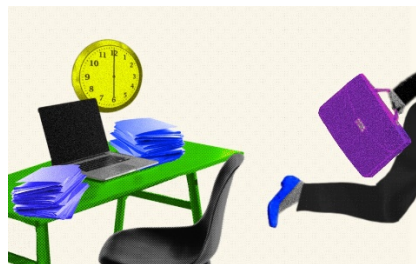




recruiting excellence for this digital technology age

How to manage “quiet quitting”

7 rules



A recent Gallup research poll has suggested that “at least 50% of the US workforce consists of quiet quitters: large numbers of employees it seems are just doing the minimum to get by, putting in no more time, effort or enthusiasm than absolutely necessary”. And Gallup confirmed this appears to be a growing trend: “people feeling disengaged, not connected to the mission and purpose of the company, and with no motivation or incentive in their current job to go the extra mile.”

Of course, employee engagement or disenchantment with their job is nothing new. There are countless studies showing that it is often the key challenge that every company has to face up to if they are to truly and sustainably succeed. But this now seems to be ever more critical, with Covid, lockdowns and hybrid working /WFH an accelerating force. In my recruitment work for example, I have placed candidates who even now, 12 to 18 months after joining have perhaps only met their co-workers on a handful of occasions, who have only met their boss a few times, have no real sense of the company culture, not had the chance to make any friends, no “water cooler”/ “coffee in the office kitchen” shared moments and gossip. Hardly surprising perhaps that they struggle to connect, to feel valued and wanted as an important part of the organisation, to feel committed and inspired.

So, how can companies breakthrough, how establish that key and essential and heartfelt engagement?

In my research and working with companies big and small around the world, I have found there are 7 rules for success, 7 keys to managing “quiet quitting” and transform that into, let’s call it: “noisy participation”!

Rule 1: Appoint a Chief Heart Officer

Claude Silver is the *Chief Heart Officer* at Vayner Media (a global \$150m revenue creative agency). “I work for 800 human beings, 800 souls. I aim to be in touch with the heartbeat of every single person in the company. My role is to infuse the business with empathy and purpose. We want this company to be a place where people *can* find a home. Now more than ever is a time to provide a connecting and emotional landscape where our people can feel realistic and optimistic.”

I have written about CHO’s before and am surprised more companies have not followed the Vayner Media lead. It’s as much as anything the symbolism, the flag, the recognition that says that in today’s world, we care. We appreciate that people do need that kindness and extra care and support and so setting up, at C-level, a person/a team with the dedicated time and resource to do just that.

The US-based Center for Agile Leadership has done further research on this: “there’s no doubt people leadership and management has become ever more challenging and demanding. There’s no established off the shelf policy for managing in a post-pandemic world, but especially senior HR and other people leaders have to become innovative and open-minded to best engage their workforce and keep them motivated. We expect to see more senior and C-level roles dedicated to looking after a remote and hybrid workforce.”

Rule 2: Pay & Benefits

Paying competitively ought to be the goal surely of every company. Organisations I have recruited for who aim to benchmark and pay towards the top quartile, such as Aviva, LEGO, Unilever, do tend to attract and get the best people, as would be expected. But it surprises me how many companies will proudly tell me our policy is deliberately *not* to pay top quartile, “we want people to join us because of who we are, not because of the money.”

That noble philosophy may sound good and idealistic and may indeed be appropriate in the not-for-profit sector where individuals are highly motivated to perhaps support a particular cause. But in the private /commercial sector?

Research by Willis Towers Watson has shown that 47% of people left their jobs because they could get more money elsewhere and that 39% of people felt that there was no point going the extra mile because they did not feel they were being paid their market rate. Of course, people will always look for higher pay & benefits, but surely no reason to add fuel to that fire by deliberately paying low quartile?

3. Career path

Nearly half (47%) of employees don’t see a clear path to progression, according to new research conducted by IRIS Software Group (IRIS), in partnership with YouGov. Especially as a result of the pandemic, the research is showing that people generally are keen to catch up with their career growth. But the IRIS research showed there is sometimes a lack of transparency between managers and their teams over career goals and that current HR tools and systems are not built to best manage and support employee progression. “Workers today

want purpose and meaning from their work and a clear timeline of what's next for them in the workplace – and rightly so.”

