



COMBAT 'THE GREAT RESIGNATION'

HOW TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

EngagementMultiplier® |  breathe

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 Introduction

03 Five reasons people are leaving their jobs

05 Building a retention strategy for today

- Finding the problem areas and at-risk employees in your company
- Identifying and resolving burnout
- Connecting employees to purpose
- Making flexibility a superpower
- Ensure your managers are not compelling people to leave
- Increasing team engagement, motivation, and morale

11 Bonus: Differentiating your employer brand

INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic recovery is hitting full stride in the United States, and according to [new data](#), the UK is not far behind, recording the greatest increase in new jobs since 2014. This is undoubtedly great news, but it's not without impact - a perfect storm is brewing that is making it monstrously more difficult to retain employees, and attract new ones.

In the US, people are [quitting](#) their jobs at a rate not seen in 20 years. Worldwide, a recent survey found that 41% of people are thinking about leaving their current positions. For any employer, an exodus of employees is difficult. It's even worse at this particular moment, just as demand is soaring and businesses are recovering.

As the job market heats up, and hiring becomes increasingly difficult, retaining talent requires leaders to keep their teams' morale and engagement high. Good news, this guide is loaded with ideas and tactics you can use immediately.

“**41% of people are thinking about leaving their current positions.**”

FIVE REASONS PEOPLE ARE LEAVING THEIR JOBS

What's causing so many people to leave their jobs now? For starters, it's generally not for more pay - at least, not initially.

Before we dive in, one word about compensation. A study from Gallup has found that employees who self-identify as being engaged are extremely hard for competitors to dislodge - to even get an engaged employee to consider another role, the potential salary increase needs to be more than 20%. However, the opposite is true for employees who are not engaged. For them, the salary differential drops to nearly zero, which makes sense: they already have good reasons to actively consider leaving the company.

The key reasons people are leaving their jobs right now include:

- They seek flexibility and prefer working from home or hybrid working,
- They are stressed and burned out,
- They don't feel they belong anymore or are seeking more meaningful work,
- They're seeking new opportunities (in ways you may not expect),
- Their manager is compelling them to leave.



It's also important to look at the "why" behind these drivers, delving into what people are feeling and how the experience of the coronavirus pandemic has changed their priorities, because, as you'll see, those factors are informing peoples' decisions.

They want flexible work arrangements

We've written extensively about the need for leaders to consider [flexible work options](#) for their teams. After a year of working from home, many employees are determined to hang onto the benefits they've gained: more time in their days because they're not spending hours commuting, flexible schedules that enable them to watch their children's sports practice, attend events after work, spend more time with their family, and enjoy a healthier work/life balance.

They are burned out and stressed

The stress of the last year - layered upon the effort employees worldwide made to help their clients and organisations throughout the pandemic - is taking its toll on people. A global [survey](#) of workers by Harvard Business Review earlier this year found:

- 89% said their work-life was getting worse.
- 85% said their wellbeing had declined.
- 56% said their job demands had increased.
- 62% of the people who were struggling to manage their workloads had experienced burnout “often” or “extremely often” in the previous three months.
- 57% of employees felt that the pandemic had a “large effect on” or “completely dominated” their work.

Employees who are [burned out](#) are more than twice as likely to leave the company, and burnout is at an all-time high. Identifying burnout and mitigating it within an organisation is one of the most effective ways to improve employee retention.

They feel they no longer belong or seek more meaningful work

A sense of belonging is the [top driver](#) of employee engagement this year. Belonging is a big umbrella, and underneath it, you'll find inclusivity, support for wellbeing, security, fairness, and purpose. Leaders who create welcoming environments where people feel they're a part of something bigger and more [purposeful](#) - will be rewarded with higher employee engagement and its many [bottom-line benefits](#), including significant gains in retention, while also becoming an employer of choice.

They're seeking entirely new opportunities

People have always valued the opportunity for growth and development - that hasn't changed. What has changed are people's priorities. Specifically, employees have re-prioritised their relationships and wellbeing and aren't willing to compromise on either. This is leading to a startling number of [women](#) deciding to leave the workforce and it's also spurring many people to [change professions](#) entirely - not just jumping to a new employer in the same industry, a role within their established profession.

Their manager drove them to it

Employees don't leave companies, they leave their managers. The pandemic faced managers with a pantheon of never-before anticipated challenges.

“One thing we learned was that front-line managers are critical to the success of the team and, unfortunately, most of them were not up to the task. This is the biggest risk to business going forward,” writes Brian Watkins in a *Chief Learning Officer* [article](#) titled, “COVID-19 Didn't Challenge Managers, It Exposed Them.”

