

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/whmm20

The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions

Sandro Formica & Fabiola Sfodera

To cite this article: Sandro Formica & Fabiola Sfodera (2022) The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions, Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 31:8, 899-907, DOI: 10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601

Published online: 20 Oct 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 11607

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=whmm20

JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MARKETING & MANAGEMENT
2022, VOL. 31, NO. 8, 899–907
https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2136601

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPINION PAPER

Check for updates

The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting paradigm shifts: An overview of current situation and future research directions

Sandro Formica[a] and Fabiola Sfodera[b]

[a]Research Unit on Positive Organizational Behavior and Human Capital, Department of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy; [b]Department of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

ABSTRACT

The analysis and comprehension of world events, nowadays, is best understood by dividing them as pre and the post pandemic era. Most of the principles and paradigms that governed the world before 2020 have changed and the academic community is in ferment, attempting to make sense of the new world we are living in. Two of the recent changes that have affected organizations in general and the hospitality businesses in particular, relate to its workforce and have been labeled as "great resignation" and "quiet quitting." Both are paradigm shifts that will necessarily force hospitality managers and executives to rethink the way they have approached their internal marketing and, more broadly, human resources strategies and processes. The goal of this paper is to shed some light on the magnitude of the great resignation and quiet quitting and to propose a framework containing experiential practices that respond to the demands of the post pandemic workforce.

对当今世界事件的分析和理解, 最好将其分为大流行前和大流行后两个时期. 2020年之前统治世界的大多数原则和范式已经改变, 学术界正在酝酿之中, 试图弄清我们所生活的新世界. 最近的两个变化影响了整个组织, 特别是酒店业, 这两个变化与员工有关, 被称为"伟大的辞职"和"安静的辞职". 这两种模式的转变必然会迫使酒店管理者和高管重新思考他们处理内部营销以及更广泛的人力资源战略和流程的方式. 本文的目的是阐明大辞职和悄然辞职的严重性, 并提出一个包含经验实践的框架, 以应对大流行后劳动力的需求.

KEYWORDS

Organizational commitment; needs; values; purpose; human capital

The Great Resignation

The last two years have brought extraordinary change and transformation in hospitality management. Forced business closures and lockdowns have had devastating economic and financial effects, partially tampered by government emergency aids and other forms of economic interventions and support, in particular stimulus checks. With a few exceptions, especially in the healthcare industry, most employees were forced to stay home. During this prolonged time of isolation, employees had the opportunity to think about their work and reflect on how to get a fresh start, once the pandemic era would be over. Even though the pandemic did not hit all world regions with the same intensity and timing, from early

CONTACT Sandro Formica sformica@fiu.edu Research Unit on Positive Organizational Behavior and Human Capital, Sapienza, University of Rome, Rome, Italy

© 2022 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

Spring 2020, hundreds of millions of employees spent most of that year at home, working remotely or not working at all. The Great Resignation, credited to business professor Anthony Klotz, started one year later, in Spring 2021, when employees were asked to go back to work and many of them didn't. By the end of 2021, over 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). In November 2021, accommodation and food services was the leading industry in terms of quitting rates, with 6.9%. This trend continued in 2022 and by July of that year, about 6% of voluntary separations were initiated by hospitality employees (Cheng, 2022).

Quiet Quitting

The term Quiet Quitting refers to the limited commitment of employees to carry out the assigned duties and to relinquish from any other task not specified in their job description. It also implies a low investment in work activities. Quiet quitters, therefore, are disengaged at work and do not intend to go above and beyond their line of duty. At least 50% of the U.S. workforce is represented by quiet quitters and in the second quarter of 2022 the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees was 1.8 to 1, with 32% being engaged and 18% being actively disengaged. Based on longitudinal data collected by Gallup, it is the lowest level of engagement in the last decade (Harter, 2022). The generations that are mostly represented by quiet quitters is GenZ and younger Millennials.

The term Quiet Quitting is not new as it was given by economist Mark Boldger in 2009, however, it became popular in 2022, a year after the beginning of the Great Resignation. While the academic community is unified in believing that there is a correlation between the pandemic and the phenomena of Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting, there is no consensus that these paradigm shifts are the result of Covid restrictions. Indeed, employees' dissatisfaction, in terms of high turnover and low engagement in general and, particularly, in the hospitality industry (Yu et al., 2021), existed well before the pandemic because of low wages, challenging work shifts, and long working hours. Covid, then, has acted as a catalyst for change by accelerating them, not as their source.

