

What's The Intersection Between The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting?

By: Dr. Jessica E. Metcalfe

Introduction

The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting are two related phenomena that have been increasingly observed in the current job market. Both are terms used to describe the mass exodus of employees from their jobs. While the Great Resignation refers to the large-scale, highly publicized resignations by employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, Quiet Quitting is a more subtle and gradual process where employees leave their jobs without making much noise. This paper aims to explore the commonalities between the two phenomena.

The Great Resignation

COVID-19 pandemic has been the catalyst for a lot of changes for all people personally and professionally. As the world went into lockdown, everyone's schedules were wiped clear from social events, meetings, conferences and certain day-to-day obligations. A drastic shift occurred which gave many employees and leaders the opportunity to reconsider their work-life balance and priorities. However, people quitting started happening long before COVID-19. (1)

In addition to the changes, the pandemic highlighted the need for flexibility for remote and hybrid work and the importance of psychological safety and workplace culture development. Thus, there were multiple factors that fueled The Great Resignation. Introverts recognize they don't want to go back to forced interactions. Mothers or primary parenting figures noticing a flexible asynchronous schedule allows more control over schedules. If companies didn't adjust their sails to the changing times, then it became an easier decision for people to leave, on top of the already growing list that they were likely noting.

For a lot of companies, The Great Resignation came with increased employee turnover, decreased employee retention and satisfaction, scarcity mindset and high performers being stretched beyond their capacity. For the individual, some would say it was the best decision possible while others would say they left one company and went right to another. Then, rumbles of The Great Regret started to transpire. "Let's explore this. The Great Resignation happened because employees saw their work environment for what it was, decided they'd had enough, and left. During this time, they found a new job or

career, and with new changes came a honeymoon phase. However, if they didn't do the inner work of figuring out what their needs and wants were first, then it was easy to drift from one toxic work environment to another." (2)

I want to make it very clear and transparent. I'm not playing the blame game. This is to give you more information to navigate the changes you are noticing in yourself and your company.

Quiet Quitting

Quiet Quitting, on the other hand, is a more gradual and subtle process. It involves employees slowly stepping away from going "above and beyond", or staying that extra hour before or after work or taking on that one more project. Quiet quitting has been painted as something quite negative because companies are feeling the restriction when employees aren't "stepping up". Let me offer a different perspective: quiet quitting happens when employees are pushed past their limits and decide to go back to what their expected roles and responsibilities are. The person who decides to quiet quit just implemented boundaries and is doing what is expected of them, in essence, their job description.

Quiet Quitting is not a result of a mismatch between an employee's values and their job and then the subsequent disengagement. It is a result of being overextended beyond their capacity, being told to "prove themselves" time and time again, and feeling under appreciated. When individuals quiet quit or actually quit, it can put an enormous amount of pressure on the remaining team members if not accounted for.

The Intersection Between The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting

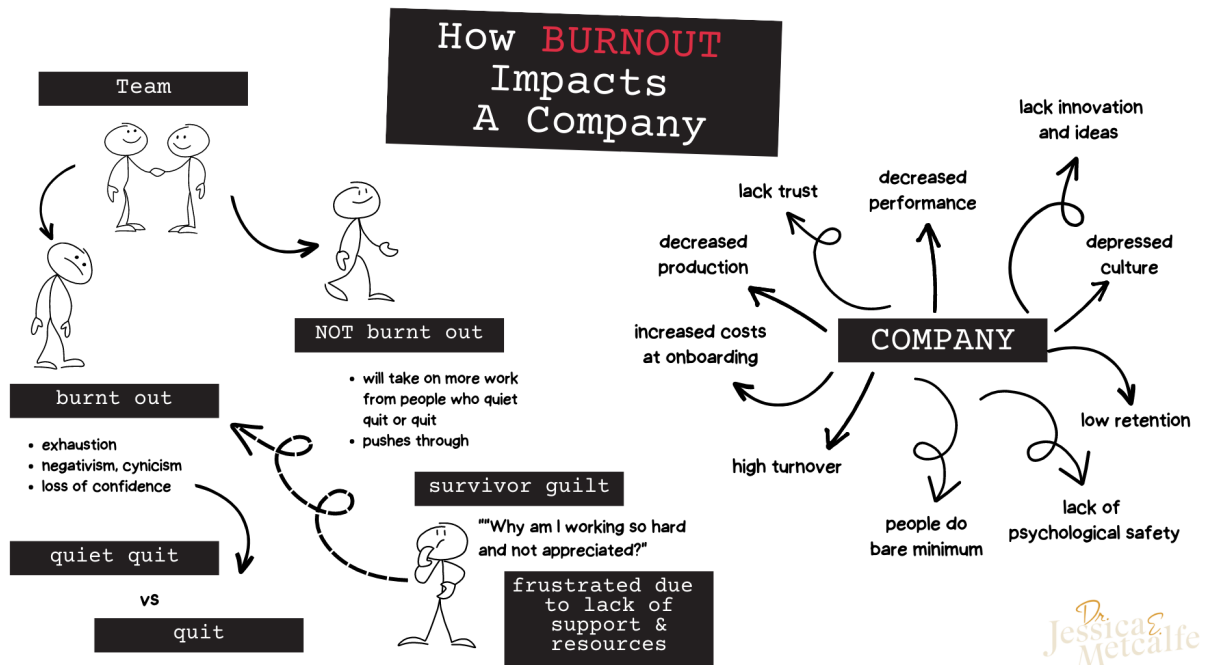
Despite the differences between the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting, they share several commonalities. Both are a result of employees re-evaluating their work situations and realizing that their current job is not meeting their needs. This may be due to a lack of work-life balance, a desire for a more meaningful job, a need for greater flexibility or being over extended and absolutely exhausted. *The intersection between The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting is burnout.* North American culture likes to label experiences that happen so that the masses feel connected and understand what they are experiencing. But all The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting are showing me is that we as a society have created a fancy word for burnout.

