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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A WFH Dilemma

WHAT TO DO WHEN REMOTE WORKERS GET GHOSTED?

CHICAGO, February 23, 2022 – With many employees still working remotely, even temporarily, a new issue has emerged for companies: internal ghosting. While some companies are overscheduling meetings, leading to increased Zoom fatigue, for some remote teams the opposite is true, triggering disengaged workers, lower productivity, and eventual talent drain, according to one workplace authority.

“Companies have always had to find effective ways to engage remote teams and have done so with varying success. Certainly now, with the additional emotional and, in some cases, physical toll of the pandemic, this has become a larger pain point for employers. Workers who are not being heard or recognized for their contributions end up leaving,” said Andrew Challenger, Senior Vice President of global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

More than half (53%) of companies are keeping their teams or most of their teams remote due to the Omicron wave, with 18% reporting they had not brought workers back to the office prior to the latest surge, according to a new survey from Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. The survey was conducted online in January and February among 150 Human Resources executives at companies of various sizes and industries nationwide.

Meanwhile, increased infections due to the Omicron wave kept 24 million workers remote in January, up from 17 million in December, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With cases falling, and COVID concerns waning, more employees may begin seriously looking at other opportunities, especially if they feel ignored by colleagues and leaders.

In fact, 82% of companies are concerned about an exodus of talent, based on the latest Challenger survey, up from 68% of companies who reported this concern in [Challenger’s July survey](#) among 172 companies.

To combat resignations, 73% of companies are offering hybrid and remote work options to retain workers, up from 52% and 64% that offered this benefit respectively in July.

“With many workers continuing remote work and employers increasingly offering the option, leaders must strike the right balance between overscheduling and remaining too hands-off, both of which have detrimental results,” said Challenger.

“Leaders need to stay connected to their direct reports regardless of where they are physically located. The impact of internal ghosting could not only lead to low morale, falling productivity, and increased quits, but something worse. Your disengaged workers could stay,” he added.

An August 2021 article in the [Wall Street Journal](#) discussed the instances of white-collar workers taking on two jobs during the pandemic WFH wave, ultimately performing subpar in both positions.

“Ultimately, managers are responsible for the engagement and output of their teams. If workers feel ignored, if emails go unanswered, or ideas overlooked, talent will look elsewhere for validation,” said Challenger.

Tips to Avoid Internal Ghosting

Meet workers where they are. Communication is crucial to developing touchpoints for work teams. Surveying workers to determine their ideal communication style – whether written or verbal, one-on-one or in groups – can give leaders the data necessary to develop an effective strategy to engage workers, not just between the leader and his or her subordinate, but also among the entire team.

Recognize team members for their contributions, both professional and personal. Leaders need to ensure their teams feel their work is contributing to the overall goal of the organization. Likewise, leaders can build camaraderie by showing interest in personal endeavors and achievements. It goes a long way to share both personal and professional goals with colleagues, other managers, and executive leadership.

Schedule virtual coffee meetings or non-work-related hangouts, but don’t overdo it. Often, calendar software allows workers to see their colleagues’ schedules. Create opportunities for team members to socialize virtually and not necessarily discuss work, but if your team is already in meetings all day, do not overschedule them. These meetings would be good opportunities to recognize and share accomplishments.

Introduce team members to other department heads. Workers report they want mentorship opportunities at work, and employers seem to be responding as part of the Great Resignation. According to a 2019 survey of 3,000 people from Olivet Nazarene University, over 75% reported mentorships are important. In Challenger’s most recent survey, of the 53% of respondents that reported they are offering new incentives to attract and retain talent, 62% are offering mentorship opportunities.

“By building relationships between your team members and other leaders, you create more outlets and resources for your workers, leading to stronger bonds within the organization,” said Challenger.