What Caused the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting?

We still do not know whether the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting are fads or trends. Both of them, however, point at a deep, prolonged, and widespread workforce dissatisfaction that must be addressed and cannot be ignored any longer. The hospitality industry, traditionally challenged by labor shortages, is experiencing one of its most acute employee crises. What are the motivations that have pushed employees to let go of their current job or disengage?

In addition to the long-standing problems issue concerning low pay and the working poor perception, the most common causes of the Great Resignation there are: (a) failure to recognize performance and feeling disrespected, (b) toxic culture, and (c) professional fulfillment and meaningfulness of work (DeSmet et al., 2022; Parker & Horowitz, 2022).

Among the principal drivers of Quiet Quitting there is a lack of: (a) feeling cared about, (b) opportunities to learn and grow, and (c) connection with the organization's purpose (Harter, 2022). In both cases, Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting, it appears evident that the sources of dissatisfaction of employees revolve around three fundamental characteristics that are common to every human being: needs, values, and purpose.

First, failure to recognize performance, feeling disrespected and not feeling cared about are clear expressions of universal needs, at work as well as at home. The fundamental causes of dissatisfaction of those who are actively disengaged is, therefore, that their needs at work are not met. Zenger and Folkman (2022) report that Quiet Quitting and the Great Resignation are the outcome of feeling undervalued and underappreciated and that managers who balance getting results with a concern for others' needs have the lowest percentage of quiet quitters. Second, a toxic culture and lack of opportunities to learn and grow point at a lack of alignment with fundamental values that are common to most employees, especially to GenZ and Millennials. It is unlikely to predict a long-term workplace relationship with a person whose values do not match or are in contrast with organizational values. Third, lack of professional fulfillment and meaningfulness of work point at a lack of connection with the organization's purpose, which inevitably leaves employees confused and disengaged, wondering why they are part of that organization to begin with. In other words, it lowers their sense of belonging and overall interest and commitment to it. When employees feel that their organization helps change the world for the better, by actively caring about issues that are important to them, it brings meaning and purpose to their work and are fulfilled by the contributions they are making to the company, as well as society (DiPietro et al., 2020).

Suggested Processes to Respond to the Great Resignation and Quit Quitting

The solutions that are provided here are based on the premise that impactful and seemingly permanent changes, such as those imposed by the post-pandemic era, require deeper remedies, that point at the root cause of the problem. As explained earlier, lack of understanding and organizational processes geared toward employees' needs, values, and purpose are among the key factors that have triggered the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting (see Table 1). What is proposed below is not intended as a permanent fix to an extraordinary personal and organizational transformation. Instead, it is designed as the beginning of a journey that puts the human capital at the center of organizations and considers employees as cells operating in the context of a live organism, where the good or bad functioning of one affects the others and, ultimately, the whole entity.

Needs

All human behaviors can be explained in one simple way: they fulfill one or more human needs. Human needs are the same for every person, regardless of differences in gender, nationality, age, or religion. Employees' needs must be met if we intend to build a strong sense of belonging and commitment. Needs fulfillment is regarded as a significant predictor of individual function in life and deemed necessary to reach the highest potential and maintain growth, integrity, and health (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Also, human need theory suggests that when individuals are able to satisfy their needs, they achieve and maintain a state of wellbeing (Diener & Lucas, 2000).

There is a direct correlation between needs satisfaction at work and employees' engagement, retention, stress reduction, life satisfaction, and positive energy at work (Schwartz & Porath).

Do hospitality organizations invest energy and resources in ensuring that employees' needs at work are met? Literature does not provide evidence of it. An example of how the

Table 1. Causes and Solutions to the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting.

