

Is Rage Fueling The Great Resignation?

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According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via SHRM, [nearly 4 million workers quit their jobs](#) each month in 2021. It was the highest year on average for employee resignation in U.S. history. The trend has continued into 2022, with more than 4.3 million American workers quitting their jobs [in January 2022 alone](#).

Dubbed the “Great Resignation” or the “Big Quit,” the phenomenon is a confluence of Gen Z hitting the job market, a pandemic and increased venture capital. This era is most certainly a quitter’s market, where talent is in high demand and workplaces are rife with burnout. It begs the question: Is the Great Resignation premeditated, or are other factors leading employees to suddenly quit, leaving to see if the proverbial net appears?

Stress, Toxicity And Exhaustion

Online invoice platform Skynova [recently surveyed](#) 705 people who had quit a job to see what fueled resignations and the outcomes. Of those surveyed, the vast majority who quit left on the spot, either walking out following an argument with a superior or simply never returning to their position. Shockingly, 16% “ghosted” their employer completely.

Like many decisions made in the heat of the moment, some people changed their minds. Of those who had “rage quit,” 41% tried to get their job back after cooling down, but the majority left never to return.

That’s a lot of lost talent, especially when we consider that 78% of those who quit and then tried to get their job back were successful. This suggests that the employees leaving are highly valued—not workers the organization wishes to lose.

When an employee rage quits—especially if they were a leader within the organization—the reverberations on the productivity and morale of other staff can be enormously damaging. So, what’s fueling this “rage quitting” trend, and how can managers avoid uncomfortable confrontations?

The data indicate multiple factors are fueling rage quits, many well within an employer’s control. The most cited reasons include a company culture with low regard for employee mental health, overwhelming workloads and excessive stress. Skynova found that those who rage quit reported improved mental health and said their stress levels decreased.

Rage Rebuttal

As the leader of a mental health education organization, when I see that most “rage quitters” never even try to get their old job back, it strikes me that something is fundamentally broken at the organizational level.

Even when employees who quit suddenly do return to work, the organizational issues that compelled them to quit in the first place don’t miraculously

disappear. These employees are likely planning their next, imminent exit—when they have another role lined up. To keep a hold of critical talent and—more importantly—make your workplace safe, supportive and inclusive for employees, consider the following actions.

Operate With Empathy

While depression and anxiety aren't unique to a pandemic, the WHO found that anxiety and depression increased [25% worldwide in 2021](#). Isolation left many feeling “out of practice” when functioning in social situations. Even the most extroverted employee is likely to feel somewhat awkward re-navigating the workplace. We need to come together with shared empathy and without judgment more than ever. This might entail more quality one-to-one time with employees and managers or mentors, organized social events with structure so everyone feels included, and easy access to digital resources to help with managing anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges.

Relieve Digital Overload

From the start of the pandemic, U.S. employees reported [staggering levels](#) of burnout. As the pandemic lingers, this remains an issue employers should work to rectify by getting to the root of the problem—overload.

With our workforce more “plugged in” than ever, it has become a common driver of burnout. In addition to ensuring workers are adequately supported and managed, employers can suggest ways to manage digital overload. These might include encouraging employees to take breaks from their devices and demonstrating how leadership can “walk the walk” by disconnecting themselves. When it comes to managing digital overload, leading by example is an effective approach to getting employees unplugged and recharged.

Create A Culture That Prioritizes Mental Health

A [study](#) from my organization and Lighthouse Research & Advisory found that three in four workers say that “having personalized, confidential mental health benefits would make them more likely to stay in their job.” Ensuring employees have resources and benefits they can opt into further cultivates a truly supportive workplace by removing the stigma often associated with mental health challenges.

The best approach to improving mental wellness in the workplace will involve a combination of mental health resources and benefits and open communication from the top down. By sharing how leaders manage and prioritize their own mental health, employees can feel empowered to do the same. For an employee who is struggling and potentially reaching burnout, knowing they can have a candid conversation or gain support through a variety of resources to address their unique challenges may help to alleviate some of the pressure.

Get To The Root Of The Problem

If an employee reaches the point where they're ready to rage quit, it is likely there were signs along the way that the employer may have missed. The good news is that managing a toxic workplace is well within an employer's control. Employers should regularly gather employee feedback through anonymous surveys and build the results into manager reviews. HR can also play an important role here by mediating discussions between workers and leading team-building exercises that foster trust.

The fact remains that these are stressful times, and even the best employers may still experience rage quitting. By putting the best tools, support and resources in place, it's possible to avoid—or at least reduce—the instances of this unfortunate possibility.