Understanding whether your managers are compelling your staff to leave is the first act to take to stem the turnover tide.

RECRUITING TIP

These factors are also the key things job candidates are seeking in their new roles, so ensuring your organisation speaks to them in your recruitment marketing and related communications is vital to positioning the company advantageously.

BUILDING A RETENTION STRATEGY FOR TODAY

Now that we've provided a broad view of the reasons people are deciding to leave their jobs, we'll focus next on the steps you take to retain your people. We'll concentrate on five areas, with the intention of countering the factors driving people to leave their jobs.

1. Finding the problem areas and at-risk employees in your company
2. Identifying and resolving burnout
3. Connecting employees to purpose
4. Making flexibility a superpower
5. Ensure your managers are not compelling people to leave
6. Increasing team engagement, motivation, and morale

Finding the problem areas & at-risk people in your company

"If you're going to spend the time developing a robust business strategy, you should also take the time to understand if your team is standing shoulder to shoulder with you and is ready to drive things ahead."

Stefan Wissenbach
CEO & Founder of Engagement Multiplier

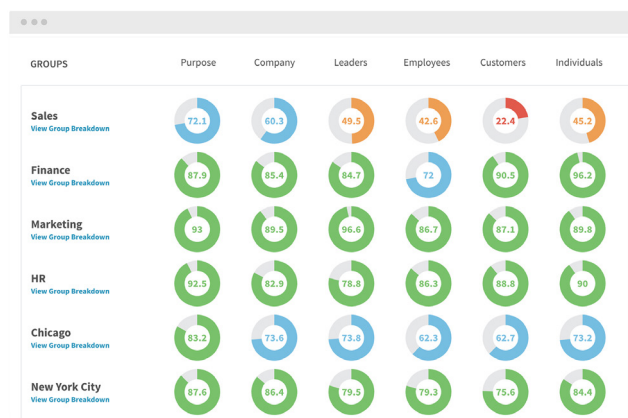
Many leaders haven't assessed the health of their organisation's culture and employee engagement over the last year - they've been too busy triaging customer demands and generally keeping things going.

Failing to evaluate how the pandemic has affected employees could be a critical mistake. In addition to the changes they have borne at work, their home lives have been altered as well, compounding the effects of stress, isolation, and uncertainty. Understanding how employees are doing, where they are struggling, which managers are leading well through the crisis, and which are not – all ultimately impact business performance. All of these things roll up to employee engagement, which is why it's both a useful measure and a leading indicator.

There are a host of ways you can acquire this information, but the common denominator is this – *you have to gather employee feedback*. If you ask, they will tell you. Initiate a series of round table meetings, host town halls, or, for the swiftest results, field a survey of your employees. A good survey will show you at-a-glance where the hotspots are.

Identifying and resolving burnout

Employee burnout is costly and can lead to real damage to the business, and it's a key catalyst of employee turnover. However, burnout is both preventable and resolvable - if you can identify and mitigate the root causes within your company.



Employee engagement surveys can help you spot problem areas at a glance.

Burnout is a real health condition:

While people may casually say they're burned out when they simply need a break, burnout is a real health condition that is [distinct](#) from exhaustion and disengagement, its close cousins.

In 2019, the World Health Organization added new detail to the description of burnout syndrome, which is classified in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases ([ICD-11](#)) as an occupational phenomenon, as follows:

"Burnout is a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised 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.*

Burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life."

How to tell if employees are burned out

Leaders who keep their ears to the rail of their business can detect burnout before it takes hold. An early warning sign is often one's gut instinct that something's not right. Signs to look for include:

- Reduced work quality,
- Declining enthusiasm for new initiatives,
- Fewer people "going the extra mile",
- Worsening morale.

As burnout becomes more serious, it also becomes more measurable. Keep an eye out for trends and patterns such as project deadlines slipping, productivity declining, and absenteeism increasing. Leaders whose gut instincts are sounding an alarm should take a fresh look at their HR and employee engagement data, and look for trends in unscheduled absences, as well as downward shifts in engagement scores (or an uptick in negative feedback.)

At its most serious, burnout results in increases in paid leave and employee turnover - both of which are enormously costly to the business.

Resolving burnout

Burnout happens when employees feel powerless to change their circumstances. Situations that can lead to burnout include:

- Unrelenting workloads or unreasonable deadlines,
- Feeling one is being treated unfairly,
- Lack of the tools, information, or support needed to do the job.

