3 Ways to Avoid the Quiet Quitting of Your Gen Z Employees



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Articles about quiet quitting (when employees stop hustling and do the bare minimum required for a job) popped up in my LinkedIn feed all over the place last week. After reading these articles, I realized quiet quitting is just a catchy name for Gen Z employees who have become disengaged and disappointed at work.

Gallup and other management thought leaders have been talking about disengaged employees for decades (employees who merely go to work for a paycheck, not for impact or purpose). Being engaged at work feels like time stands still, and you enjoy what you do for a living. You get energy from your job,

because it has meaning and is intrinsically fulfilling.

This article will discuss ways to get your Gen Zers from saying TGI Friday (TGIF) to TGI Monday (TGIM) — for example, by paying your top performers more, providing training for your first-time leaders and creating a culture of wellness and support for your employees. Below are three ways I've helped my clients create a more engaged Gen Z workforce and avoid quiet quitting before it's too late:

Related: 8 Ways to Avoid Your Employees Quiet Quitting on You

1. Examine Gen Z's pay structure

As of July 2022, inflation was 8.5%, which has been hard on Gen Z (and all Americans) starting their careers. Eventually, quiet quitting will be the ultimate resignation, which we've seen throughout the pandemic. Examine your Gen Zers' pay structure to see if it's competitive in your industry. Also, analyze the cost of turnover (one-half to two times an employee's annual salary) for each employee. If your Gen Zer makes $50,000 annually, it could cost you $25,000-$100,000 if they unfriend you (leave your company). Our study found that many Gen Zers had to get a side gig during the pandemic just to make ends meet — and that they would quit this side gig if their primary employer paid them more.

Here are some steps to examine your pay structure and employee ROI:

- Listen to your HR leaders, and give them the resources to fund a compensation study.
- Calculate the cost of turnover for each employee. Is it feasible to pay them more versus the cost of losing them?
- Create metrics to measure employee output. By doing this, you'll be able to reward your top-performing

employees. Is there a gender pay gap? Gen Zers and millennials talk to each other about salaries, so it will most likely come up.

- What other perks can you offer your Gen Zers that aren't expensive? Some good places to start include flexible schedules, teleworking, special projects, job rotation programs and tuition repayment/reimbursement.

As a business owner, I know first-hand that labor is one of the highest costs of running a company. But sustaining and growing your business is very difficult without the right people on the bus.

2. Train your leaders

Did you know that almost 60% of managers didn't receive training when transitioning into their first leadership role, and that 50% of organization managers are rated ineffective?

No wonder Gen Zers are quiet quitting. All generations have been part of the Great Resignation, and 40% of workers are considering quitting their jobs. Quiet quitting is a symptom of inadequate leadership.

Gallup found that managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores. People quit bosses, not companies. These statistics are hard to believe, but having worked for large organizations, I'm not surprised. I've seen people get promoted because they were the best from a technical perspective. Or they played office politics but didn't care about the interpersonal aspect of the job. But organizations don't always promote people based on their ability to connect and motivate their teams. It's not a problem for technical folks to get promoted to a leadership position because they're the best salesperson or engineer. Organizations need to set new leaders up for success, not

failure. Some of the most common problems for first-time leaders are the inability to delegate, micromanaging their team, distrust and going from me to we.

If your company's training budget is small, try these tips to develop your first-time leaders:

- Set up a mentoring program.
- Promote leadership book clubs.
- Give new leaders podcasts to listen to and discuss over lunch.
- Offer tuition reimbursement (if your company's large enough).
- Create a strengths-based culture starting with your leadership team, and provide training for all employees by investing in their strengths, not fixing weaknesses.

Related: Why You Need to Invest in a Leadership Development Program

3. Create a flexible corporate culture that cares

We found that most Gen Zers want to work in a hybrid setting once the pandemic is over. Still, many organizations have brought workers back into the office full-time (or almost full-time) without explanation – or for reasons like creating a sense of belonging and creativity.

Survey your employees to see what they want, and ensure it aligns with your business objectives. For example, if your team works in a lab, it may be hard for them to work remotely every day. But they may be able to work remotely once a week to do paperwork or crunch numbers.

Next, Gen Z is the most depressed and anxious generation in the U.S. As a college professor, I've seen this first-hand. Organizations that want to attract, retain and avoid quiet

quitting need to prioritize mental wellness and make it a staple of their corporate culture.

Here are some ways to support mental wellness at work:

- Offering therapy and counseling through insurance
- Investing in mindfulness apps like Calm or Headspace
- Leaders being vulnerable and vocal about mental wellness
- Having leaders check in with their employees to see how they are doing and the resources available to them if they need help
- Being flexible and compassionate (i.e., a great human being)

Quiet quitting is nothing new. But it is a symptom that leaders and organizations who want to hire and keep the best talent need to pay their employees more, train their leaders and create a culture focused on mental well-being.

Related: Does Your Company Culture Lead to Happy Customers?

My message for Gen Zers or quiet quitters reading this article: I'm a fan of Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits* book. I would advise you to be proactive and start searching for a new boss/organization whose values are in sync with yours and, ones that care about you as a person. Quiet quitting is unfair to you (and your employer), because it's wasting your time and their time. We all deserve to be happy and passionate about what we do, but it's up to us, as individuals, to find it.

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