Professional Services firms are the stand-out success stories however in this regard. Law firms, Accountants and the major Banks all set out clear plans and timelines for promotion. So for example at the top 4 Accountancy firms, EY, KPMG, Deloitte and PWC, a graduate on joining knows exactly what they need to achieve and by when to get to the next pay and promotion level, from Junior Associate to Snr Associate to Manager, Snr Mgr, Director, Managing Director to Partner. “Here at PWC, you can expect a clear and structured career path through the levels from internship to partnership”.

There's another good stand-out example from AT&T. They have a mantra: “every employee should be the CEO of their own career”. Each and every AT&T employee has a personal careers dashboard. It shows all the development milestones they need to hit to get to the next level in the organisation. It's tailored and adapted for each person. It reflects appraisal and 360 feedback as well personal performance. “Our Future Ready program is transparent. It shows what competencies people need to reach to achieve a particular goal and sets out all the training that will be provided to enable that person to get there”.

Rule 4: Bonuses/incentives

LV is one of the UK's largest insurance companies with more than 5 million customers and offering a range of personal and life insurance, pension and savings. It has been voted “best loved insurer” 5 yrs running, it has been rated by Moneywise as “most trusted insurer” and has won best life and pensions provider 8x by Moneyfacts.

CEO David Hynam talks about: “always trying to improve our employee experience and engagement, *recognising that great customer experience starts from the inside out.*”

To encourage and incentivise, LV has a generous array of employee benefits to help their staff engage. Everyone is eligible for the LV bonus scheme, all are able to participate in the pension plan up to a 14% matched contribution, there are coffee cards for new joiners, healthcare, holidays for top-performing employees and their families, *weekly thank you cards and gift vouchers with more than 23,000 sent out in the last year (workforce of 5000)*, flexible working, crowdsourcing /funding plans for new ideas, a customer leadership academy...a lot of effort going in to make employees feel valued and motivated.

Bonuses don't need to be confined to a once a year reward payable 15 months after the start of the year. They can be paid to have an immediate impact, now, recognising and rewarding today.

Nationwide Building Society is another organisation which has established an impressive range of employee benefits, available to all staff. They include time off for local charity volunteer work, everyone eligible for the pension scheme and a minimum 4% employer contribution, free healthcare for employees and their family, flexible working including part time, flexi time, school term time only and home /remote working, minimum 24 days holiday for all, *vouchers /employee rewards each week for work well-done, celebrations of employees “who go the extra mile” with their stories published weekly for all to read, long service awards...employees feel valued and their efforts recognised.*

Rule 5: Train the managers!

If the new paradigm includes remote working, hybrid workforces, distributed employees, located potentially all over the world, how can managers best manage, how ensure the right levels of employee motivation and engagement, how ensure low to zero levels of “quiet quitting”?

Most have not been trained in this new world of work, in many instances they will have themselves grown up in a more traditional environment where employees came to the office 5 days/week and it was often relatively easier to identify who was committed and who was disaffected.

AXA, Cromwell Group, Siemens, Virgin Money are all examples of organisations who have recognised this “new paradigm” and have been proactive in dealing with it.

For example at AXA, they have launched a programme called “Smart Working”. *Each* team has got together and been asked to all *co-design* a team agreement about working arrangements, how much time in the office and when, agreed days in the week when they all need to be there, socials booked in the calendar, commitments eg to 2 hour response to calendar invites, 1 hour response to calls, setting-up mentor and coaching times, an acceptance that hybrid working has its advantages, but also its disadvantages and an open dialogue about how each person on the team expects to respond.

Each manager was also invited to join the “Smart Ready” training programs, a mix of virtual and in-person courses which focussed on communication and engagement styles, how to encourage and most importantly celebrate good performance and also how to identify if an employee is struggling and how to help them.

