

Engaging Employees During the Great Gloom

The unhappiness that many employees have consistently been feeling since 2020 reached an all-time low in the second quarter of 2024, according to BambooHR. This period, called the “Great Gloom,” reflects the widespread disengagement, burnout and workplace dissatisfaction experienced by U.S. workers in recent years.

Unlike the “Great Resignation,” where waves of employees voluntarily left their jobs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Great Gloom indicates a more passive but pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and disengagement among workers. While employees are less inclined to quit their jobs than in previous years, employers are struggling to engage their workforce effectively. The rise in employee discontent could lead to higher turnover rates and decreased productivity for organizations. Keep in mind that a recent 2024 EY survey revealed that nearly 2 out of 5 employees are likely to quit their jobs in the next year. As such, it’s crucial for employers to implement strategies to engage their workforce and anticipate rising employee quit rates in 2025.

Why Is Employee Happiness Down?

Several factors have collectively driven a steady decrease in employee happiness. According to BambooHR, persistent layoffs have created job insecurity and dissatisfaction. Inflation has added financial strain, as many workers report that their wage increases aren’t keeping up with the rising cost of living. Inadequate compensation, especially in sectors like health care, has also left many workers feeling undervalued.

Furthermore, ongoing debates over remote work and mismatched work expectations have fueled dissatisfaction.

Ways to Engage Employees During the Great Gloom

Engaged employees are satisfied with their jobs and usually speak highly of their organizations. They tend to be more productive and better prepared to meet challenges. Moreover, happy employees encourage co-workers to do their best and are more likely to remain with their organizations than those who are dissatisfied.

Consider these strategies to help engage employees during challenging times:

- **Recognize achievement regularly.** Acknowledge top performers during team meetings and companywide announcements.
- **Conduct weekly check-ins.** Managers can hold recurring meetings with employees to listen to their concerns and offer support.
- **Provide flexibility.** Offer remote or hybrid work options and adjustable work hours to allow employees to balance family commitments and pursue personal interests.
- **Offer professional development.** Provide learning and development opportunities to grow employees’ skill sets and boost their confidence.
- **Promote work-life balance.** Implement physical and mental wellness programs to show empathy for employees’ well-being.

- **Build camaraderie.** Offer team-building activities that give employees something to look forward to and a sense of belonging.
- **Foster a culture of transparency.** Clearly communicate the rationale behind management decisions and let workers participate in the decision-making process.
- **Instill a sense of purpose.** Help workers understand how their efforts align with the organization’s objectives and positively impact the broader community.

Focus on Employee Engagement Today

As employee satisfaction dips, it’s vital to find innovative ways to help workers remain motivated and engaged. Employers who proactively create a supportive work environment and make meaningful improvements to the overall employee experience will likely benefit from a more engaged and productive workforce.



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The **Great Gloom** signifies a steady decline in employee happiness, primarily attributed to increased workloads, insufficient management support and compensation that fails to keep pace with rising costs.