impact. Employees may be denied raises, development opportunities, or time off. Or perhaps they face intended or unintended bias. Whatever the situation, if employers are not giving employees what they need to thrive at work, then employees will not give the extra effort companies may want.
- **Encourage trust between employees and managers:** The HBR article cited above outlined the importance of trust in the employee-manager relationship and suggested ways managers can create trust with their employees to make them feel valued so they are more engaged and therefore less likely to “quietly quit”: have a positive relationship; show consistency; and have expertise in the role. HBR also encourages employers to work to deserve employee enthusiasm – by doing more for employees, employees are more likely to do more for them.

One Final Thought: Not every employee will have the 24/7 commitment that owners and executives need to make the business successful; nor should they be expected to. In fact, if you expect employees to “hustle” and “do more” to help grow your business, they may realize they can put in the same effort to grow their own business pursuing their passion while creating the work-life balance they want.

By Paige McAllister, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Vice President for Compliance – Affinity HR Group, Inc.

Paige McAllister is a contributor for Affinity HR Group, Inc., AOCA's affiliated human resources partner. Affinity HR Group specializes in providing human resources assistance to associations such as AOCA and their member companies. To learn more, visit www.affinityHRgroup.com.

