

A new way to view success is required to manage the Great Resignation



International media is awash with stories about The Great Resignation of the last year, and now the ‘turnover tsunamis’ expected once the pandemic passes. Startling findings such as those of the Microsoft Work Trend Index, indicating that 40% of the global workforce considered leaving their job during 2021, have shaken up board conversations, and rightly so. Whether your organisation is adopting a hybrid model or not, an uncertain future and a forever changed mindset of our workforce is demanding we find a new way to lead our teams.

South Africa - more complex but still changing

Globally, the world of work has gone through seismic shifts as a result of the pandemic. A great proofpoint is seen in Google’s 2021 search trends, which showed that more people searched for “how to start a business” than “how to get a job in 2021”.

The South African situation is however, always more nuanced. The ability to walk out of a job is not within reach of many workers who, in a job-scarce economy, often need to hold onto the work they have. However, we have also seen a trend of employees choosing to move on with far less caution than in previous years. In the corporate environment, meanwhile, we are seeing senior staff opting for early retirement rather than slogging it out for the last five or six years, which is also a new development. What is particularly interesting is how this global shift in attitude has resulted in many workers asking to re-contract with their employers. And with this in mind, we believe we should be speaking about the Great Renegotiation rather than what may be an oversimplified Great Resignation.

Moving the mouse or moving the measurement?

One of the issues causing dissatisfaction amongst employees has been the lack of boundaries (and even

trust) in a work-from-home working environment. Companies installing software to track how often a mouse or cursor is moved, or even software which allows managers access to see what workers have on their computer screens has contributed to high levels of frustration. This has been exacerbated by many workers reporting that, rather than working less when they are home, they are often responding to mail late into the evening.

This challenge speaks to a need to change how we measure performance, productivity and success and the need to move on from time-based measurements. We believe organisations will need to look at the value of the efforts rather than the time it took to produce the outcome. Finding new measures of success will go a long way to helping teams set a more relevant course and add inspiration and energy to those travelling alongside you.

A new way to view success and growth

In a world where we need to re-imagine what growth and success looks like, it helps to apply new lenses through which we can see things differently and in a more holistic way.

The three lenses we ask our clients to use when viewing whether they have achieved success are:

Profit – How we are organised to deliver and scale our operations

Impact – How we create value for others and make our impact

Joy – How we experience our culture and grow our people

We know that currently leaders of big corporates are hardwired to pay more attention to profit, often at the expense of the other two lenses. Leaders of NGOs, meanwhile, will promote impact ahead of all else, even shutting off potential investment. Leaders need to pay attention to what gives meaning to the people in their organisation and apply all three lenses to allow for a meaningful and holistic judgement of their performance.

On the plus side, we have noticed that leaders are much more receptive to this way of thinking after the mayhem of the last two years. They are much more aware of the cost of not creating a space for their people to experience meaning in their work, which results in large scale resignations, and also the cost of not creating value for their customers, which results in lost revenue.

We have seen the organisations which have been able to pivot and adapt during Covid are the ones which have been able to apply the three lenses and get to the bottom of what their real reason for existence is.

Adjust your leadership style to meet the new requirements

There is also clearly a new style of leadership required for remote and hybrid work models. Those leaders who can build a culture of connection and collaboration will perform better than traditionally charismatic leaders.

Finally, by prioritising a meaningful experience, leaders are best placed to retain their valuable employees. Of course big paychecks may entice employees to move on, but it would require a really big paycheck to entice a person to move on from a job which is fulfilling and meaningful. We have seen, time and again, that leaders who apply the three-lense approach are far better equipped at retaining and

building their teams - which ultimately is the real key to productive and profitable companies.