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The ultimate guide to quiet quitting

What is it and how organizations can deal with it



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Introduction

Events of the past two years have exacerbated some long-standing corporate challenges, such as a healthy work-life equation and putting the need of the self before the employer. This has led to seismic shifts in employee behavior, causing the Great Resignation.

A PwC survey explained that one in five employees planned to switch jobs in 2022.

But, apart from the Great Resignation, companies across the globe are now dealing with quiet quitting from employees. For workers, quiet quitting is a rejection of the hustle culture and a way to achieve the perfect work-life balance.

However, is it something organizations should be worried about?

Here is an in-depth look at quiet quitting, its reasons, and how companies can prevent it.

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What is quiet quitting?

The central idea of quiet quitting is doing the minimum necessary work per the job role. For quiet quitters, work is not the primary focus of life, and they refrain from putting in extra hours. They also have a disinclination towards going beyond what their position requires, taking up tasks strictly within their job description.

Quiet quitting employees want to set clear boundaries to improve work-life balance. Such employees fulfill their job roles but do not subscribe to the work-is-life ideology to guide their careers and stand out among their peers.

Quiet quitting can take different forms depending on the employee and their reasons not to actively participate on the work front. Some signs that are commonly associated with quiet quitting are:

- Arriving late or leaving early
- Lack of contribution to team projects
- Absence of passion and enthusiasm regarding work
- Lack of participation in meetings
- Considerable reduction in the quality or quantity of work being done

85%

According to a Gallup study, the number of quiet quitters could be as high as 85%, as only 15% of employees are actively engaged at work.

There could be many reasons behind quiet quitting, from employees not being happy at work to experiencing burnout. In such cases, it becomes a way for workers to alleviate stress. However, it can also imply that they are looking for a change.

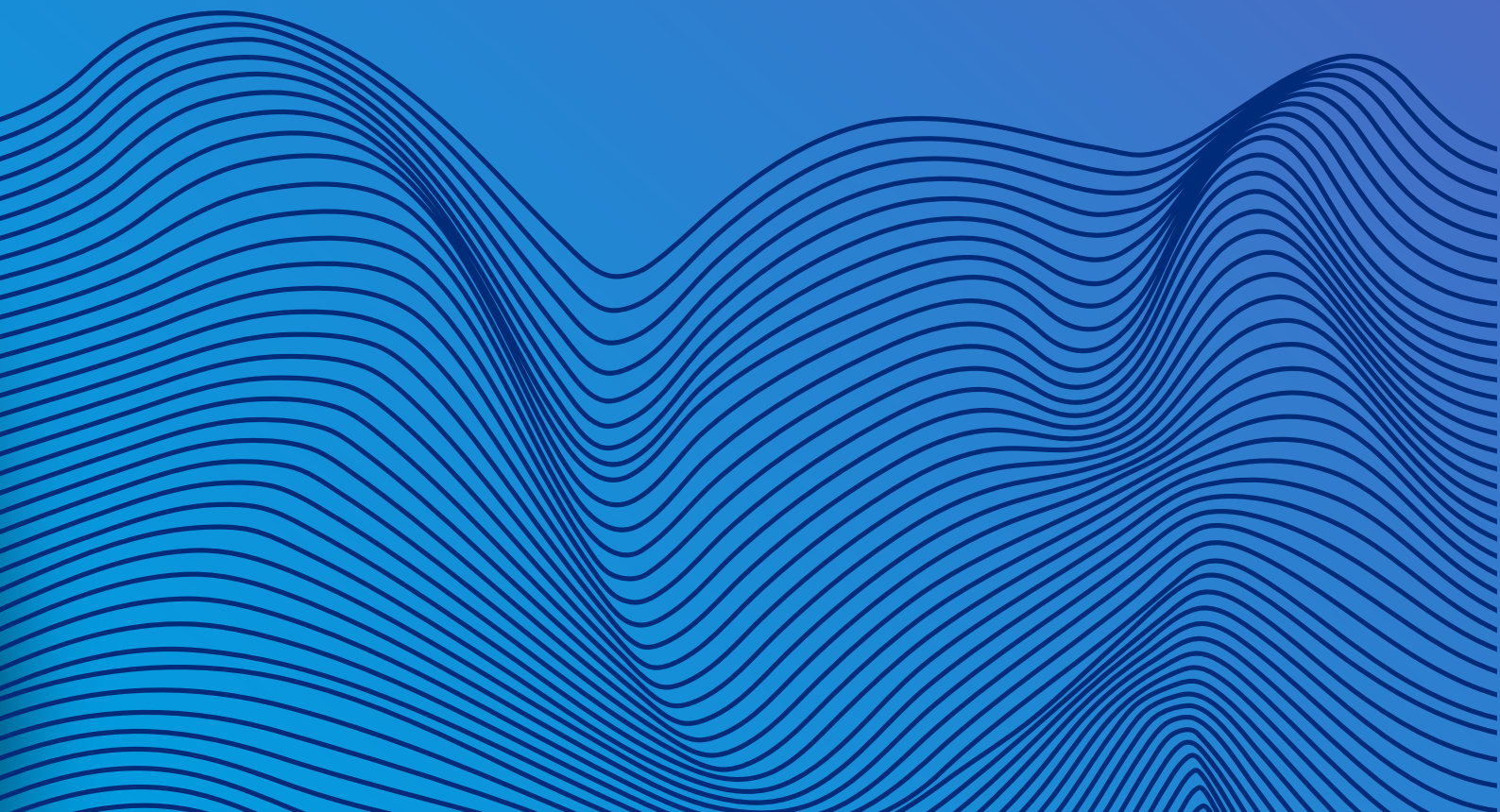


Should organizations be worried about this trend?

