

## **What Quiet Quitting is Really About**

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## What Quiet Quitting is Really About

The pandemic has changed work forever, finally making workers aware of the abuse and mistreatment they have faced for years. To combat this, workers started using a term called “quiet quitting” to describe when a worker does the essentials of their job and nothing more. Ever since this term became popular, managers and employers have been trying to come up with ways to combat this new way of thinking. In the article “There’s a Better Way to Reclaim Your Time Than ‘Quiet Quitting’” from *The New York Times*, Laura Vanderkam’s (2022) solution to quiet quitting is the addition of energizing and exciting activities into a worker’s life. These solutions include: a day to yourself, a new hobby, or spending time with friends and family. Vanderkam proves these solutions work by telling the story of a woman who decided to put aside extra time each week to play tennis with her friends. According to the article, Vanderkam states that woman felt happier, more energized, and more productive at work because of this extra day a week. A study of 140 busy people that Vanderkam conducted revealed that these strategies increased workers productivity around 16 percent and their satisfaction went up 20 percent. While I do see the value that adding hobbies and time to yourself will do for mental health, I do not agree that it is the solution for quiet quitting. Vanderkam’s solution to quiet quitting is ignorant of the actual reasons that workers have stopped going above and beyond, by saying that someone should just add more to their busy schedule undermines the reasons why quiet quitting is so powerful. Workers do not quiet quit because they lack hobbies; they stop going above and beyond because they are not paid to do extra work, are burnt out, and have bosses who create a toxic work environment.

Vanderkam is not entirely wrong, though; her own research has proved that adding more hobbies and time to themselves helps workers be happier and more productive. One of Vanderkam’s main arguments includes her study of 140 people, although the study does prove her main point, I do not believe it should be used to represent the entire quiet quitting movement. In Adam England’s (2022) article from *verywellmind*, he argues that people are burned out from overwork and that quiet quitting could be the solution for better mental health. The article then goes into how people who stop going

above and beyond have more time to themselves which includes: more time to do the things they love, more time to spend with your family, and more time to exercise. England proves that people who aren't dragged down by overwork have more time to do the things they love. England's article shows that people can only get time to themselves when they quiet quit but Vanderkam's article shows that the people in her study already had this free time. This is a fundamental flaw with Vanderkam's (2022) article which is proven when she describes a "time-satisfaction study with more than 140 busy people."

Although she says the people in her study are busy, we know nothing else about them. This is a massive problem for many reasons including the fact that we do not know what type of job or financial situation these people are in. This contrasts with England's article in which he uses researchers with PHD's to support his evidence. A huge factor as to why people quiet quit is because they do not earn enough money for the amount of work they do. This is proven when England (2022) states that "people aren't seeing wage increases—at least in line with inflation" the quote shows that pay is a huge issue and is something that quiet quitting is trying to address. Vanderkam's article completely ignores the issue. There are millions of people in the work force and when Vanderkam uses her small sample size of around 140 people she proves to everyone she does not understand why people quiet quit. Vanderkam's untrustworthiness to the issues of quiet quitting culminates with the fact that there are multiple times throughout the article where she talks about and references her book "Tranquility by Tuesday: Nine Ways to Calm the Chaos and Make Time for What Matters." In Vanderkam's (2022) article there are multiple references to her "nine time-management strategies" which coincidentally plays a big part in the book she is advertising. From ignoring the reasons to why people quiet quit to the small sample size and finally her many biases, it has been shown that Vanderkam cannot be trusted to represent the quiet quitting movement.