Burnout is broken down into 3 components: exhaustion, mental distance which includes negativity and cynicism and a loss of confidence. (3) When team members experience burnout, discussions need to be had to allow for an adequate amount of time to

reassess the current environment resources or lack thereof. Otherwise, a vicious cycle starts with employees feeling burnout, not getting the support they need, more work being put on others who “seem” to be doing fine, and then eventually hit a wall and experience burnout as well.

Prior to COVID-19, burnout was already happening. There were rumbles of what was yet to come, but people didn’t think it would happen to the extent it did. I believe COVID-19 has accelerated and amplified a problem that was already in existence. It is only now, that companies will have to start to make the necessary changes to bring themselves into the 21st century, which is a post-industrial age way of working or get left behind.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of mental and physical health, leading many employees and leaders to prioritize their well-being over their job. Millennials and Gen Z are not willing to put up with what was deemed status. Below you will find a mind map of how team members (employees and leaders inclusive) can be affected by burnout and the impact it has on the overall company.



Three Strategies To Navigate Burnout Among Your Team

Burnout is a serious issue that affects individuals and teams alike. Unfortunately, the term "burnout" is often overused and not used in the appropriate manner. It is a complex and dynamic issue that doesn't happen because of one bad day or a lack of sleep. Instead, it is a progressive condition that can take 1-4 years to recover from, and a lifestyle change is often required to fully recover (4).

As a leader, it is important to be aware of the signs of burnout in your team members and to take steps to address it. Here are three strategies to keep in mind when navigating burnout in your workplace culture:

1. *Create a safe space for feedback.* Encouraging open communication is important, but it is not enough on its own. In order for individuals to feel psychologically safe, they have to trust who they are speaking to and who is listening. Relationships require open communication with actionable steps to allow for trust building. As a leader, avoid commenting behind someone's back to another as this creates an environment of back channeling talking and reduces trust amongst team members. Additionally, employees who feel heard and valued are more likely to feel psychologically safe, which leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction.
2. *Acknowledge and mean it.* Regardless of whether your company is navigating turmoil or is in a success streak, employees like to know that their work is noticed. They want to feel that they mean something to the team and that companies are grateful for the work they do. Create moments during the day, week or month, where employee appreciation is notable whether it's a gathering or a conversation. Acknowledgement of hard work during challenging times reminds people they are more than just a number in the company.
3. *Focus on employee well-being.* Signing a team member up for a resilience course, throwing a pizza party, or offering yoga once a month isn't enough to address burnout. Instead, it is important to support employees by offering days off from work, reducing workload, and providing adequate timelines for projects.

Conclusion

The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting are two related phenomena that reflect changing attitudes towards work. While The Great Resignation has come and gone, Quiet Quitting is still well alive and is a subtle process that is just as important. Both are a result of employees re-evaluating their work situations and realizing that their current job is not meeting their needs. As the job market continues to evolve, employers will

need to adapt to these changes and create a work environment that is conducive to the businesses well-being and employee well-being.

Author

Dr. Jessica Metcalfe is an award-winning international speaker, best-selling author, an expert on self-intelligence and relationship intelligence, a former dental oncologist and education director at a world-renowned cancer centre. As a Strategic Leadership and Workplace Culture Consultant Dr. Jessica diagnoses underlying problems and provides straightforward solutions to improve community, collaboration, confidence and communication amongst leaders and teams.

This white paper was originally published in April 2023.

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