Leaders faced with burnout within their organisations should meet the problem head-on, and assess which of these issues are present within the teams that are struggling. To start, evaluate the impact of the last year on your people. If they have been in "all hands on deck" mode since the beginning of the pandemic, burnout is likely.

What to do about burnout

Asking for employee feedback or surveying the affected team is an important early step in the process - people feel less powerless when they know they are heard, and in this case, the simple act of listening can act as a valve, releasing some of the pressure and buying leaders some time.

A well-crafted survey is can help leaders quickly identify teams that are struggling, and provide insight into the underlying causes, as well, though it may be necessary to gather additional detail to get to the heart of the problem.

Providing employees with tangible evidence of management's awareness of the issue, such as sharing the findings, survey results, and feedback can assure that the circumstances that lead to burnout are being resolved. Of course, swift action to resolve the underlying causes of burnout, such as reducing workload, removing toxic players, and allowing employees choice and flexibility, is of paramount importance.



LEARN MORE

Find additional ideas for re-energising your team here: [Balancing Wellbeing and Performance: Re-Energising Your Team](#)

Connecting employees to purpose

It's not unusual for people to reassess their lives after a shock, and for many, the pandemic has triggered a "life's too short" response. The desire to be a part of something bigger and to do some good in the world is showing up as a reason why many people are leaving their jobs.

Creating a sense of belonging and purpose for employees is every leader's job, and it's more important than you might think. According to an article from McKinsey titled, "Help Employees Find Their Purpose - Or Watch Them Leave,"

- 89% of employees want purpose in their lives, and
- 70% say their sense of purpose is defined by their work.

However, 85% of front-line employees **do not** feel they can live their purpose at work each day, representing a significant opportunity for leaders.



RECRUITING TIP

Just as a clear, compelling purpose can motivate people to stay with your company, it can also encourage them to join it. Ensure job descriptions and recruiting pitches lead with the company purpose and invite candidates to be part of something bigger.

Connecting people to the company's purpose can provide powerful engagement and motivation to stay. How can you get employees connected to purpose?

- Connect them to the “why” behind the purpose and ensure the purpose is visible throughout the company.
- Ensure everyone understands how their role feeds into the purpose and how their contributions connect to achieving the purpose.
- Include a reference to purpose in project retrospectives, and tie new products or development work back to the core purpose.
- Make purpose a habit. Include it in reviews, meetings, make space for it in one-on-ones, in setting goals, in company communication.

Making flexibility a superpower

One of the most significant changes employers are facing is the demand for increased job flexibility from workers of all disciplines and professions.

“Flexibility” means different things to different people. Knowledge workers are continuing to express a decided preference for working at home, at least part of the time. Some are also seeking location-agnostic roles, as they trade city dwellings for new locales in small towns and suburbs.

For others, including site-specific industrial and construction roles, flexibility means having more options (or even choices) when it comes to selecting shifts, trading shifts, and opting in for overtime.

A recent [study](#) in the United Kingdom by Morgan Sindell found that introducing flexible working for construction workers increased the number of workers who felt they had enough time to look after their health and wellbeing from 48% to 84% - a huge increase. The study also found that overtime work decreased, and that trust between team members rose.

Another trend that is gaining momentum is the [4-day workweek](#), which is proving to deliver remarkable results for the organisations that have tested shorter workweeks.

San Francisco-based Buffer reported positive results from its test of a 4-day week, including remarkable productivity gains, as well as significant reductions in employee stress, reporting:

“The four-day workweek resulted in sustained productivity levels and a better sense of work-life balance. These were the exact results we'd hoped to see, and they helped us challenge the notion that we need to work the typical ‘nine-to-five,’ five days a week.”

Flexible options are extremely popular with employees, to the point that people are making decisions to leave employers who are unable or unwilling to offer employees any flexibility related to when and where they work.

Making flexibility your organisation's superpower could be a boon to both your retention strategy as well as making the firm more attractive to potential employees.

Ensure your managers are not compelling people to leave

There's a simple way to think about this. Managers have an outsize impact on an employee's experience, accounting for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores across business units, according to Gallup. Of employees to leave their jobs, the majority (58%) said their managers were the primary reason for leaving, according to SHRM.

The last year has tested your managers severely.

The abrupt shift to remote work also created a raft of new challenges for leaders and required a range of entirely new skills. As a result, we're seeing new behavioural pitfalls remote leaders fall into, all of which can impact employee engagement or contribute to burnout, including:

- Becoming invisible to employees now that all are working remotely, with the result that employees feel less supported,
- Expecting employees to be "always-on" and immediately responsive to emails,
- Using technology to monitor employee activities,
- Over-reliance upon meetings, as a proxy for keeping tabs on productivity.

