

**B**y now, you're probably heard of the tidal wave of people quitting in the US which has been dubbed The Great Resignation or The Big Quit. In the US alone, 4 million people quit their jobs in July 2021 — that's 2.9% of their workforce. In India too, data indicates that a reshuffle of talent is upon us. LinkedIn data shows that there were 61% more job transitions in March 2021 as compared to a pre-pandemic March 2019. Hiring was 65% higher at the end of July 2021 compared with July 2019, and 68% higher at the end of August 2021 when compared with August 2019.

While some of these resignations may be because the pandemic has given people the time and perspective to re-evaluate their careers, another happier reason is that after the Covid-induced lull last year, the job market is once again alive and stirring. Ronesh Puri, managing director of specialist headhunting firm Executive Access, says due to the pandemic, there was a backlog of normal attrition when people looking for greener pastures were not able or did not resign. Now that hiring has picked up again people are exercising more options that are available, he says. "Secondly, people have changed their priorities in life with all the pressures and stresses they've had to deal with. Talent is looking at more impact and meaning in their jobs with more purposeful jobs being preferred. This has led to a huge increase in resignations in virtually every sector and industry," he says.

Those changing priorities are reflected by surveys. According to a new AI@Work

**The pandemic made me realise that it was time to break out of my comfort zone. I had been creating content on Instagram for a while now and wanted to follow my passion**

**—UPASANA KOCHHAR**  
Quit advertising to become a content creator



2021 study by Oracle and Workplace Intelligence, a majority of the Indian workforce (96%) said the meaning of success had changed for them since the pandemic. Their priorities now included work-life balance, mental health and flexibility over when and where they worked. LinkedIn's Future of Work survey found that half of India's workforce (52%) believes work-life balance is just as important as salary.

For film producer Akshita Wadhwa, both were impacted in the pandemic. "We got a 50% pay cut and were told that because

# Why Indians are job hopping like crazy

*Job transitions are on the rise as the pandemic makes many young people rethink their career and life choices*

EXIT



of the pay cut, it would be a three day work-week, but that didn't end up happening. I was working 18 hours a day," she says. The 25-year-old quit her job, and used her savings to start her own company where she did design and animation work with a curated roster of artists. While the company did really well initially, projects began to dry up early this year. She has since taken a consultant role at a firm, which she balances along with her business.

While walking out is easy, the road to a new job or career isn't smooth as Dhaval Rawal, 29, who had been working at a PR agency where his clients were mainly in the restaurant and hospitality sector, found out. "With Covid, business was not good and we were facing salary cuts. I quit in June this year and spent a few months looking for jobs, freelancing and trying to travel a bit," he says. That latter part of the plan caused some trouble at home. "Family pressure is there in middle class families. People feel like if you're not working, you are going nowhere. I also had a loan to pay so I was desperate to find something." He did manage to land a job at an influencer marketing agency in September.

Another reason for the quitting spree is that remote work during the pandemic gave some people time to spend with their families or hobbies while getting rid of irritants like long commutes. Now, they aren't willing to let it go though many employers want them back at the desk. For 27-year-old Tarana Farooqi who works in the development sector, one of the main reasons she was looking for a new job was remote work. "Last year, around September-October, they wanted people to come in every day. My new job is a lot more flexible. People are working from their hometowns and travelling as needed for meetings."

Sunit Sinha, Partner and Head — People, Performance and Culture, KPMG in India, admits that attrition has been higher than in 2020 and back to pre-pandemic levels, particularly for "hot, in demand skills across technology, environmental, social and corporate governance, risk and assurance". Part of the reason for this is that people are seeking more flexibility in location and work hours. He adds, "I look at this as an opportunity for both people and organisations to rethink their tradi-

tional and time-tested work arrangements and be bold in experimentation of newer models which are hybrid, tech-enabled and provide greater degrees of empowerment and satisfaction."

For others, the uncertainty and fear of the Covid era pushed them towards their passions. Upasana Kochhar had been working in advertising for over five years. "I realised that it was time to break out of my comfort zone. I had been creating content on Instagram for a while now and realised that is my passion. You put limitations on yourself thinking about what you can and can't do but I wanted to break out of that," she says. She is also working on a microbrewery she is starting along with her sister and father in Shimla.

Wadhwa says that the pandemic has made her more malleable to other kinds of opportunities. "It felt like the world is ending so you might as well do what you want to," she says.

Nirmala Menon, CEO of HR firm Interweave Consulting, says this kind of re-evaluation is common. "People want roles that are fulfilling but aren't going to stress them out." Plus, some have been preparing to move upwards and onwards. "Many have used this time to upskill and reskill and better equip themselves for new opportunities," she says.

Bengaluru resident Sneha, 34, is one of those who used the pandemic to do certifications, and move on. "At my previous organisation, there was a lack of investment in promoting and providing opportunities to employees within the organisation," she says. Working remotely, too, the rapport she shared with her manager was not the same. "So, when the job market opened up, I

**People have changed their priorities in life with all the pressures and stresses they've had to deal with. This has led to a huge increase in resignations in virtually every sector**

**—RONESH PURI**  
Executive Access



pounced on it." Her new job offered remote working, flexibility (as a mother to an infant, it was essential) and long-term incentives like stock options.

Employer behaviour during the pandemic has far from gone unnoticed. Puri points out, "Some companies were very kind to their employees during the pandemic, others shed their workforce quickly." Little wonder that employee loyalty too vanished just as quickly. Plus the fact is that it's easier to bid adieu remotely, especially if you haven't ever met your boss or co-workers.