2.5%

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, productivity levels in the US have fallen 2.5% since 2021. It is the steepest decline in productivity since 1948.

Another study by The Conference Board found that quiet quitting costs US businesses **US$450 to US$500 billion** annually, which could be **up to US$1.5 trillion** worldwide. The numbers are just costs that could be calculated. However, quiet quitting has many intangible impacts, such as low team morale and friction between teammates. Also, as organizations continue to focus on increasing productivity levels and look at productivity as a metric for excellence, quiet quitting can be a significant hindrance to fulfilling those goals.



Reasons behind quiet quitting

As said, quiet quitting can be used to cope with burnout or might indicate that an employee is looking for a change. Other reasons can range from a lack of growth opportunities and low pay to a lack of appreciation from higher-ups. Some of the common reasons for quiet quitting are:

1. To avoid burnout

For many employees, job-related burnout has become a common problem, especially for those working remotely. In fact, remote workers are logging in more hours than previously, as per the Society for Human Resource Management. In such cases, quiet quitting becomes a route to avoid burnout. The employee decides that they are not going to overwork themselves anymore. Such employees conclude that taking up work beyond the scope of their role isn't worthwhile and they avoid taking unnecessary meetings and just focus on the work that falls within their assigned role.

2. As a self-care tactic

For some employees, quitting is more about mental well-being and self-care than feeling unappreciated. Many employees are plagued by anxious thoughts regarding the work assigned, even when not working on it. These employees put other things before work-related tasks. The process is more about setting boundaries with oneself than with the employer. This ensures that they disengage from their work life when not working.

3. Lack of motivation

According to a Pew Research survey, around 47% of workers in the US believe that their job is just a way to pay bills. For such employees, there is a lack of purpose or motivation at work that aligns with their life goals. This leads to decreased job engagement and a lack of productivity.

4. Lack of growth opportunities

According to a McKinsey report, one of the top reasons employees look for a change is the lack of career advancement opportunities. Similarly, a lack of opportunity can turn a diligent worker into a quiet quitter. If employees don't find room for professional or personal growth, they will feel demotivated and refuse to pick up work beyond their roles.

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When communication or collaboration breakdown because the employee feels they lack work-life balance, recognition, learning, visibility, career advancement opportunities, fair compensation, and incentives; they tend to adopt quiet quitting.

Siddhartha Gupta,
CEO, Mercer | Mettl

How can organizations avoid quiet quitting?

Ensure the team is adequately compensated

A leading cause of quiet quitting is pay discrepancy or low pay. In such cases, employees don't feel motivated enough to put in any additional effort as they feel the reward (salary) is not worth it. Furthermore, increasing responsibilities and heaping extra work conveys that the company only cares about the output.

Any change in job responsibilities should be discussed with the employee, along with a salary hike, depending on the new role and responsibilities. Keeping the pay competitive with market rates and living standards, along with bonuses for extraordinary results, is vital to prevent quiet quitting. Proper compensation ensures that trust between the employer and the workforce is maintained and employees don't feel devalued.

Clearly describe the roles and responsibilities

A common complaint among workers is how they end up handling more tasks than they were hired to do. While it is common for job roles to widen in scope from the job description, especially in startups, these changes can catch employees off-guard when they happen soon after hiring.

In such cases, employees might feel they have been baited. Therefore, it is best to be clear about role growth in the interview stage. Discuss the role with the candidate clearly and help them see it increase in scope that will accommodate different roles and responsibilities in the future. Letting candidates know about it at the interview stage allows companies to hire employees comfortably.

Reward employee achievements

Employees need to feel appreciated and valued in the workplace. It is one of the primary engagement drivers for them. By acknowledging and rewarding the hard work put in by the staff, companies are telling them that they are valued. It also shows that going above what is expected benefits them.

