

Quiet Quitting and What Employers Can Do About It

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“Quiet quitting” is the newest coined phrase that has burst onto the workplace scene. Not to be confused with the “great resignation,” quiet quitting is commonly understood to mean employees intentionally prioritizing the minimum requirements of their job and nothing more. No going above and beyond, working overtime, accepting extra job tasks and responsibilities, and certainly not doing so without something in return such as additional compensation or a pathway to advancement.

Some commentators have likened quiet quitting to age-old workplace slowdowns and work-to-wage or work-to-rule concepts engaged in by some employees and unionized workforces in labor disputes or until their working conditions improved.

The idea of quiet quitting has surged on social media platforms with robust how-to videos and explanations. Some credit this to changing employee mindsets and attitudes after years roiled by the COVID-19 pandemic, international war, climate change, and the up-and-down economy, among other stressors. Others say employees may feel underappreciated, burnt out, or subject to a culture of overwork after two years of a worldwide pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions, lockdowns, masking and testing, illnesses and death, caring for loved ones, and juggling hybrid and remote work with schooling and other commitments. Still others say employees may have realigned priorities and rethought the workplace, including how it fits into their lives or their ideal work-life balance, especially given world-shaking events.

For employers, addressing quiet quitting, as well as employee job performance and performance management (especially given hybrid and remote environments), involve unique considerations in these unprecedented times, such as the following:

- Employers should carefully review their offer letters, employment agreements, job descriptions, written annual goals and objectives, and similar documents to ensure appropriate emphasis on the critical job functions and deliverables whether they are sales, quality, customer satisfaction, or other productivity and production measures. The continued necessity of less crucial deliverables (*e.g.*, travel or on-site visits) also should be reassessed and reconsidered.
- Companies should use this opportunity to review (and possibly recalibrate) their employee recognition, awards, bonus, and incentive programs, recognizing that employees may feel underappreciated in a workplace with less face-to-face interaction. Emails, Zoom calls, and technology often make communications less spontaneous and personal. Employees who truly go above and beyond or exceed expectations should be intentionally and purposefully shown appreciation, such as genuine thank-yous and expressions of gratitude (both publicly and privately), time off, a clearer pathway to promotion, or increased monetary and non-monetary compensation and perks.

- During managerial training, employee onboarding, and throughout their employment relationship, effective open and frequent communication among supervisors and employees should be emphasized (and in-person meetings maximized) where mutual engagement is encouraged with clear expectations set and managed. Supervisory requests should generally be reasonable in scope and proportionate with and tied to job functions and duties consistent with overarching business needs. Likewise, employees should understand that job descriptions serve only as guideposts or maps of expectations, never intended to chronicle in exacting detail the full contours of their jobs or to exhaustively list every job duty and responsibility.
- Communication, mentoring, and quality supervision and encouragement are keys to managing and motivating employees to do their best, exceed company and individual goals and expectations, achieve and enhance job satisfaction, avoid underappreciation, and quell employees' compulsion to quietly quit. Goal setting, job satisfaction, and appropriate flexibility are all essential ingredients to this dialogue.
- Companies also should discuss with employees other available benefits and opportunities, including their wellness and support programs, in-house or outside training and skills-building programs, educational, certificate, or training programs, stipends, sabbaticals, or other offerings.

If you have questions, need assistance with these or related employment law issues, please contact the authors or the Jackson Lewis attorney with whom you usually work.

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