



Building the future of work requires skills training, flexibility

More than a year and a half into the pandemic, the “Great Resignation” continues, as substantial numbers of workers have already switched jobs and even more are actively seeking new ones, according to a newly released survey from Prudential Financial. How employers respond will be critical to their long-term success.

Data from the [*Pulse of the American Worker: The Grand Experiment – Building the Future of Work*](#) say it all. Fielded in mid-September by Morning Consult on behalf of Prudential, the survey found that 15% of workers have switched jobs since the start of the pandemic, and nearly half (46%) are either actively looking for or considering a new job search.

These numbers are even higher among millennials, who are now the largest segment of the American workforce, with 29% and 30% saying they are actively looking for or considering looking for a new job, respectively.

Some of the reasons behind workers’ exits were not unusual. Among those surveyed, 45% say they were seeking better compensation and benefits. But 26% of respondents say a lack of opportunities at their former job spurred their departure; another 26% say they wanted to do something different.

Among millennial workers, 26% say a desire to work remotely at least some of the time fueled their desire to switch jobs.

Employers may have an opportunity to address departures: 45% of the workers who are planning to look elsewhere said that if their employer offered internal mobility opportunities, they would think about staying.

This state of flux has had ripple effects in the workplace and among teams, as two-thirds of respondents in manager roles say their teams have been impacted by employees leaving during the pandemic. Seven in 10 managers say they have open positions to fill, and a third (35%) report having more than three open roles. Nearly half of managers with open roles say it is taking longer to fill these positions now than before the pandemic.

New normal

The survey, which polled 2,000 full-time employed adults in mid-September, comes as workers settle into the “new normal” of virtual work across many industries by working, job hunting and interviewing online. The pandemic accelerated this shift exponentially, but it has also exposed challenges.

Nearly 3 in 4 people, or 73%, say a gap exists between the skills American workers have and the skills needed for future jobs. Eight in 10 believe technology skills will be increasingly important for those jobs, and 3 out of 4 say knowing how to analyze data will be critical. When asked about the one skill they are looking to build in the coming year, nearly half (46%) say it would be technology or data related.

While most workers know growing their skills will be a requirement for career mobility, 58% are struggling to learn new skills in a remote environment.

“The future of work is already here. Talent can be a company’s biggest differentiator, so it is important that employers move with urgency to address the growing skills challenge and provide workers with opportunities to develop their skills,” says Prudential Vice Chair Rob Falzon. “Nearly two years ago, Prudential invested in a career development and internal mobility platform to enhance skills training and create new career opportunities for our employees. Since then, employees have logged more than 100,000 hours of training, and we’ve seen a nearly 50% increase in the number of roles filled by internal candidates.”

Flexibility is key

A *Pulse* survey fielded in March 2021 found that while most people working remotely appreciated the benefits of virtual work, many were starting to feel disconnected from company culture. Several months later, those trends are continuing.

Among remote workers, 27% say they are actively looking for a new job and 25% are considering looking. Half report feeling less connected to their employer while working in a remote setting. A hybrid model may offer some opportunity to address workers’ desire for flexible work arrangements and care for culture at the same time. Six in 10 remote workers would feel more connected to their employers if they were going into a work site at least one day a week.

Perhaps surprisingly, two-thirds of people who are still working remotely are comfortable returning to the work site — but they want the benefit of a hybrid work model and the flexibility to choose which days they go in. In returning to the work site, many people who worked remotely during the pandemic say they are looking forward to socializing and collaborating with coworkers.

“Work site reentry can be a culture-building opportunity,” Falzon says. “Employers must meet this moment with the same deftness as they did when pivoting to remote work. By focusing on their talent and building resilient cultures, employers can stand out in the current environment and gain a competitive advantage.”

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