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OPINION

# Today's Business: The Great Resignation — Keeping the workforces intact

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Jessica A. Slippen Contributed photo

There is little doubt that post-COVID workplaces look different.

Boardrooms appear to be a thing of the past as many large companies enact policies permitting employees to work exclusively from home. Questions pertaining to hybrid or flex workplaces now dominate the recruitment process.

For employers it's seemingly become less about what qualifications an employee brings to the table and more about what the company has to offer to get a qualified employee to even come to the table.

In December 2021, 4.3 million workers quit their jobs. Although this is down from a record high of 4.5 million that November, these numbers are troubling.

For many employees, the at-home work environment required by COVID has ignited the case for better work-life balance. Many of the employees who were fired or furloughed during the pandemic have decided not to return to their old jobs, and, instead, seek out new opportunities and interests. Employers are facing a dwindling post-COVID workforce with higher demands.

If employers want to maintain a quality workforce and attract talent in this post-pandemic environment, they must consider a new focus on employee engagement, morale and wellness. This applies as much to the “mom and pop” shops across the street as it does to Fortune 500 companies.

Many of the larger companies have enacted fully remote or hybrid work environments. Facebook employees, for example, can now work from home permanently if their jobs can be done remotely. Some companies like Reddit are letting employees choose if they want to come into the office and offering a more casual, laid back-office environment for those that want to come into the office.

Where geographical location is not an issue, companies can reach a wider and more diverse talent pool. Employers that do not offer more flexible working arrangements will inevitably lose talent to those that do.

Where remote or hybrid working arrangements are not possible, employers need to think “out of the box” to keep and attract talent. While financial incentives are always attractive, they are not always feasible, particularly for smaller businesses and restaurants returning after COVID closures. Incentives can and should look different in the post-pandemic workplace.

Businesses should consider increased training and development in the early stages of employment. Making an investment in the employee goes a long way toward keeping talented employees motivated and committed for the long haul. Consider a mentorship program where new employees are paired with senior staff.

An increased focus on employee morale and mental health is invaluable as many employees are returning to work after a prolonged period at home with their family. Employee wellness programs should no longer be limited to gym memberships and healthier snacks in the break room. Programs should focus on cultivating a healthy work-life balance, assisting working parents in handling the stresses that child-care issues often bring, and implementing on-site education programs.

One thing is certain: workplace culture in this post-pandemic era is evolving. If employers want to attract and maintain a talented and motivated workforce, they need to value the employee as much as the customer.

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