Reasons Behind the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting	Failure to Recognize Performance, Feeling Disrespected, Lack of Feeling Cared About	Toxic Culture, Lack of Opportunities to Learn and Grow	Lack of Professional Fulfillment and Meaningfulness of Work, Lack of Connection with the Organization's Purpose
Root Cause	Needs fulfillment	Value alignment	A common Purpose
Suggested Processes	(a) a list of top needs prospective employees want to have met, who should meet them, and how. (b) measure percentage of need satisfaction (c) Formulate and monitor a plan to reach the highest level of need satisfaction	(a) identify personal values (b) determine person-organization value fit (c) Look for alignment between values and behavior (d) understand and show interest in the values of others	(a) starting from the end and write own eulogy (b) What if you had 6 months, one week, one day left to live? (c) Write life purpose using action verb and how it will be carried out. (d) Connecting personal and organizational purpose

organization can demonstrate knowledge, interest, and involvement about needs satisfaction at work could be the following. First, in the selection, hiring, and onboarding processes, would be valuable to find out: (a) a list of top needs prospective employees want to have met, who should meet them and how. Second, three months after being hired and every three months after that, employees are asked to measure the percentage in which the most important needs they listed when hired were met and actively engage on a plan to reach the highest level of need satisfaction. For example, if an employee's top need is "growth" and the level of satisfaction at work is assessed at 35%, he is encouraged to discuss, with his supervisor, ways to bring that percentage to 50% or higher in three months. This might entail changing tasks, supervisors, or processes to find the best balance between needs being met and organizational performance. This process will help hospitality organizations not only to know and keep track of employees' need satisfaction levels, but also to find, test, and perfect tools to keep them highly satisfied.

Values

Values can be integrated in hospitality organizations in four separate steps: (a) identify personal values, (b) determine person-organization value fit (c) align values and behavior, and (d) understand and show interest in the values of others. Hospitality organizations must show interest and curiosity about employees' values, which are their judgment of what is important in life (Ayachit & Chitta, 2022).

Once personal values are clearly stated, the second step is to determine if there is a match between the values of the employee and those of the organization. Evaluating this match earlier on, in the selection, hiring and onboarding processes will give organizations a competitive edge in terms of increasing employee performance and minimizing turnover costs. Knowing an employee's values and their match with those of the organization does not result in desirable behavioral practices. The third step is geared toward finding alignment between employees' values and behavior at work (Buchanan & Bardi, 2015). The

fourth and final step, understanding and being interested in the values of others, helps us connect with others' points of view, avoid conflict and become more supportive and a better team player (Korsgaard et al., 1997).

What are the processes that are likely to improve each of the four steps listed above? The first is to ask employees what they value most, particularly when they are at work. Making values part of the selection, hiring, and onboarding processes is fundamental to strengthening the organization-worker partnership. It is useful to provide them with a list of values and to ask them to select the top ten, then the top three, and eventually the most important value of all. Narrowing down their value preferences will help in the process of integrating what is important in their daily activities. The second is to find out whether the individual and organizational values are in alignment. Organizational values, even when not explicitly stated, can be found in other documents, such as the code of ethics or vision statement. When organizations and employees have shared values, their relationships are more long lasting, satisfactory, and beneficial.

In the third step the focus is still on alignment, however, it relates to what the employees say their values are and their actual behavior. Therefore, the percentage of alignment or level of coherence links tasks performed and worker's values. If a worker's value is "contribution," alignment with daily tasks can be achieved by being actively involved with the corporate responsibility department or by offering counseling and advice to colleagues or customers. When no immediate fit is possible between vacant positions and individual values or the employee cannot be easily transferred from a department to another, job crafting could be an effective tool to increase the level of value alignment by integrating personal values in daily tasks at work. The last step of the process of integration of values in organizations concerns relationships. In particular, it involves a deeper understanding of and interest in the values of others. A practical tool to advance in this matter is to ask employees to write down their top three values, then pick a colleague and guess her top three values. The coworker performs the same task, which is to write her top three values and guess the top three values of her colleague. Next, they share what they have written and notice how accurately have guessed each other values. Every week, employees will repeat the exercise with another colleague until they have connected with all or as many employees as possible. This activity stimulates interest, curiosity, and a deeper and more meaningful relationships among colleagues.

Purpose

The third reason why employee resign or disengage is "a lack of connection with the organizations purpose" and "lack of professional fulfillment and meaningfulness of work." Life Purpose can be defined as a full commitment and dedication to something greater than ourselves. Han (2015) explains that purpose is a moral virtue that helps achieve happiness and human flourishing. It is no surprise then, that progress toward a life purpose is directly related to well-being (Wiese, 2007). Scientific studies have pointed out that those who have a life purpose live longer than those who do not (Hill & Turiano, 2014). Additionally, individuals who know and pursue their life purpose are less affected by illnesses related to cognition, such as Alzheimer's disease (Boyle et al., 2012). Needless to say that employees who feel a sense of purpose when at work are more committed and engaged than their colleagues who do not (Ramlall, 2008). Despite the several benefits of

having and pursuing a purpose, 25% of Americans adults assert having a clear sense of purpose, (Kullar, 2018).

