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SAY IT OUT LOUD:

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of Our Population
and Workforce



by David Cooper

SAY IT OUT LOUD:

QUIET QUITTING
IS NOT NEW



The Quiet Quitting trend has leadership losing their minds, and justifiably so, given the threats and pain it is heaping on today's employers. Everywhere we turn for insights, from business news to industry analysts and experts, this ominous development purportedly surfaced over the past year or so.

We're left to believe that, just like with The Great Resignation, Quiet Quitting is another major fallout of COVID-19, but one in which people don't directly or immediately resign their jobs. Instead, these quitters choose to pony up only the bare minimum of effort required to perform their jobs, delivering just enough output to squeak by while not out-and-out quitting... at least not yet. Most are said to be looking for a new job, which puts them squarely in the crosshairs of The Great Resignation.

If you think the prevailing attribution is correct, that the lingering effects of the pandemic on the workforce brought on Quiet Quitting, you're wrong. If there is a correlation at all, it is only that the behavior has greatly intensified post-pandemic, and mostly among younger workers. COVID-19, followed by corporate America's return-to-work protocols, might be provocateurs, but they are not the origins of this type of resolve and behavior among workers.

Forbes contributor Kevin Kruse, CEO of LEADx, puts it in historical context: "The reality is that quiet quitting has always been a thing. Now we just have a name for it."

The name isn't all that accurate, either: Many quiet quitters are anything but quiet

Jim Harter, chief scientist for Gallup's workplace management practice, says quiet quitters make up at least 50% of the U.S. workforce. "Everyone else is either engaged (32%) or actively disengaged (18%)," he says, adding that, "The latter are 'loud quitters.'" Actively disengaged employees "have been the most vocal in TikTok posts that have generated millions of views and comments," Harter says.

Call it an uprising among millennials, who value meaningful motivation. Call it a reflection of Gen Z's firm convictions, which demand authenticity and direct communication. Call it whatever you like. Just don't call it new!

The burning question is not really about when it became a thing, or whether these quitters are quiet or loud – but rather, what are we going to do about it?

3 steps to fixing it: We must get down to brass tacks

Wouldn't you agree it's time to look this problem square in the face and deal with it? I use the expression 'get down to brass tacks' for two reasons. By brass, I mean leadership must act, and by tacks, I mean solutions need

to be deployed. Accordingly, the first steps to addressing the issue require that leadership get on board with three realities:

- 1. Accurately timestamp this disruptive workforce behavior:** It existed long before the pandemic.
- 2. Acknowledge the true cause:** It is internally manifested, not externally, and it's likely systemic.
- 3. Minimize or eliminate the reasons workers don't care:** Your managers must engage your employees.

The root cause was known decades ago – and the cure is a golden oldie, too

Over the past 20 years, Gallup has studied performance at hundreds of organizations, measuring the engagement of 27 million employees and 2.5 million+ work units. What they consistently find, regardless of industry, size or location, is executives struggling to know why performance varies from one workgroup to the next. According to their research, performance metrics fluctuate widely and unnecessarily in most companies, due in no small part to a lack of consistency in how people are managed.

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Don't be quick to dismiss a connection to Quiet Quitting:

Leaders and managers often have no idea that they have quiet quitters on their teams. Evidence isn't always obvious or visible until damage is done and pain is felt. If your company experiences unexplained fluctuations in performance in certain areas or business units, Quiet Quitting should be scrutinized as a likely culprit.



There are links between employee engagement and vital performance indicators: As shared in the link above, Gallup finds that when employee engagement levels are raised consistently across business units, everything gets better. To make this happen,

What's clear is that Quiet Quitting is a symptom of poor management – and companies need to find and upskill the right candidates for managerial roles.

Employee engagement is the answer, and managers are the drivers

Most ineffective managers are simply not developed to exhibit the leadership traits that engage employees. This must change. Remember the root cause of varying performance – a lack of consistency in how employees are managed – and the cure – raising employee engagement levels across the organization.

Change doesn't mean replacing underdeveloped managers, but rather investing in them so they can in turn make a meaningful difference in your organization.

