



# Quiet Quitting Quiet Firing Career Cushioning

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Navigating Organizational Dysfunction:  
A Leader's Guide to Retaining Top Talent

**FranklinCovey**  
Middle East

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# The New Workplace Trends

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## Quiet Quitting

is the phenomenon of coming to work to give the bare minimum without taking the extra mile.

Employees walk away from overtime or going above and beyond. The potential causes of this trend are: not seeing a future with the company, the opportunity to work elsewhere, the fact that a lot of extra work goes unrewarded and finally perceiving that management is not invested in the employee. There's even a term called "rage applying" for people who are applying to as many companies as possible because they're unhappy with their current employer.

## Quiet Firing

is when the manager stops investing in the employee and puts obstacles in their path to career advancement. It manifests in assigning a lot of routine work that is not stimulating, rejecting the employee's submissions for no good reason and minimizing communication.

A prominent cause for quiet firing is avoiding difficult conversations.

For example, a manager might want to terminate the work of an employee but is not comfortable with having a direct conversation about it. Hence, they might overwhelm the employee with too many tasks in order to pressure them into resigning.

Quiet firing and quiet quitting can feed into each other; an employee who suspects that their manager is quiet firing them will lose motivation leading to quiet quitting. Conversely, the manager who suspects that the employee is quiet quitting will not see that they're worth investing in so they will minimize interaction. This can lead to a destructive vicious cycle that would destroy the fabric of the organization's culture.

## Career Cushioning

Having a plan b for career opportunities when you're not satisfied with the current job. In this state of uncertainty about the commitment of the other party and dissatisfaction with the status quo, it would make sense that career cushioning would spread



# Disengagement in the Modern Workplace

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Quiet quitting, quiet firing, and career cushioning are all related to the concept of leaving a job or an employment situation due to lack of engagement.


People need to feel that what they're doing is valuable, challenging, adequately compensated and appreciated. This is the fuel that energizes them everyday to get out of bed and do their best. Once there's a deficiency, the human engine will run out of gas and productivity is expected to take a hit. This problem is especially prominent nowadays in the alarming trends of quiet quitting, quiet firing and career cushioning.



According to Gallup's 2022 Key Workplace Trends in The United Arab Emirates report:

 8% are actively disengaged


 62% are not engaged


 30% are engaged

- In response to the statement “I plan to be with my current company one year from now,” the survey showed that 12% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while 55% agreed with it. The remaining were somewhere in between and had neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.
- In response to “I would recommend my company as a place to work to friends and family members.”, 10% strongly disagreed, 50% strongly agreed, and the rest were in the middle.

According to Gallup's 2022 Key Workplace Trends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia report:

 12% are actively disengaged

 64% are not engaged

 24% are engaged

- In response to “To what extent are you currently looking for a new job? ”, 24% said that they’re actively looking for a new job, 24% said that they “look around” but “not actively looking for a job” and 52% are not looking for a new job.

You can see from these numbers how strongly correlated is engagement with the desire to leave the company.



# Quiet Quitting, Quiet Firing and Career Cushioning Assumptions

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In order to tackle these problems, it's good to keep the following assumptions in mind. The assumptions listed are statements about employee behavior and motivations that are believed to be true, but may not be supported by concrete evidence. These assumptions can guide an organization's approach to employee retention and help identify potential issues or opportunities for improvement:

1. Most people desire to make a significant impact and have their work recognized as valuable and meaningful. They want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and feel that their contributions are appreciated and valued.
2. People want to be compensated fairly.
3. The competition for attracting and retaining top talent is intense and constantly evolving, and organizations need to be proactive in identifying and addressing the factors that impact employee satisfaction and retention.
4. Culture is a primary reason for staying or going. This assumption suggests that employees are more likely to stay with an organization if they feel a strong sense of belonging and alignment with the company's values and mission.

5. Leaders create culture. A positive and supportive culture can be a major factor in employee retention.

6. People perform well when they get to exercise their strengths in a challenging but not overwhelming environment, when they have the right balance between autonomy & structure, and when they have healthy supportive work relationships.

