

## SUMMARY

# New Research on Why Employees Quit

Employee turnover rates have fallen since their COVID-era peak in 2022 but remain high across many industries. New research sheds light on why employees in many fields continue to resign at higher rates than pre-pandemic levels and what employers can do to reverse this trend and retain talent.

## WHAT IT IS

As our society and workplaces evolve, driven by events such as the pandemic, global financial shifts, politics, and technological developments, employee expectations and needs also evolve. Awareness of the latest research on why employees quit helps organizations invest in strategies that will proactively meet employee needs, thereby reducing potential turnover and improving overall organizational culture and productivity.

## WHAT IT DOES

New research by management scholars and business consultants has identified three surprising insights into why workers are quitting at relatively high rates, and how employees can intervene:

- 1. Task sequencing:** New research found that employees who were asked to do a string of hard tasks in a row were 110% more likely to quit than employees who were asked to do a string of hard tasks 'not in a row.' A hard task followed by an easy task and then a hard task, called task sequencing is an effective method to reduce employee overwhelm and burnout. Through thoughtful sequencing of tasks designed to avoid overloading and overwhelming employees - an approach called the streak-end rule - employers can reduce their turnover rates by an estimated 22%. Assigning work in a pattern of hard-easy-hard-easy can meaningfully reduce employee turnover at zero cost to the employer.
- 2. Return-to-office mandates:** Deciding whether to require employees to work in office full-time, part-time or at all continues to be an evolving area of decision-making for organizational leaders. Many companies and government offices have announced full return to office mandates over the past year, which were met by employee resistance sufficient to

compel these organizations to roll back these rules. Management consultant Korn Ferry reports that while nearly 65% of U.S. employers require employees to work on-site full time, nearly 70% of employees want to work remotely at least part of the time citing greater flexibility and improved mental health as benefits of remote work. Recently, the U.S. Government Accountability Office examined the pros and cons of full-time return-to-work mandates and found that the greatest benefit of telework is recruiting and retaining talent.

- 3. Disconnected management:** In a survey of over 2,000 individuals, a toxic or negative work environment, poor company leadership, and dissatisfaction with manager/supervisor were cited as the top three reasons for quitting a job. Meanwhile managers believed the top reasons employees quit were for personal reasons, to take a different job that better aligned with one's career goals, and unsatisfactory pay. This workplace challenge is complicated by an emerging trend in 2025: cutting costs and flattening organizational structures by removing middle managers. This level of management is often the bridge between employees and the organization, providing personalized support for employees in addition to translating organizational goals into action. Organizations considering a move towards a flatter structure would benefit from strategic planning and investment in ensuring that employees feel connected to the organization, confident in the work they should be undertaking, adequately resourced, and comfortable communicating with teammates.

Understanding these trends will help organizations craft employee satisfaction and retention strategies that reflect the current concerns and needs of today's workforce.

#### WHO USES IT

|                     |                             |
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| Bayer               | Benesch                     |
| Amazon Web Services | ODW Logistics               |
| Synchrony           | Briggs Industrial Solutions |

#### WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

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[Korn Ferry](#)

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[U.S. Government Accountability  
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