How do you do it?

Gallup emphasizes three overarching recommendations for combatting the current Quiet Quitting crisis, all centered on employee engagement:

1. First, address manager engagement: Only one in three managers are engaged at work. Senior leadership needs to reskill managers to win in the new hybrid environment.

2. Managers must learn how to have conversations to help employees reduce disengagement and burnout: The best requirement and habit to develop in successful managers is having one meaningful conversation per week with each of their team members, 15-30 minutes.

3. Managers need to create accountability for individual performance, team collaboration and customer value – and employees must see how their individual work contributes to the organization's larger purpose.

In his Forbes [article](#), LEADx CEO Kruse outlines 12 manager leadership behaviors that are directly correlated to employee engagement, and that can be trained for and developed:

- 1. Future Vision:** Does the manager communicate the organization's goals and strategy in a way that makes employees feel confident about the future?
- 2. Psychological Safety:** Does the manager create an open and trusting environment where employees feel free to speak their minds without fear of negative consequences?
- 3. Trust:** Does the manager keep their commitments? Do their words and actions match?

they say, companies need to systematically demand that every team in their workforce have a great manager, that nothing less than great managers can maximize morale, motivation and clarity among individual team members.

Research further shows that about one in 10 people possess the talent to manage, and when placed in manager roles, they naturally engage team members and customers, retain top performers and sustain a culture of high productivity. Another two in 10 people exhibit some characteristics of basic managerial talent and can function at a high level – if their company invests in coaching and developmental plans.



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4. **Feedback:** Does the manager give employees actionable feedback that helps them improve performance?
5. **Meeting Efficiency:** Are the manager's meetings a productive use of the team's time?
6. **Autonomy:** Does the manager provide the autonomy employees need to do their jobs? Do they not micromanage?
7. **Care:** Does the manager show that they care about employees as a people?
8. **Recognition:** Does the manager show appreciation or give recognition when employees do good work?
9. **Career:** Does the manager have meaningful and frequent discussions about career development?
10. **Accountability:** Does the manager hold people accountable for their performance?
11. **One-on-Ones:** Does the manager meet with each employee one-on-one at least twice a month?
12. **Two-Way Communication:** Does the manager listen to ideas and opinions?

"It's not enough for managers to display these behaviors every now and then," Kruse says. "To be effective, these leadership behaviors must become habits. You can't just treat the symptoms. You have to fix the root cause."

He goes on to provide a five-step framework for turning the 12 behaviors into habits and engage employees in the process:

1. **Measure Your Managers' Effectiveness.** Use a simple manager effectiveness survey that asks managers to rank their effectiveness in the 12 above areas. This provides the data needed to benchmark and establish a foundation for development across the organization – and especially in the minds of individual managers. Make the survey anonymous so managers feel comfortable in providing honest answers.
2. **Give Managers the Data.** Once you collect and analyze survey data, meet with each manager. Share the results and discuss their own target growth areas. These need to be clear. It's also important for them to know what they're doing well so they don't abandon those efforts as they grow and learn in other areas.
3. **Train and Develop Key Behaviors Within the Flow of Work.** Once you and the manager are on the same page about growth opportunities, it's time to train and develop specific behaviors. Ideally, this happens in small doses in the flow of work and focuses on practice and application. When learning is delivered in small doses, in direct application to the job, managers are more likely to retain what they learn.
4. **Leverage Personalized Nudges.** Personalized nudges focus on behaviors that a manager has targeted to improve. For example, a manager working on recognition (#8 above) might get a nudge that says, "Improve your engagement score by kicking off meetings with a moment of recognition." Nudges like these, delivered consistently

over time, help transform key behaviors into habits.

5. Measure Your Managers

Again. After giving managers time to learn new leadership behaviors and develop them as habits, issue your manager effectiveness survey again to evaluate progress. Seeing progress in black and white feels good, and when managers see their scores go up, they'll feel motivated to continue practicing and growing.