Throughout Julia Kaplan's (2022) article she uses a new term called "acting your wage" that workers have started using in tandem with quiet quitting. Although the two terms have similar meanings, the saying "acting your wage" more accurately describes the reasons workers are not going above and

beyond. Pay is one of the biggest reasons why people quiet quit and is another issue that Vanderkam's original article neglects. But Kaplan's article describes how pay is related to quiet quitting by saying the money workers get from these jobs does not keep up with inflation. In that same article, Kaplan (2022) states that "at 300 low-paying firms, CEOs make 670 times more than their workers. At 106 of those firms' workers' median pay did not keep pace with inflation." This is one of the major reasons why quiet quitting as an idea took off so rapidly. Workers are burnt out and they do not earn enough pay to keep up with the amount that inflation is increasing. Meanwhile, the CEOs and higher ups are earning over 100 times more than the workers they employ. Workers have been unacknowledged and overworked for years just for them to barely make enough money to live. Vanderkam's problem is that people do not quiet quit because of hobbies, they quiet quit because they are unappreciated and overworked. Saying that people would be happier with their job if they had more hobbies completely misunderstands the entire movement and ignores one of its most important issues

If you look at the previous paragraph, you can see that workers are tired of higher ups earning more than them and all the while workers can barely make ends meet. In Zenger's (2022) article he highlights how quiet quitting relates to bad managers and bosses. Zenger shows this by gathering data from over 2,000 managers who were rated by direct reports. The data that Zenger (2022) shows that managers who were rated poorly on these reports "had 14% of their direct reports quietly quitting" and managers with higher ratings had "62% of their direct reports willing to give extra effort, while only 3% were quietly quitting." This data shows how much management affects people quietly quitting, managers with bad ratings had way more workers that were quietly quitting than people with good managers. Maybe the effectiveness of the manager reflects how much work they are willing to put in? If workers see how much work the manager is willing to put into their job, then maybe the workers will be more likely to go above and beyond. But people who are not convinced that managers influence quiet quitting might be convinced by another article. In Priesemuth's (2020) article from Harvard Business Review, she claims that her own research has shown that 'bad bosses' can "destroy important bonds between team

members, which further results in reduced performance”. Both articles not only prove that managers can make productivity go down but can also relate to quiet quitting. Workers surprisingly do not want to go above and beyond for employers that create a toxic work environment or barely work as hard as they do.

However, there is a more eloquent solution to quiet quitting that does not involve adding more hobbies to your schedule, and that solution is unions. Unions solve every problem that people have had with jobs since the pandemic. Unions not only protect workers against abusive management, but it also makes sure workers are not underpaid or overworked and even also prevent against unfair firings. Aleem (2022) confirms this: “Unions can act as advocates for workers, reduce arbitrary firings, clarify labor expectations in a way that counteracts the drift toward overwork.” This quote not only shows that unions can prevent quiet quitting because it fulfills all the reasons people quiet quit in the first place. Unions have become increasingly popular after the pandemic as well. In Lina Selyukh’s (2022) article from NPR, she states that “Petitions to form a union are up almost 60%” this shows that the increasing popularity of unions prove the fact they support the overworked and underpaid work force. The article also shows that many unions have won against some of the biggest companies like Amazon and Starbucks. Although unions can be complicated and risky for the workers, it ultimately leads to the jobs that quiet quitters want.

Although Vanderkam’s reasoning as to why adding hobbies can make you happier is justified, the lack of time after work is not a reason as to why people quiet quit. Vanderkam does not understand the reasons quiet quitting has become so popular. After looking at the comments on this article it is clear to me that people share the same sentiments that I do. People are sick of managers overworking and underpaying them. Working for a union myself has changed my perspective on how jobs should function. Unions not only look after the employees but also solve the toxic idea that you should always be going above and beyond for your job. Workers who are quiet quitting are actively fighting against the system to make their lives better. They won’t just stop fighting once they have one night a week where they play tennis with their friends. When employers finally understand why their employees are quiet quitting

maybe the circumstances can change. But when you use a study that represents a minuscule fraction of the workforce it negates the progress that workers have been striving for. Vanderkam misunderstands the entire movement by saying another hobby will make workers overlook the toxicity and abuse that they have endured since before the pandemic.

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