7. Proper communication can resolve misunderstandings and performance issues between leaders and their teams.

8. People need to have both a sense of security and growth in their career paths. This assumption suggests that employees need a balance of stability and advancement in their careers. A sense of security in their job and the organization can provide employees with a sense of comfort and stability. Without a sense of security, employees may feel uncertain about their future and be more likely to leave for other opportunities. Without opportunities for growth, employees may become bored or disengaged in their work.



# Leadership vs Employee Engagement

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Quiet quitting, quiet firing and career cushioning can result from poor leadership.

Creating and maintaining great leadership is the antidote. Great leaders differ from regular leaders in the results that they achieve. That is not enough though as a lot of leaders can obtain results with humans as casualties, Thus, the actions that they take matter just as much. They differ as well in how they think and who they are, especially in regards to how they approach their teams.



# Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Engagement

Engagement is inextricably linked to productivity. Employees who do not feel a connection with their jobs are not expected to learn or thrive as much as their engaged peers.

There are 6 levels of engagement: creative excitement, heartfelt cooperation, willing cooperation, indifferent compliance, resentful obedience and “rebel or quit”. Quiet quitting occurs at the indifferent compliance level and below.



Employees' level of engagement is inextricably linked to the type of leadership in the organization.



## Authoritarian Command & Control

This level is a residue from the industrial age. The most important thing was physical labor and the KPIs were very definite and tangible (e.g. 30 pieces produced per hour). It was a very transactional relationship.



## Enlightened Command & Control

This level came out of the knowledge worker age. The importance of the mind grew, efforts are made to address the root causes of employee disengagement and find ways to re-engage workers. While the approach may offer some benefits, it ultimately falls short in addressing the root causes of disengagement and creating a truly empowering and engaging work environment.



## Trust & Inspire

Engagement now is important but not enough. What is needed is to inspire the employee. The leader here authentically cares about the employee's wellbeing. The whole being of the employee becomes the concern of the leader including body, spirit, heart and mind. Reaching the inspiration level can make the employee unleash their biggest potential and shine. This will lead to a culture where employees can say “I'm a valued member of a winning team, doing meaningful work, in an environment of trust.”



# 92%

of all organizations  
operate with some  
variation of **command  
and control**.



# 125%

**Higher productivity**  
is shown by inspired  
employees compared  
to **satisfied** employees.



# Strategies for Dealing with Low Engagement Levels Among Employees

## Proper Prioritization:

Spending a lot of time on unimportant tasks is a demotivator. It's useful to have a prioritization system to prevent spending time on unimportant tasks. [The FranklinCovey Time Matrix](#) can be used for this purpose. Q1 tasks are important and urgent. Q2 tasks are important but not urgent. Q3 tasks are urgent but not important. Q4 tasks are neither important nor urgent. The goal is to spend as much time as possible in Q2.

Leaders can cause their subordinates to disengage unintentionally by throwing them into Q1, Q3 and Q4. For example, they can keep waiting till the last minute for emergencies and then dump those tasks on their team. This can lead to a non-stop stressful work environment. Also, they can make no distinction between the tasks in terms of importance, which can lead to overwhelm and focusing on the wrong task at the wrong time.

60% of the time spent on important matters

40% on unimportant matters

- From the 350,000 respondents in FranklinCovey's survey for The 5 Choices of Extraordinary Productivity

## Having Regular 1 on 1 meetings:

Reaching the inspiration level can be facilitated through one on ones, as it is a step towards understanding and relating to the person's whole being.

1 on 1 meeting tips:

- Hold 1-on-1's at regular intervals.
- Schedule at least 30 minutes for each meeting.
- Use the prep worksheets.
- Draw out the issues and interests.
- Help find solutions rather than solve problems.

According to Gallup, employees who have at least one weekly meaningful conversation with their manager are about **4** times more engaged.