Start planning your employee engagement strategy today

I highly recommend digging into the links in this article to get the full story behind Quiet Quitting and what your organization can do about it. Ask your full leadership team to become immersed in the facts as well. It is only through understanding and a united front that your plan can come into focus and lead to actions that will turn your culture into one in which employees want to go above and beyond to help themselves and your company succeed.



The Largest
Segment of Our
Population
& Workforce

APPE ALING TO MIL LE N NIALS

by David Cooper

I am not one to entertain stereotypes, mostly because they are an unhealthy way to view our world and the people in it, but also because my profession requires that I deal in data-driven facts. As I dive into this article about millennials, or Gen Y, I need to express that there is a big difference between some of today's stereotypes and the carefully researched characteristics of this

million millennials in management, business or financial operations roles. And more than 3 in 5 millennial employees (62%) manage direct reports.

As today's employers and marketers struggle with extraordinary challenges in talent retention, in the hiring market, and in their product development and marketing initiatives, a greater understanding of this generation is

needed to strike the right tone and approach to these employees, job candidates and customers. Our collective futures depend on them.

Facts matter

In 2019, Anita Lettink annihilated a widely publicized and often-quoted statistic about the percentage

of millennials in the workforce by 2025. Lettink is the Netherlands-based founder of HRTechRadar, a partner at Strategic Management Centre and an international speaker on the Future of Work.

"No, millennials will NOT be 75% of the workforce in 2025 (or ever)!" she said. "How can one generation be made up of so many constituents that it leaves just 25% for the remaining three generations currently employed around the world? As it turns out, this estimation is quite far off the mark. Not even in 2030 will the workforce consist of 75% millennials. And not

in 2025, either," she said, and she backed it up with data and charts from reliable global sources.

Despite a huge discrepancy in these projections (see accurate figures below), millennials are nonetheless the largest generation in both population and the workforce, globally, and will continue to be for many years to come.

Consider the power and influence they wield

Given their substantial numbers, their profound influence in the workforce and on society, and their collective spending power, we need to better understand what

Training our eyes and hearts on millennials can only help us create more meaningful connections and outcomes as we engage and rely on them in the workforce and as customers.

remarkable generation.

Throughout their earthly tenure, millennials have been the subject of countless research studies, reports and opinion pieces – many of which are well substantiated and others that are at best inaccurate, and at worst, unfair and misleading.

None of us can afford to be wrong about something so consequential as this generation! One critical example is the pressing need among employers to develop and nurture effective managers. According to a study conducted by Pew Research in 2018, there are anywhere between 5 million to 11



motivates millennials at work, in their values systems and in their buying decisions. Training our eyes and hearts on millennials can only help us create more meaningful connections and outcomes as we engage and rely on them in the workforce and as customers.

Let's start with who they are and who they are really projected to become:

- Most often defined as those born between 1981 and 1996, millennials are approximately 26 to 41 years old today.
- They began working in the late 1990s and by 2016 were the largest generation in the U.S. workforce. And they remain so. Today, there are approximately

56 million employed U.S. millennials, representing one in three participants in the American labor force, or 35%.

- In 2019, millennials officially surpassed baby boomers as the United States' largest generation, and by 2021, they comprised 72.19 million people in the United States. (There are an estimated 1.8 billion millennials worldwide.)
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), from 2019 to 2029, the bulk of millennials will shift into the 35- to 44-year-old age group. By 2029, more than 38.5 million people ages 35 to 44 are expected to either be working or actively looking

for work, outnumbering all other age groups in the labor force. This age group is already the most employed in the United States as of 2020, at 77%.

What do millennials want in their jobs and the workplace?

A telling reflection of satisfied, engaged millennial employees can be found in Great Place to Work's 2022 list of Best Workplaces for Millennials™. Organizations that made this year's list understand the critical role that "meaning" plays for this generation. Winning



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...millennials want to leave their mark on the world by working for organizations that benefit society, encourage innovation and provide them the opportunity to expand their skills.

workplaces, in large, small and medium-sized company categories, make an effort to give their younger workforce a sense of purpose and, in return, experience higher retention, pride and endorsement, they said.

