

# HOW TO ADDRESS AND REMEDY QUIET QUITTING IN THE WORKPLACE

GREENSFELDER, HEMKER &amp; GALE, P.C.



Whether manufacturers realize it or not, the “quiet quitting” phenomenon likely has already permeated into your workplace. But what is this term “quiet quitting,” and why has it recently garnered so much attention? “Quiet quitting” describes workers who are now scaling back their work efforts, or “checking out,” and not pushing to go the extra mile without some kind of recognition or compensation. This does not appear to be so much about quitting, as it is about disengagement. The term seems to be gaining momentum now because in the after-math of the pandemic, there has been a bigger focus on mental health, balancing work/life commitments and not burning out.

For manufacturers, having disengaged, less productive workers is an issue and indicates a dissatisfied, underperforming workforce. In today’s labor market, particularly in manufacturing, it is no secret that talent is scarce, and hiring replacement employees for skilled manufacturing positions is extremely expensive and time consuming. So how can manufacturers protect their business and ensure that their employees are productive and not preparing to plan their exit strategy, or forcing your hand to do so?

Initially, it is critical to the success of your organization that manufacturers recognize the signs of a budding quiet quitter and immediately take steps to prevent and address it. This means that

at all times manufacturers must ensure that their employees are consistently meeting legitimate performance expectations required for their specific job, and consistently – and uniformly – enforcing those performance expectations. Choosing to turn a blind eye and not immediately remedying an employee’s repeated failure to meet expectations, carelessness, or just general laziness in the workplace, can have a serious and adverse effect on your organization, including employee morale, especially if others are asked (or required) to “pick up the slack.” Also, consistently following your established policies will be one of your best defenses to any discrimination claims, should you ultimately choose to terminate the “quiet quitter”

**About the Author:** Scott Cruz is a Labor and Employment Attorney at Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale, P.C. He may be reached at [scruz@greensfelder.com](mailto:scruz@greensfelder.com), or (312) 345-5008.

for failing to meet expectations. Remember, the “inmates don’t run the asylum,” so do not let a general fear that the employee may resign or sue overshadow your ability and the need to enforce your policies and maintain reasonable expectations. Setting expectations serves no purpose if you do not require employees to meet them.

On the flip side, an employee may choose to quietly quit when performance expectations are not clearly delineated. To avoid this, manufacturers should set clearly defined expectations for your employees. Employees need to understand company expectations. Thus, make it an annual task to review and update policies and procedures in the handbook, update all position job descriptions and, if applicable, set forth specific performance expectations with metrics and attainable goals for each position.

Regardless of whether all or part of your workforce is remote, hybrid, or completely in-person, manufacturers should try to take the time, and make the effort, to conduct occasional “wellness” checks with their employees. Taking the time and effort of showing your employees that you care, costs nothing and, therefore, has no impact on the proverbial “bottom-line.” This generally should not be limited to a perfunctory 2-minute conversation that occurs during an annual performance review (if you are even doing these), because these reviews all too often are too impersonal and serve a narrow purpose. Find the time and put forth effort. However, be organized with a concise agenda and ask specific and pointed questions about the employee’s workload, the employee’s career goals, and how the company can contribute to or do more to help the employee’s success at the company. A little can go a long way to steering the disinterested employee back to being a productive member of your workforce.

Finally, incentivize outstanding performance among your employees by recognizing and rewarding employees who put in the extra effort day in and day out on the job, or just for a job well done. Fostering a culture of appreciation in this way can be very effective to keep

employees engaged, while simultaneously maintaining, or in some instances actually increasing productivity. Indeed, a strong culture can unify employees and help keep quiet quitting at bay. Manufacturers, therefore, should focus on re-engaging their workforce. While most employees probably welcome and understandably prefer monetary incentives as a reward for their good deeds, there are other non-monetary incentives that can be equally rewarding. For example, a simple “thank you” from senior leadership, or starting an “employee of the month” recognition program that comes with preferred parking in a designated parking spot in the company park-

ing lot, can go a long way to enhance employee morale. Employees generally appreciate kind gestures, especially from senior leadership.

Manufacturers need to be alert to quiet quitting and deal with it by creating a positive work culture, caring for workers as individuals, and supporting employees. Most workers want more than a position, and it is no longer enough for employers to provide only a paycheck. Employees want a purpose for their work. By implementing the recommendations above, it may be possible for manufacturers to reduce (or even eliminate altogether) the quiet quit quotient in their workplace. ♦