One aspect of 1 on 1's that can be especially useful is mastering the art of initiating and handling difficult conversations. The Forbes Coaches Council were asked for tips on this topic. Best practices included not sugar coating the message, establishing trust, creating a culture of feedback and exercising empathy.

This can be especially useful for quiet firing as many of the managers resort to this technique because of their inadequate communication skills. Having regular effective one on ones can build a strong healthy relationship built on trust.



### Effective Coaching:

Effective coaching brings out hidden and exciting potential. To get employees to the inspiration level, we need some effective coaching. That is built on listening, acknowledging and questioning. Powerful questions are a cornerstone of effective coaching to unlock their insight. This is useful for making sure that talent is uncovered.

High-performing teams share more than

**5x more  
positive  
feedback**

than low-performing teams.

—MARCIAL LOSADA AND EMILY HEAPHY

### Developing Career Paths:

This solution is especially relevant for career cushioning. Employees veer towards plan B, C and D when there is a lack of security and clarity in terms of their future. Leaders can work with their employees to create this needed structure and vision. The type of career path will depend on the goals of the employee. For example, a senior contributor path can be charted for people who are not interested in management positions. Career paths can vary in terms how fast or toned down it is depending on the employee's ambition.



# How FranklinCovey can Help you Engage with your People

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Employee engagement and thriving has become a priority for modern day businesses. No longer is it the case that employers can rest assured that their team will stick with them without going the extra mile.

This is why it is important to prioritize the wellbeing of your team.

FranklinCovey provides learning solutions based on **35+** years of research and refinement to help every person pursue key opportunities for professional development. These will help you:

- Communicate and Collaborate
- Foster Inclusivity
- Increase Trust
- Lead Yourself
- Navigate Change

At FranklinCovey, we are committed to providing training and assessment in leadership, individual effectiveness, and business execution, helping businesses develop more effective leaders, better engaged employees, more productive teams, and a winning culture. Your team's success whether from a performance or a culture perspective is our concern.



# How FranklinCovey's Content Assists in Retaining Top Talent?

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Core to what we do at FranklinCovey — assisting organizations as they take on the challenges that matter most — our following solutions may be areas of consideration to address the underlying principles that fuel Quiet Quitting:

- **Trust and Inspire:** Addressing a leader's mindset and responsibility to pave the way for employee meaning, purpose, and contribution.
- **The 6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team®:** Cultivating trusted relationships through regular 1-on-1 practices.
- **The 4 Essential Roles of Leadership®:** Utilizing key coaching skills to build leadership capabilities in others and increase individual capacity.



- **The 5 Choices of Extraordinary Productivity®:** Skill/mindset development towards burnout avoidance through clarifying priorities.
- **Multipliers®:** Recognition of accidental diminisher tendencies that result in decreased engagement and low psychological safety.
- **The 7 Habits for Managers®:** Maximizing clarity of role expectations and commitments using Win-Win agreement principles.

Seamlessly integrating FranklinCovey's unique combination of content, people, and technology with The Impact Platform allows our solutions to create collective behavior change in ways that lead to breakthrough results and a culture where everyone can take on timely problems, show up authentically, and do their best work.



# Build the Power Skills That Unlock All Other Skills

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Unleash the potential of every person in your organization by giving them tools to collaborate with others, manage their time, and make a distinctive contribution to help build a culture of success.

Our unique approach combines powerful content based on decades of research and development, expert consultants and facilitators, and innovative technology that supports and reinforces lasting behavior change.

[Learn more](#)

To learn more, email us at  
[info@franklincoveyme.com](mailto:info@franklincoveyme.com)  
or visit [www.franklincoveyme.com](http://www.franklincoveyme.com)



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FranklinCovey is the most trusted leadership company in the world, with operations in over 160 countries. We transform organizations by building exceptional leaders, teams, and cultures that get breakthrough results. Available through the FranklinCovey All Access Pass<sup>®</sup>, our best-in-class content, experts, technology, and metrics seamlessly integrate to ensure lasting behavior change at scale. Our approach to leadership and organizational change has been tested and refined by working with tens of thousands of teams and organizations over the past 30 years.



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