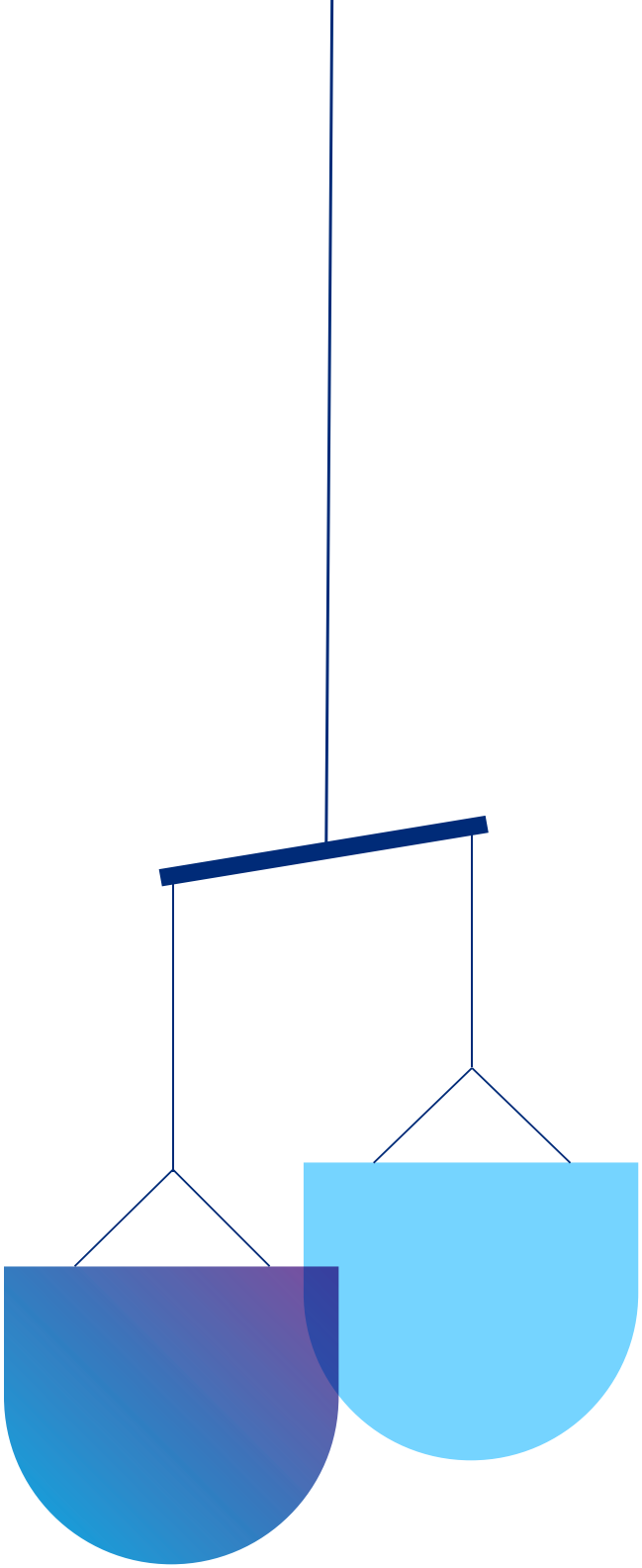
Recognition and rewards also motivate employees to invest themselves at work, positively impacting their careers, increasing productivity and improving retention. Hence, to prevent quiet quitting among staff, it is best to reward and recognize their achievements.

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Maintain work-life balance

Burnout due to work is among the primary reasons people start quietly quitting. Getting the most out of employees can drive them to exhaustion and burnout, leading to a loss of productivity and morale. This makes it essential to maintain a work-life balance in the organization.

Although many employees are now more vocal about setting boundaries for a better work-life balance, it is still beneficial to reinforce the same on employees' behalf. It is done by implementing a few policies, such as making after-hours calls and emails optional, offering time off, and encouraging employees to use them. Remember, rested employees are more productive and effective in achieving business goals.



Create rapport between employees and management

Often quiet quitting is a result of a disconnect between workers and employers. Creating an environment where feedback is welcomed helps avoid such situations, and it is done by building a rapport between the workers and their managers. Bosses who are more than just authority figures inspire a stronger sense of commitment among their workers. These workers are more likely to tell their bosses about issues plaguing them at their job, enabling managers to resolve any that lead to quiet quitting. Therefore, nurturing social ties between employees and their bosses can lead to a happier and more engaged workforce.

How can Mercer | Mettl help

With over a decade of experience providing HR technological solutions, Mercer | Mettl offers various ways in which organizations can plan and automate L&D programs. Experts have designed Mercer | Mettl's Employee Engagement Assessment Tool. It consists of 92 questions on a 5-Point Likert Scale that assess employees on six parameters and 18 sub-factors.

Some of the critical features of Mercer | Mettl's Employee Engagement Assessment Tool are:



Difficulty level of the test

Companies can set the difficulty level of the test as per their needs to assess candidates with different experience levels.



Multiple skills in a single test

Organizations can add multiple skills in a single assessment depending on the requirement.



Tailor-made test

If an organization requires a custom assessment, it can get created with the help of Mercer | Mettl's subject matter experts (SME).

Also, Mettl's Virtual Assessment and Development Centers (VADCs) can help gauge an individual's skills, fitment and developmental needs in a company. VADCs automate the process using digital tools, helping organizations find high-potential workers, plan strategic employee development and analyze training needs.

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Conclusion

Quiet quitting can be easily countered by engaging employees and making them feel worthy. Creating a workspace that fosters collaboration and learning can make employees feel appreciated and inspire them to do their best.



About us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions across two key areas: acquisition and development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with more than 4,000 corporates, 31 sector skills councils/government departments and 500+ educational institutions across more than 90 countries.

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