Why Quiet Quitting Is a Sign of Management Failure

By Amy Feind Reeves

Big news! Work environments have become so terrible that it has become a national phenomenon for employees to put in less time and effort doing their jobs. The message is that by quitting quietly, you won't have to give up your paycheck; you can stop worrying about going above and beyond what is required of you.

Does this mean employees are exercising their right to care as little about management as their management does about them? Or is this about setting healthy boundaries? The debate rages on, but it's not really the heart of the issue. If there is a large demographic in the country that is so unhappy at work that it feels the need to make a mindset shift of this magnitude, there has been widespread management failure.

Why quiet quitting is a management failure

As a career advisor, I keep track of the reasons why employees are unhappy with their work. From my anecdotal evidence, these reasons were also key drivers of The Great Resignation, which has lessened with economic conditions, and the rise of The Great Regret, but is statistically still a major factor in the American economy.

It boils down to the fact that management is continuously asking their best employees to do more with less. For example:

- Doubling or tripling an employee's workload because peers, subordinates, and even higher-ups leave without being replaced.
- Setting financial targets and qualitative goals at higher and higher rates, without additional resources.
- Requiring greater accountability without commensurate responsibility. For example, asking one department head to complete a supplier consolidation project without assigning responsibility to all department heads using the same supplier base to make sure the goal is met.

If these things happened to you without commensurate additional compensation, recognition, or stated intent for promotion, you might want to quit quietly, too. However, many managers have reasons for continuing these practices:

- On doubling or tripling an employee’s workload: *"Why upset the balance if it is working? We’ll get around to addressing a promotion for this person or replacing the open head count at some point."*
- On setting financial targets and qualitative goals at higher and higher rates, without additional resources: *"This is how we grow our top line and profit margins at the same time. We need to pursue this as long as we can."*
- On requiring greater accountability without commensurate responsibility: *"It is going to be difficult if we ask all six department heads to decide on how to reduce our overall supplier base. Why not ask one of them to lead the project and gain consensus as a peer?"*

Managers can prevent their employees from quitting

Even with the best of intentions, doing your job well as a P&L manager can cause you to turn a blind eye to your job as a manager of living, breathing human assets. As a management advisor, I ask clients to regularly think about whether they are getting the most they can from their team. If the answer is a “maybe” or a “no,” that issue should move to the top of their priority list. The issue needs to be accepted, identified, and corrected.

A quiet quitter indicates the company is not operating at peak capacity and more employees will quietly quit unless the problem is addressed. Only one employee quitting may not seem like a big deal, but if the employee is under your management, you are vulnerable.

What’s more important, however, is not having employees who are frustrated in their roles. And there is no need for this to be a big time commitment. Just make a note to check in with everyone on a regular basis to say thank you, ask if they need anything, and start a conversation about goals.

If you are asking your staff to do more, let them know that you are appreciative. Let them know that you are also on the line to deliver more and that you are on the same team—don’t assume they already know this. If you invest in your team and set a high rate of return, you will avoid the need to participate in the latest TikTok resignation trend.

About the Author

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Amy Feind Reeves is the founder and CEO of JobCoachAmy, a Boston-based consultancy where she leverages her experience of over 25 years as a senior executive and hiring manager to help professionals at all levels find and keep jobs that make them happy. She has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal,Business Insider,The Baltimore Sun,Chicago Herald Tribune,* McMillan Digital, and Job-Hunt.org. She is a regular speaker for undergraduate and new alumni groups as well as at women's conferences and wellness resorts. Amy graduated cum laude from Wellesley College and has an MBA from the Tuck School at Dartmouth College. She is a past president of the Tuck Club of Dartmouth and a current member of the Board of Trustees of The Nature Conservancy of Massachusetts. She lives in Boston with her family.