McKinsey (Dhingra et al., 2021) reports that 62% of organizations have a purpose statement and that 70% of employees considered purpose as defined by work. However, in surveying 1,214 managers and frontline employees at US companies, there were noticeable differences between executives and upper management when compared to frontline managers and employees. In fact, 85% of the former agree they can live their purpose in their daily tasks, while 85% of the latter are unsure or disagree they can live their purpose at work. This difference is likely to foster a disconnect between employees based on their rank and can have detrimental effects for organizations in the long term.

The proposed process is made of four steps that can help employees to find their purpose. The first spurs from the principle of "starting from the end" and it is operationalized by asking them to think of the long-lasting legacy they would like to leave once they are deceased. This can be achieved by drafting their own eulogy. By paying a tribute to themselves, employees are forced to reflect about what is the original mark they intend to live on earth. The second step is to think of multiple scenarios in which they have a limited time to live: from six months to one week and, a final scenario where they have only one day of life. In this activity they are asked to list in detail what is that they choose to do. Writing and sharing their work with their colleagues will help them be clear about their purpose and will strengthen the depth and breadth of their relationships. While the previous two steps help employees to shed light on their purpose, in the third step, they are asked to spell it out. In writing their personal purpose statement, employees are guided to use a simple sentence starting with an action verb and an explanation of how it will be carried out. The purpose of one of the authors, for example, is "To integrate happiness and wellbeing through self-science, in firms, schools, universities, and governments." The fourth and last step is to investigate possible connections between personal and organizational purposes. They do not necessarily need to be the same or very similar, however, they have to be compatible with the goal, through appropriate planning, to build a sustainable and satisfactory collaboration based on purpose. For example, the purpose of an employee could be: "Empowering children through sports" and the purpose of the hospitality organization he is working for is: "Crafting unforgettable host and guest experiences while bringing awareness and appreciation to our ecosystem." In this case, management is tasked to find ways to bridge the gap from a purpose that focuses on sports and another that prioritizes ecology, such as providing sporting or physical activities that are performed in natural settings and do not harm the environment.

Future Research Directions

This paper provides an overview of current issues affecting hospitality human resources and three actionable processes to respond to them. While the suggested processes can prove to be beneficial, they constitute a quick example of what could be done, in easily applicable terms, to help solve the current state of unease that is affecting the hospitality workforce. In addition to recruiting and retaining employees, the most prominent challenges faced by hospitality entrepreneurs and managers in the post-pandemic era are building trust, organizational commitment, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging. These are increasingly pressing issues in our field. Their magnitude has grown as a result of a limited interest in

exploring the employee as a whole being. Training programs that focus on single competencies, such as time management, collaboration, or resiliency, relate to the person as a gatherer of skills that are required and applied in the workplace. This is an old paradigm no longer applicable in today's business environment. The key recommendation for future research is to shift the attention from the "doing" to the "being." As we demonstrated with needs, values, and purpose, future research could explore other aspects of the being, such as beliefs, emotions, mental imagery, and life design, to support and strengthen not only the person as a whole, but also the employee-organization connection. The hypothesis is that organizational processes and training focused on employees' state of being improve their overall satisfaction and increase the competitive advantage of organizations.

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we feel about work and life. It has also exacerbated underlying industry problems that existed for decades, such as dissatisfaction with work conditions, pay, management and leadership. It has escalated the speed of change and transformed concepts such as work-life balance into work-life integration, to the point that we hardly understand the boundaries between them. Managers and executives are making extensive changes to adjust to the new, post-pandemic paradigms. Those changes should spring from the overarching principle of considering employees as whole beings, as people who are not simply going to work to receive a compensation or to have a career, but who are looking for meaning and purpose while engaging in routine job activities. To do so, they must have, first, their needs met; second, their values aligned with those of their organizations and, third, search and pursue a common purpose that enhances their satisfaction and wellbeing. The goal of this paper is to encourage deep reflection on the root causes of the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting and to provide them with simple and effective processes and action steps to address them. It is hoped that the paradigm shift we are experiencing in these years will compel the hospitality industry to put human capital at the core of its strategy.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Fabiola Sfodera http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1966-8038

