

Why Aren't Employees Coming Back to their Jobs?

Cheryl Burkhardt-Kriesel

Extension Specialist, Rural Prosperity Nebraska

Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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You may have heard the phrase, “The Great Resignation.” This is referring to the more than 19 million workers — and counting — that have quit their jobs since April 2021. Businesses of all types are scrambling to hire people, especially those that work on the frontline with customers — from healthcare to hospitality to retail and everything in between.

There has been a lot of speculation on what is happening and why. Just recently I found some research on this topic, which was conducted not only in the United States, but also in four other countries (DeSmet, A. et al, 2021). Their findings identified these trends:

- Employee resignation will continue, at least in the short-term for the next few months into 2022.
- People are resigning in higher numbers than in previous economic downturns and are doing so without having a job lined up.
- Approximately 60% of the survey sample of employees said they were not likely to quit in the short-term. This sounds positive but there is another issue to consider. Employees indicated that one of the reasons they are staying is because they do not want to relocate. However, with greater options for remote work, changing jobs can be viewed in an entirely different way. Satisfied workers can now be tempted to change jobs without relocating.
- There is a disconnect between the factors that employees feel are important in the workplace and what employers think are important to employees. Employees say they are leaving work because they don't feel valued by the organization, or their manager and they lack a sense of belonging. In contrast, employers believe the primary factors for leaving relate to inadequate pay, poor employee health and the desire to look for a better job. The disconnect highlights that employees are more focused on relational issues and employers are more focused on transactional ones.

This last bullet may be the most troubling for the business community – they can't fix what they don't understand. It also may offer a great opportunity. If businesses can listen to their employees and realign the work environment to better meet their current needs, as a business they may find themselves not only retaining employees but also attracting new ones.

Reference:

DeSmet, A., Dowling, B., Mugayar- Baldocchi, M., & Schaninger, B. (2021). ‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Available at:
<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

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