



Quiet Quitting

Case Study:

Jada started her new marketing job and was excited to work from home. After several years at a larger firm where she had to work in person, she looked forward to the change of pace and added flexibility. She spent hours deciding how to create her "home office," looking at blog posts, and investing in new furniture and decorations. Her new boss, Marcella, was warm and welcoming and said that Jada would make a great addition to the team.

A few months into the position, Jada had grown used to rolling out of bed and checking emails without the hassle of a drive. She was used to working independently without much direction from Marcella. She had noticed, however, that her more tenured colleagues were griping about some of the projects they were working on. When Jada asked about their complaints, they said she should keep her head down and not volunteer for anything "extra." They said Marcella had started delegating work to them with the expectation that they finish it "no matter what" - often meaning that they worked into the evening or on weekends. They hadn't received raises at their last review and said Marcella usually took credit for their work while in meetings with leadership. Jada privately vowed to keep an eye out for when Marcella might ask her to do more.

This case study represents the lives of countless employees in the United States. Jada and her colleagues are on the verge of what is now being termed "quiet quitting," doing only what their jobs require them to do but never going above and beyond to help the organization. What would you do if you were Jada in this situation? What if you were Marcella? This article will discuss the recent trend of quiet quitting and the actions leaders can take to stop and prevent this practice.

What is Quiet Quitting?

"Quiet Quitting" is the practice of employees meeting their job role expectations but forgoing any additional engagement with their employer. At its most harmful, employees take to social media and/or gripe to their coworkers about hating their job



or their lack of care for their manager. For decades, low employee engagement has affected many companies in the United States. Quiet Quitting is simply the latest and most visible iteration of this trend. Job satisfaction is most deficient in those under age 35 who work at home or in a hybrid work environment. This same demographic is the biggest social media user, so it is no surprise that Quiet Quitting has received so much social media attention!

What Can Leaders Do?

The most important person who can change engagement in an organization is an employee's direct supervisor. Supervisors often have frequent contact with disgruntled employees and have the positional authority to act in helpful ways. Leaders who build connections with their direct reports, increase clarity in job descriptions, and encourage self-care, are the most likely to support a more engaged employee.

Building Connection

Leaders can build stronger connections with their direct reports by asking questions, investing time in relationships, and providing recognition. First, leaders must ask questions to determine how their direct reports feel. Though it seems simple, asking direct questions such as "how can I increase the importance of this work for you?" or "what could I start doing to make your role more enjoyable" can show employees that they matter and that their manager cares. Leaders must be willing to act when they hear answers requiring action to make this impactful for their employees. For instance, if an employee is interested in working from home one day per week, a leader should be open to listening and either accepting this, negotiating conditions, or providing specific reasons for not accommodating the request.

Second, leaders must find novel ways of building relationships with staff, especially those working virtually. A strong relationship with a supervisor is often cited as a way that employees feel connected to their company. Supervisors should plan weekly 1:1 check-ins with all employees, with at least part of the time set aside for personal connection. Another strategy is to conduct "staying" interviews (similar to an exit interview) to understand what employees love about their work and what they would change if they could.

Finally, leaders should plan on providing frequent recognition to employees in public and private ways. Staff appreciate being recognized publicly when they are a top performer. Finding ways to celebrate smaller milestones like months on the job or completing a small project is a great way to recognize employees. They shouldn't need to win "employee of the year" to feel recognized. Keep in mind the increased need for feedback and recognition of Millennials and Gen Z. They are used to frequent "likes" and "emojis" on social media and will appreciate the increased touch points from a manager.

Increase Clarity in Job Descriptions

The second thing leaders can do to support employee engagement is to increase the clarity of the employee's job description. Many jobs have changed due to the "Great Resignation," COVID, and a nationwide job shortage. Take a moment to check in with your direct reports to clarify what you expect of them. Once you have clarified expectations, create [SMART](#) goals with each employee to give them direction. Finally, ensure that your staff has clear support for their growth and the necessary resources to complete their job successfully.

Self-Care

Employee self-care has quickly become a trend as COVID forced many people to slow down and reassess their priorities. As a leader, it is more important than ever to support the emotional needs of your employees and provide them with the time and space to practice wellness. It is important to set limits around positions by clarifying job expectations and encouraging employees not to work outside their expected work times to ensure staff can adequately care for their needs. Leaders can model boundaries by respecting work boundaries (e.g., not sending emails at 11:00 pm), taking PTO, and working within the boundaries of their position. Leaders can also ask direct reports about their work-life balance and encourage them to find ways to disengage from work when off the clock.

Leader Checklist

Leaders can use this checklist to evaluate their current competence in engaging staff.

Do your employees know:

- That you trust them, want them to be successful, and believe they are making an impact on the organization?
- What their role expectations are day to day?
- That you care about them as a human and that their self-care is important to you?

If you can answer "yes" to all of these questions, congratulations, you are on your way! If you answered "no" to any of them, this is a great opportunity to reach out and ask questions, increase clarity in job descriptions, and encourage self-care. Good luck!

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