We also know that over this same period, what employees expect of employers has changed dramatically: they want more support for their mental health, more concern about their physical wellbeing, support for social causes, and in some cases are asking for radically new ways of working.

Here's the question to be thinking about today: are your managers ready to have conversations with their employees about these topics? If not, even talented, experienced managers could unwittingly be causing people to consider leaving.

Making sure your people aren't being compelled to leave by some issue or situation you don't have visibility into is an important piece of the retention strategy. If you don't use a survey platform, asking employees questions about their work and the team dynamics they've observed can bring those previously hidden issues into focus. Skip-level meetings and round-table discussions with small groups are useful forums for these discussions.

Increasing team engagement, motivation, and morale

Increasing employee engagement is faster and easier than you think, and the benefits can be immediate: engaged employees are significantly less likely to consider leaving the organisation.

If you want to stem the tide of resignations, acting quickly to resolve the issues that are causing people to leave is the surest and most effective action you can take.

The good news is that the majority of the time, the changes employees are seeking are simple. We've been looking at employee feedback and surveys for years, the requests we repeatedly see include:

- Better communication from leadership that offers more insight into strategy and the company's future
- More understanding of how their role contributes to the business and its success,
- Simply being heard, and feeling like their opinion counts.

In almost every case, there are changes such as these that are quick to make and don't cost a dime. Simply fielding a survey and asking employees for their unvarnished feedback and opinion can, in and of itself, make a significant difference.

This may seem incredibly simplistic, but the key to employee engagement we've found most effective is adopting the principle of Kaizen -- making small incremental changes consistently over time, leading to continuous, employee-led improvement.

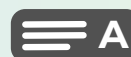
Creating a culture of feedback

Small changes add up pretty quickly in terms of scope and impact, but even more important is the cadence of listening and responding that builds trust with employees and leads to improved levels of engagement, and all of the benefits it confers the organisation. As leaders become more adept at synthesising and responding to feedback, and employees become more confident in giving it, you'll find the organisation is well on its way to developing a culture of dynamic feedback and agile response.

SURVEY YOUR TEAM

See your organisation
in a whole new way.

The resulting data is
yours to keep.



[Start your free trial](#)

Our whole approach is built around this simple idea. Survey employees, generate the action plan for delivering improvements over the next 90 days, keep the communications flowing, and re-survey the team quarterly.

Bonus: Differentiating your employer brand

There's an especially timely benefit to increasing employee engagement right now that many don't realise: your engagement strategies enable you to provide candidates with proof of the health of your culture and the excellence in your workplace in a visible, tangible way that resonates with candidates.

How do you make employee engagement visible to outsiders? There are several ways, and they work beautifully together to create a compelling narrative that can truly differentiate your organisation. Best of all, these tactics should represent little to no additional work, as they are likely to already be elements of your current engagement program. Ideas include:

- Share your team's engagement scores, showing trends over time,
- Discuss the organisation's engagement strategy: the cadence of surveys, how feedback is used, what the organisation has learned,
- Illustrate how employee feedback is valued with examples of initiatives that started with employee feedback,
- Share insights or feedback gleaned from a recent survey or roundtable discussion.

You can also use your survey platform to generate specific feedback that can be shared with recruits, by aggregating the answers to questions such as:

- What do you enjoy most about your work?
- What do you like most about working here?
- What aspect of your work is most rewarding for you?
- What makes you proud to work here?
- What advice would you give to a new person joining the team?
- What can new hires look forward to when they join our team?
- How would you describe your team?

Simply ask your team one or two questions like these, and soon you'll be armed with feedback and insight you can share with candidates, proving your culture and differentiating your employer brand.



EngagementMultiplier®

FREE OFFER FOR EBOOK READERS
ENGAGE YOUR TEAM,
GROW YOUR BUSINESS.

Start with a no-obligation free trial, and assess your team with the flagship Benchmark Assessment, a comprehensive employee engagement survey you can set up in minutes.

- Our platform is fast and easy to use.
- Personal service is here if you need it.
- Try the full Benchmark Assessment free. The resulting data is yours to keep.

Claim your free employee engagement survey here:

<https://signup.engagementmultiplier.com/breathe/>

EngagementMultiplier®

42 Berkeley Square, Mayfair, London, W1J 5AW
+44 (0) 2071 830 562

130 E. Randolph Street, Suite 1600, Chicago IL 60601-6220
773-340-0381

www.engagementmultiplier.com

© 2021 Global Magic Futures Ltd. All rights reserved. Used with written permission. Patent pending.