

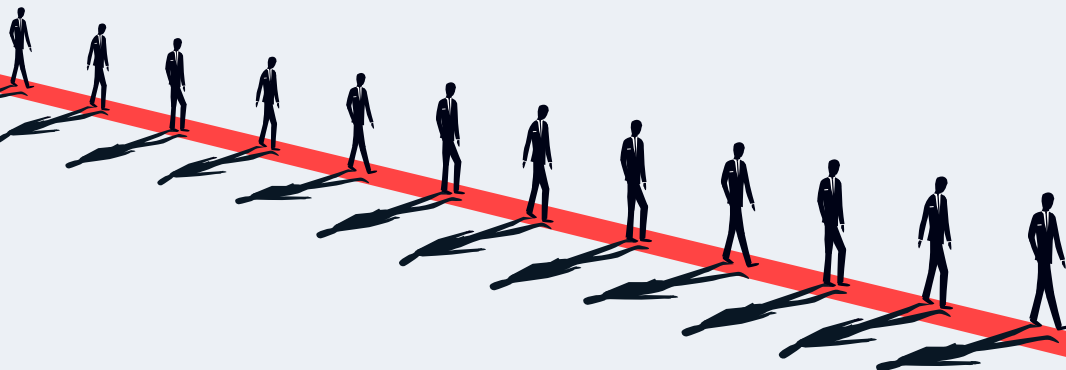
WHITE PAPER

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# 6 SIGNS YOUR EMPLOYEE IS ABOUT TO RESIGN

Warning signs you can't ignore and tips for retaining talent





# The quitting tsunami of 2021 is not going to recede any time soon

Over 47.4 million Americans voluntarily left their jobs in 2021.<sup>1</sup> The quits rate exceeded that of 2019, a year that already saw higher levels of quitting than the previous two years. **The trend of elevated quit rates continued well into 2022,<sup>2</sup> and many experts are predicting a higher baseline of job-leaving moving forward.<sup>3</sup>**

What's remarkable about this recent trend is not just the volume—but the variety—of people jumping ship. According to conventional wisdom, middle-aged employees stay put longer, but those people have also been leaving in higher numbers.<sup>4</sup>

With so many employees quitting for so many different reasons, blanket retention tactics aren't going to cut it. Higher pay, for example, might not keep someone who is leaving because they are seeking work with a higher purpose.

An understanding of why certain people are about to leave helps employers design targeted retention strategies. This guide breaks down six reasons that your employees might be on their way out, the signs to look out for, and how you can keep them.



# 1 They're burned out

Burnout has become an epidemic in the U.S., **with the vast majority (89%) of employees reporting they experienced it during 2021.**<sup>5</sup> Higher workloads, toxic workplaces, experiencing micromanagement, and being asked to complete work faster are all major factors contributing to the strain.

According to the World Health Organization, burnout is an occupational phenomenon that is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job (or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job), and reduced professional efficacy.<sup>6</sup>

When left unattended, the issue makes many people reach their breaking point, giving them no option but to eliminate the cause: their job. In fact, 70% of employees would leave their organization for another with better resources to address burnout.<sup>7</sup>

## 🚩 Signs to watch out for

A previously enthusiastic employee who is frequently absent, no longer speaking up in meetings, and missing deadlines could be ready to call it quits due to burnout.

There are also clues to watch out for based on extensive research from Gallup: According to their report on the issue, employees who frequently experience burnout are 63% more likely to take sick days, half as likely to discuss performance goals with their supervisors, 23% more likely to have visited the emergency room, and 13% less confident in their job.<sup>8</sup>

## 🔗 How to keep these employees

Check in on your employees. To spot burnout before it's too late, use a combination of passive listening software and active feedback strategies, like micro-surveys. This approach allows you to consistently keep a pulse on how employees are doing: Passive listening software helps you identify employees that might be at risk of burning out, while active feedback programs help you understand the cause.

Acknowledge the prevalence of burnout and offer options to employees to help address the stress and anxiety they may be feeling. Review policies, benefits and perks to determine if there is more you could do to address employee needs.

For those people who are putting in a significant amount of extra hours, have follow-up conversations and clarify expectations so they don't work to their breaking point. Use tools such as Collaboration Analytics—a deeply insightful way of understanding how people and teams work together—to identify ways to improve collaboration, culture, and employee well-being.



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Nearly **one-third of employees** who changed jobs in 2021 (**32%**) did so to **learn new skills**.



