

# Can We Finally “Breathe”?: No, Prepare for the Grand Exodus

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So, it looks like things are looking up. More people are getting their COVID vaccinations, and the [CDC lifted its restrictions for mask-wearing for people who have been vaccinated](#). Traffic is back. More people are going back to the workplace. All this crazy pandemic-induced mania is about to dissipate. Right?

Wrong. The seismic shift in the workplace started in the pandemic continues to rage on. For several reasons, more than half the workforce intends to look for a new job this year, according to a [recent article by the Society for Human Resources Management](#). This phenomenon, predicted by a professor, is referred to as [the Great Resignation](#).

While leaders were, understandably, focused on trying to keep their companies afloat due to downturn in their sector or fully functioning amid the increased demand for their products or services, a host of stressors and disconnects have amassed for the workforce over the last 15 months, including:

- 40% feel less connected to their company
- 42% say their company culture has diminished since the start of the pandemic
- Companies are not driving the recognition of their talent or fostering the culture
- Pent-up demand to change jobs has accumulated in the restlessness of the times
- Burnout was cited by the majority of respondents who plan to quit their job this year
- While remote work is appreciated, employees suffer from a lack of work-life balance as they work more hours to keep pace with the demands of work



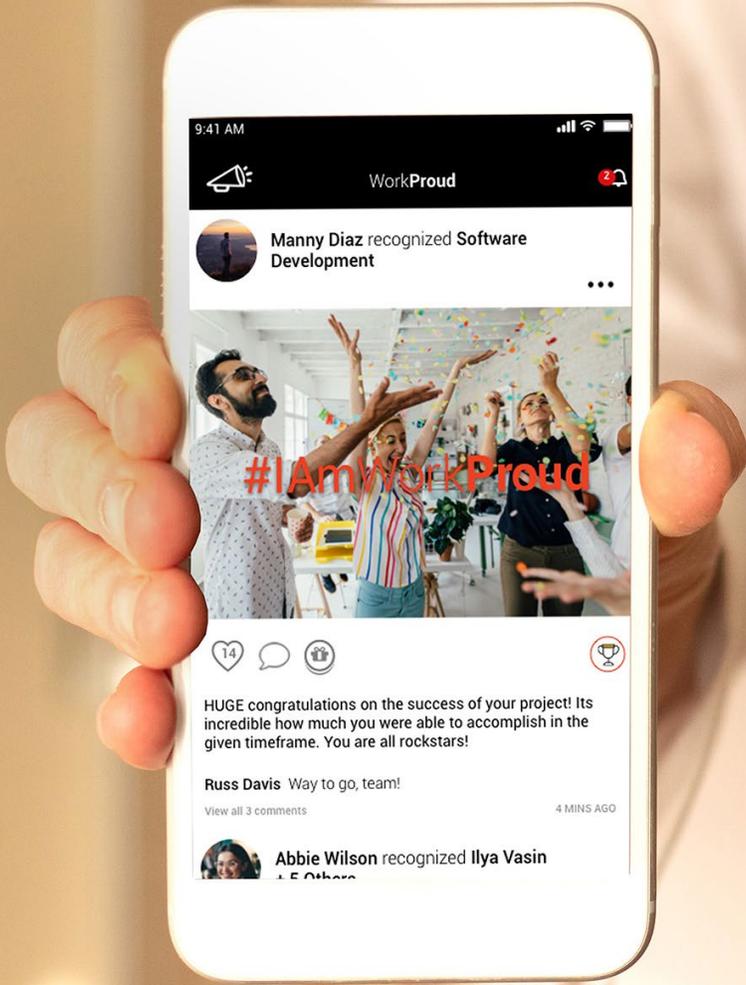
What this translates to for companies: You're about to incur an uptick in recruiting costs as your team (or the contingent staffing agency you use) goes to work to replace all those departing. Then, you'll have onboarding and training costs and register lower performance as the new hires acclimate to their positions and your company. In short, you'll need to immediately prepare for the "mass exodus" that's about to occur.

While it's critical to understand the challenges facing companies right now, there are some steps you can take to immediately address the disconnect. In addition to hiring strategically for new roles for the new world we're operating in and not merely backfilling the positions vacated, here are a few ways to start retaining talent and reviving your culture while you build for the future:

- Listen to what your employees are saying they want from work and be flexible in crafting the "return to the workplace." A large majority will likely indicate they wish to work at least a few days remotely from home and not return to the office 100 percent.
- Since one of the most often cited variables desired by employees is to "feel valued and appreciated," and yet a [whopping 74 percent want more recognition for their work](#), this is arguably one of the first places to start. Leaders and managers need training and accountability for recognizing their team members. But why leave it there? Why not invite everyone in the organization to thank and celebrate each other? In other words, "scale" recognition. That's where looking at [WorkProud](#) for their mobile technology platform that does just that makes sense. Yes, I am a serious fan.
- Prioritize mental health and well-being and provide access to mental health professionals and an array of services that strengthen emotional, intellectual, physical, financial, and vocational health. Doing so is critical to both combat burnout and prepare the workforce for the future. [See this article from the Gallup Organization](#) that also ties well-being initiatives to employee engagement.



While the COVID pandemic may seem to be relieving some concerns within the workplace, new ones are emerging. Companies that quickly address the myriad of disconnects registering in the workforce today can reduce turnover costs and moderate the downturn in productivity as the newly replaced team comes onboard by implementing practices that focus on flexibility, recognition, and well-being. Remain focused on your people, get them the support and appreciation they crave, and enlist the help of service providers who can help create a vibrant workplace where your people not only want to stay but also thrive.



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