References

Ayachit, M., & Chitta, S. (2022). A systematic review of Burnout studies from the Hospitality literature. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *31*(2), 125–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2021.1957743

Boyle, P., Buchman, A., Wilson, R., Yu, L., Schneider, J., & Bennett, D. (2012). Effect of purpose in life on the relation between Alzheimer disease pathologic changes on cognitive function in advanced age. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *69*(5), 499–504. https://doi.org/10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2011.1487

Buchanan, K., & Bardi, A. (2015). The roles of values, behavior, and value-behavior fit in the relation of agency and communion to well-being. *Journal of Personality*, *83*(3), 320–333. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12106

Cheng, M. (2022). *Service industry workers are still quitting at high rates despite recession fears*. Quartz. G/O Media. https://qz.com/service-industry-workers-are-still-quitting-at-high-rat-1849475504

DeSmet, A., Dowling, B., Hancock, B., & Schaninger, B. (2022). The Great Attrition is making hiring harder. Are you searching the right talent pools? *McKinsey Quarterly*, July 13, 1-13. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-great-attrition-is-making-hiring-harder-are-you-searching-the-right-talent-pools

Dhingra, N., Samo, A., Schaninger, B., & Schrimper, M. (2021). *Help your employees find purpose—or watch them leave*. McKinsey Reports, April 5, McKinsey and Company, Inc. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/help-your-employees-find-purpose-or-watch-them-leave.

Diener, E., & Lucas, R. E. (2000). Explaining differences in societal levels of happiness: Relative standards, need fulfillment, culture and evaluation theory. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, *1*(1), 41–78. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010076127199

DiPietro, R. B., Moreo, A., & Cain, L. (2020). Well-being, affective commitment and job satisfaction: Influences on turnover intentions in casual dining employees. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *29*(2), 139–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2019.1605956

Fuller, J., & Kerr, W. (2022). *The Great Resignation Didn't Start with the Pandemic*. *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing. https://hbr.org/2022/03/the-great-resignation-didnt-start-with-the-pandemic

Han, H. (2015). Purpose as a moral virtue for flourishing. *Journal of Moral Education*, *44*(3), 291–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2015.1040383

Harter, J. (2022). *Is Quiet Quitting Real?* Gallup Inc, September 6. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/398306/quiet-quitting-real.aspx

Hill, P., & Turiano, N. (2014). Purpose in life as a predictor of mortality across adulthood. *Psychological Science*, *25*(7), 1482–1486. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614531799

Korsgaard, M. A., Meglino, B. M., & Lester, S. W. (1997). Beyond helping: Do other-oriented values have broader implications in organizations? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *82*(1), 160–177. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.160

Kullar, D. (2018). *Find Purpose for a Good Life. But Also for a Healthy One*. The New York Times. The Upshot. January 1, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/01/upshot/finding-purpose-for-a-good-life-but-also-a-healthy-one.htm

Parker, K., & Horowitz, J. (2022). *Majority of workers who quit a job in 2021 cite low pay, no opportunities for advancement, feeling disrespected*. Pew Research Center, March 9. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/

Ramlall, S. J. (2008). Enhancing employee performance through positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *38*(6), 1580–1600. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00360.x

Schwartz, T., & Porath, C. *The Power of Meeting Your Employees' Needs*. *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing., June 30. https://hbr.org/2014/06/the-power-of-meeting-your-employees-needs

Van den Broeck, A., Vansteenkiste, M., De Witte, H., Soenens, B., & Lens, W. (2010). Capturing autonomy, competence, and relatedness at work: Construction and initial validation of the Work-Related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *83*(4), 981–1002. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317909X481382

Wiese, B. S. (2007). *Successful pursuit of personal goals and subjective well-being*. In B. R. Little, K. Salmela-Aro, & S. D. Phillips (Eds.), *Personal Project Pursuit: Goals, Action and Human Flourishing* (pp. 301–328). Erlbaum.

Yu, J., Park, J., & Hyun, S. S. (2021). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' work stress, well-being, mental health, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee-customer identification. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *30*(5), 529–548. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2021.1867283

Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2022). *Quiet Quitting Is About Bad Bosses, Not Bad Employees*. Harvard Business Review, August 31. Harvard Business Publishing. https://hbr.org/2022/08/quiet-quitting-is-about-bad-bosses-not-bad-employees