



The Conscious Quitters



Background

Gender parity is stalling at best and at worst going backwards. In the UK alone, ECC's research indicates that, across the banking, legal and FTSE 350 sectors, 20,000 women need to be promoted to achieve parity. But given attrition challenges, employees' new expectations and outdated talent models, more than fishing in one pool of 'typical' or 'traditional talent' is needed. Organisations must look beyond to other previously untapped pools of talent. Women with the skill, experience and ambition for senior leadership have not disappeared from your business. They are still there but stuck or overlooked by criteria used to identify and promote internal talent. To learn more about why segmenting your workforce of women by alternative talent pools is important and why it is essential to build a plan to engage these women, watch 'Where have all the senior women gone'.

By reimagining talent as the four different pools ECC has identified through their research, you can take steps to harness their potential. These are The Boundaried Workers, The Overlooked, The Conscious Quitters and The Uninspired. Take note, these categories won't cover every individual, and some individuals will be in more than one. Here we explain The **Conscious Quitters**.

Who are The Conscious Quitters?

The Conscious Quitters are at a stage in their career when they can (and will) prioritise working in line with their values. They are any age, but many are younger workers motivated to work for organisations aligned with their beliefs. Conscious Quitters pay attention to how their employer approaches issues such as climate change, mental health, diversity, and inclusion. To be satisfied in their workplace, they look outwards and want reassurance from their employer that they prioritise global issues that they feel are important. An organisation must act on these critical issues to avoid these employees reaching a state of poor productivity, burnout and potentially leaving.



Workplace context

Thanks to smart technology, Millennials and Gen Zs have grown up and joined the workforce with information on global issues such as systemic racism, carbon footprints and gender discrimination at their fingertips. And the pandemic allowed people of every age to reassess what is most important to them. Together these contexts have led many to question their employer's stance on socio-political and environmental issues. PwC surveyed businesses, employees, and consumers in 2021 across the US, Brazil, the UK, Germany and India. They found that nearly 9 in 10 (86% of) employees prefer to work for a company that cares about the same issues they do.

Impact for organisations

When considering a new employer, Conscious Quitters will pay particular attention to factors such as a company's values and stance on ESG. New research shows that people seeking employment are willing to explore roles with lower salaries if the company is more diverse. The Runnymede Trust and Fawcett Society found that women of colour search for a company's diversity and inclusion statistics significantly more than white women.

It's not only finding new roles where this is important. Deloitte explored the importance of workplace diversity with their younger employees in the context of staff retention. They found that 2/3 of Millennials and Gen Zs would be much more likely to work for an employer for more than five years if it had a diverse workforce. Poor commitments to ESG will drive Conscious Quitters away from organisations and brands they previously trusted. 76% of consumers surveyed by PwC in 2021 said they would discontinue their relationship with companies that treat the environment, employees, or the community poorly.

Whilst Conscious Quitters will only go above and beyond in an environment that aligns with their beliefs, when it doesn't; they may leave or become 'quiet quitters' - those doing the bare minimum at their jobs because they feel disengaged. Where organisations do not have authentic ESG values at their core, it drains the Conscious Quitters and can lead to high levels of burnout. A study from Indeed indicates that 58% of Millennials and 59% of Gen Zs are experiencing burnout.



What should organisations be doing to support and galvanise their Conscious Quitters?

If you start by acknowledging there are talented individuals that you have probably missed, you can begin to action plan how to realise this opportunity. This considerable pool of potential talent could help your organisation progress in gender equity if identified and harnessed. Understanding this segment of workers will help you and your leaders broaden their perspectives when they are identifying talent for development, stretch opportunities and progression.

Actions

1. If you manage a team, regardless of what's happening in your organisation, remember you have a significant impact on their workplace experience. Conscious Quitters value highly diversity and inclusion, and you should consider your leadership approach.
2. DEI, talent and HR people will understand that **this group of talent makes up a significant proportion of an organisation's current workforce, as well as the bright talent they hope to recruit from the next generation.** Organisations prioritising ESG will improve retention and employee satisfaction and attract new talent. Many of these issues maybe outside of your current remit, but you can begin with a focus on building inclusive and psychologically safe environments so that this pool can feel a sense of belonging.
3. If you are ready to take the next step and embed a plan for positive change for your organisation then download ECC's free Gender Assessment Planner. This evidence-based assessment tool will help organisations to develop and implement a tailored plan for progress in gender parity.