## 2 They have a desire to learn new skills and want better learning opportunities

Learning is important, not just to ward off organizational skills gaps, but from a retention perspective too: Nearly one-third of employees who changed jobs in 2021 (32%) did so to learn new skills, according to a Visier survey. More than a quarter of the people who left their previous employer said that they did so for more or better training opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

Most people want to perform well in their jobs, and the right knowledge creates a sense of efficacy. Acquiring in-demand skills also sets individuals up for further career progression.

If there is no investment in learning, however, people can feel like their careers have stalled out—and that their employer just does not care.

### 🚩 Signs to watch out for

An employee who posts regularly on LinkedIn with updates about new credentials could be beefing up their skills to perform better—for a different employer.

More subtle signals can show up in the data. Spotty performance reviews could indicate that the employee is inspired by new projects that require learning something new—and demotivated by routine assignments. Promotion stagnation can also signal that the individual is not getting the skills they need to progress in their careers.

### 🔗 How to keep these employees

Focus on internal mobility and developing a culture of promoting from within the organization. Companies that offer fulfilling growth opportunities through internal mobility retain their employees nearly twice as long as their peers, according to LinkedIn.<sup>10</sup>

Leverage tech tools to develop personalized career pathing. For example, First West Credit Union used Visier People® to investigate turnover and discovered that some was directly tied to poor communication and planning for career progression. They relaunched a learning and certification program that brought a reduction in turnover, an increase in internal promotions, and a pipeline of candidates for future openings.<sup>11</sup> To determine whether these career pathing solutions are helping employees grow and move into new positions, use people analytics. This way, employees can develop skills that make a real difference in their careers.



### 3 They're seeking higher compensation

Not surprisingly, pay is a major reason for quitting. Results of a Visier survey on the Great Resignation found that, among the top five reasons employees quit their jobs, number one was higher salary at 43%. Data from Pew Research backs this up: The majority of workers who quit their job in 2021 cited low pay.

For many employees, higher pay is simply required to cover the necessities of life. For others, it demonstrates that they are valued, and sets them up for longer term financial security. When there are plenty of other employers offering more pay for the same type of work it's hard to resist heading for the door.

#### 🚩 Signs to watch out for

If salaries for critical roles at your company are lower than the market value for those positions, then your compensation package is not competitive enough to keep people, particularly when the labor market is tight.

Increased absenteeism, combined with disengagement, is another sign that frustrations are brewing over pay. Large variances in pay for individuals performing the same role can also lead to resentment that leads to churn.

#### 🔗 How to keep these employees

Regularly refer to external market data and adjust your compensation levels accordingly. To raise wages in a sustainable way, use data to forecast the potential impacts of increases on overall costs, retention, and employee productivity.

Higher pay doesn't necessarily translate into a financial loss: The non-profit healthcare company Providence, for example, found that it could save approximately \$6 million a year by raising worker pay and reducing attrition.<sup>12</sup>

If there are signs that a top performer is about to quit, consider a merit increase to reward a job well done. This empowers the employee to take personal responsibility for their efforts, and it gives them a sense of control over their success with the company.



**Low salary** consistently ranks number one among the top reasons employees quit their jobs.





## 4 They don't feel connected to the company culture

Workplace culture is not an abstract concept. It governs the way people tackle problems, communicate with each other, and behave day-to-day. It also has a real impact on attrition.

Toxic cultures—ones that are characterized by systemic discrimination, bullying, or unethical behavior—produce high turnover rates. According to the American Psychological Association, employees who report experiencing or witnessing discrimination in their current workplace are more than twice as likely (68% vs. 33%) to say they intend to seek employment outside of their organization. A recent report from MIT Sloan Management Review found that toxic corporate culture is 10.4 times more likely to contribute to an employee quitting than compensation.

A workplace culture doesn't necessarily have to be toxic to generate attrition problems, however. For example, a sales leader who values individualistic performance rankings won't fit into a culture that is more collaborative and team-based. Remote work can also create a disconnect between the employee and their workplace culture by impeding feelings of belonging.

### Signs to watch out for

Strong emotions are an indicator that the employee is experiencing a disconnect. When people don't feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes, it's another indicator that the culture has started to unravel. Pinpointing cultural issues is key to fixing them. Sometimes cultural issues are widespread, while other times they're tied to certain managers, roles, or geographies. Understanding this level of granularity will ensure you can diagnose the problem rather than waste resources with a one-size-fits-all approach.

### How to keep these employees

Be proactive in determining the right culture for your organization, assess the strength of that culture from an employee standpoint, and take steps to make improvements to strengthen the culture. This can go a long way toward stemming a potential outflux of employees.