“Retaining key talent is one of the biggest issues. It’s putting the brakes on growth. It’s become more challenging in the new hybrid world of work. Businesses must leave no stone unturned to develop new solutions to manage in the best possible way in this new climate”
-*Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director*

6. Attractive workspace

Is the office attractive, is it a nice place to come to work, is it easy to get to eg within range of public transport options, is there somewhere to park my car? Is it modern, does it have good aircon for the summer days, are there coffee shops nearby, do people rate it as a good environment to work in?

If an organisation wants to engage and incentivise and motivate then surely there’s an increasing premium on providing the most positive work place experience. The bar has been raised by the emergence of new flexible office spaces. Often located in city centres with modern facilities, attractive design and typically with a good buzzy atmosphere. Such workspaces have reset expectations about what an office can look and feel like.

Knight Frank, the property experts, have said they are seeing a “flight to quality for premium office space.” As leases come to an end, companies are often looking for “up to 20% or 30%

less space” but in an area and style which can provide more. Meantime, “Grade B space is seeing a significant increase in vacancy rates”.

Research by Microsoft found that 38% of employees felt their office “was not an attractive place to come to work” and that can provide a further disconnect between the company and the employee. Getting the office workspace right is not by itself of course going to be an answer but it can be an integral part of this “7 rules” plan.

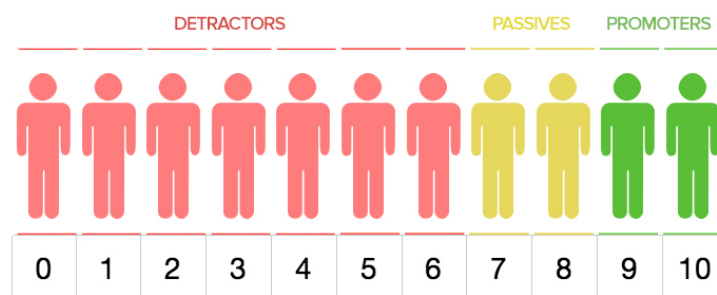
Rule 7: Measure to motivate

eNPS (“employee net promoter score”) is a simple tool to monitor and measure and motivate. It works by benchmarking and asking just one a simple question: *would you recommend working in this company?*

It’s a straightforward piece of research that can be carried out by each line manager at every level in the company. It can be done as frequently as wanted, but usually eg every 6 months. The answers from each employee are anonymous. But the overall score for each team can be measured and monitored and benchmarked. If the organisation wants to, then the results can also be published: best performing vs worst performing.

The eNPS question asks for a simple score out of 10. But in all the eNPS research, it’s been found that only a score of 9 or 10 truly counts as an active recommendation:

- Promoters: give the score 9 or 10 and are “extremely likely” to recommend
- Passively Satisfied: they give a score of 7 or 8 and are neutral. They’re not likely to recommend but they’re satisfied with the experience
- Detractors: give a score of 0 to 6 and are not all likely to recommend.



Allianz, Panasonic, Salesforce, Apple, Sage, NFU Mutual, First Direct...there are a growing number of companies who use this eNPS tool and guide, but research by Bain & Co (who founded this approach originally) shows that such companies are still a minority, that in particular sectors like Logistics, Utilities and Energy companies have been slow to adopt and in fact “only 10% of 190 companies surveyed could be shown to excel at employee engagement and experience, consistently getting those 9 or 10 eNPS scores.”

There are no quick and easy answers. Retaining staff, building commitment and excitement, creating an environment where people want to and regularly do go the extra mile, where that mode of behaviour becomes the norm and the standard, that will always be an ongoing challenge and opportunity. Smaller companies and ventures can find it easier where there is a shared and common purpose, where there can be more intimacy and esprit de corps. Larger organisations by definition will find that harder, and harder still to enshrine that motivation organisation-wide and not just in a few teams in a few areas.

We've all seen and sometimes had the privilege of working in well-run, well-managed, inspiring work places. We can point to that manager or that person who was "just brilliant" at getting the best out of everyone. The challenge now is just that bit harder in this new world of work and so we do have to learn to adapt how we manage, how we build teams and how best motivate, sustainably and successfully.

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."
– *Walt Disney*

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."
– *Aristotle*

"Good teams create the building blocks for success"
– *Dwight Eisenhower*



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