"There's a lot millennials can teach companies about work," says

Michael C. Bush, CEO of Great Place to Work. "How they spend their time and who they spend it with matters to them, as it should to all of us. Help them find meaning in their work. Give them a reason, many reasons, to be proud to work for you – and they'll stay working for you."

Their altruism has not changed: In 2013, The Deloitte Millennial

them the opportunity to expand their skills.

Purpose is not the only area that needs work, according to Great Place to Work's most recent research:

- One of the biggest gaps in millennials' experience at work is around fairness. More than any other generation, millennials are experiencing a gap when it comes to feeling they receive a fair share of profits, ranking 8 percentage points lower than baby boomers and 7 points lower than Gen X. Profit sharing is also the lowest of all measures of the overall workplace experience for millennials.
- Another measure of fairness at work – fair pay – was 8 percentage points lower for millennials than baby boomers, and the second lowest of all measures of millennials' workplace experience. Millennials and Gen Z are tied, with 71% saying they receive fair pay.
- More than any other generation, millennials lack clarity around direction and expectations from leaders. Clarity isn't a "nice to have." It's a "must have" if you want to outperform your competitors and experience strong business outcomes.
- Millennials are falling behind baby boomers by 6 percentage points at 79% when it comes to work-life balance, and 5 percentage points, also at 79%, when it comes to feeling their workplace is psychologically and emotionally healthy. Taking their needs for work-life balance seriously will help millennials experience a healthy workplace.

Survey gathered the views of more than 7,800 millennials across 26 countries, who had a college or university degree and were employed full-time. Results resoundingly revealed that millennials want to leave their mark on the world by working for organizations that benefit society, encourage innovation and provide

To determine organizations that made this year's list, Great Place to Work measured differences in more than 413,000 millennials' survey responses to those of other generations and assessed the impact of demographics and roles on the quality and consistency of their experiences. Survey responses described a great employee experience as defined by high levels of trust, respect, credibility, fairness, pride and camaraderie, and were weighted according to their relevance in describing the most important aspects of an equitable workplace for millennials.

What millennials want from businesses, as consumers

The Brookings Institution is the nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., that conducts in-depth research that leads to new ideas for solving problems facing society at the local, national and global level. Here's what they had to say about millennials and their spending power: "To date, untold billions have surely been spent in the United States in an attempt to understand this new breed of consumer. Millennials are the biggest demographic segment (roughly 90 million people) of the largest economy on the planet, and so their preferences will drive production and marketing strategies for the next 20 years... their aggregate annual income is expected to surpass 4 trillion dollars by 2030."

- Business must become more agile: Brookings says in terms of aggregate income, and thereby spending power, it is unsurprising that at the global level, millennials will be the

reigning economic powerhouse over the medium term. Based on what is already understood about the coming two decades, they say, the ultimate narrative of millennials at the global level will be a story of market disruptions, shifts in production and marketing preferences to new regions and cultures, and the new businesses and brands who were agile enough to be able to navigate these changes.

- Expectations are high: Organizations that want to tap into millennial spending power must meet some key expectations, according to Khoros, a global leader in customer experience (CX) technologies and services. Regarding the projection that millennials' collective annual income will exceed 4 trillion dollars by 2030, Khoros has this to say: "That figure has retailers doing a doubletake. But while millennials present a huge market opportunity, they have high expectations of brands and low regard for advertising, meaning brands must use different tactics to reach them. Millennials often scoff at traditions, and they care about a brand's values and actions within their communities. To draw the interest of this oft-maligned yet powerful group, you need to understand who they are and how they make their purchases." Khoros offers several of these insights [here](#).

... the ultimate narrative of millennials at the global level will be a story of market disruptions, shifts in production and marketing preferences ...



Gain a greater understanding of this pivotal generation

It's important to dig deeper into the traits, characteristics and motivations of millennial workers and consumers. Businesses that do not address their prevalent desires and concerns run the risk of losing talented employees and job candidates in the years ahead, as well as customers whose expectations of brands are at their highest level in history.

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