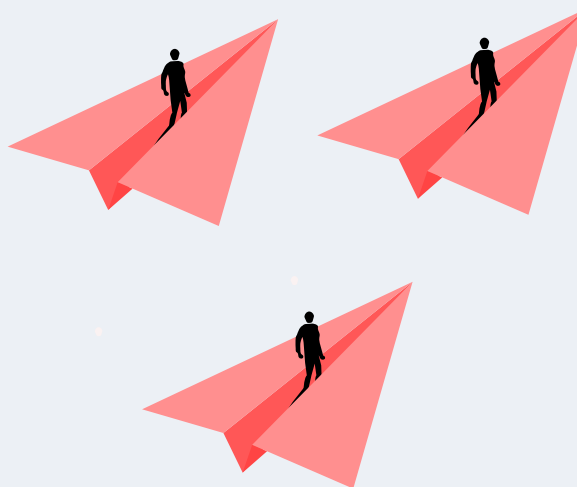
Create psychological safety by training your managers to avoid blame, be open to making mistakes themselves, and being open to feedback.

Build connections in a remote workplace by using collaboration tools, setting up a mentor program, ensuring remote workers are invited to company off-sites, and teaching managers how to avoid negative terms when giving feedback via text.



**Toxic corporate culture** is 10.4 times more likely to contribute to an employee quitting than compensation.





**32% of US employees** said they have already quit a job due to being forced to physically be in an office setting.

## 5 They want to continue working remotely

Apple’s director of machine learning made headlines when he resigned over the Silicon Valley giant’s return-to-office policy. And he was not the only one who voted with his feet when new in-person work rules came into effect: According to a Zapier survey, 32% of US employees said they have already quit a job due to being forced to physically be in an office setting. Over 60% of Americans would quit their job for a remote working opportunity.

Many people got a taste of flexibility during the pandemic-induced shift to remote work, and what started as a necessity became a preference. Some are seeking better work-life balance, and others are looking to ditch the commute. Some people feel they are more productive without the general buzz of co-workers in the background.

### 🚩 Signs to watch out for

Higher rates of absenteeism, lower employee engagement scores, and lower productivity on the heels of a new return-to-work directive could be an indicator that employees are seeking flexibility, but aren’t getting it. If your remote work policy is more conservative than what other companies in your industry are offering, your people have more attractive options elsewhere and might be considering calling it quits.

### 👂 How to keep these employees

Carefully consider to what extent remote work, or a hybrid approach, could work for your organization. While this will likely not be an across-the-board measure, most organizations will have at least some segment of their workforce that could successfully work outside of the physical office setting.

Some jobs just can’t be performed remotely. Pay attention to these employees’ desires for flexibility by considering ways to build flexibility into their scheduling. Whether that means working from home, or flexing hours in a way that wouldn’t adversely affect the business.



## 6 They want to focus on doing meaningful work

In the shadow of a crisis, participating in mundane work tasks can feel meaningless. According to a return to work survey conducted by Gartner, 52% of employees say the pandemic has made them question the purpose of their day-to-day job. 56% said it has made them want to increase their contribution to society.

Fulfilling a purpose is a universal human need. To flourish, people need to feel like the work they do means something to the organization or the world in general. Without this sense of meaning, work becomes a daily drag.

### Signs to watch out for

Signs the employee has one foot out the door because they aren't getting the purpose they are seeking include lower engagement, a lack of interest in participating in longer term projects, or doing the minimum amount of work possible.

### How to keep these employees

Be a values-driven organization and communicate regularly with staff about your business' values and purpose. Employees who are committed to their employer's mission also find their work more meaningful.

Try boiling down your mission to memorable statements. Consider something pithy along the lines of TED, "Spread ideas" or LinkedIn, "To connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful." Purpose is also about having the capacity for self-actualization: Give people the autonomy to innovate and create an impact for the company—and they'll reward you with stronger loyalty in the long run.



**52% of employees** say the pandemic has made them **question the purpose of their day-to-day job.**







# Endnotes

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# About Visier

Visier's purpose is to reveal the human truth about your workforce and contribute to a better future.

Visier was founded to focus on what matters to business people: answering the right questions, even the ones a person might not know to ask. Questions that shape business strategy, provide the impetus for taking action, and drive better business results.

Visier delivers fast, clear people insight by using all the available people data—regardless of source. With best-practice expertise built in, decision makers can confidently take action. Thanks to our amazing customers, Visier is the market leader in Workforce Analytics with more than 15,000 customers in 75 countries around the world.

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