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“Quiet Quitting” and “Quiet Thriving” – Flourishing in the Modern Organization

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“Quiet Quitting” and “Quiet Thriving” – *Flourishing in the Modern Organization*

The discontent of employees with 21st century working conditions has resulted in the “Great Resignation” with more than 90 million Americans quitting their jobs in 2021 and 2022 (Lagurci, 2022). In total, 50% of the U.S. workforce has been identified by the *Wall Street Journal* as “Quiet Quitters” who have chosen not to take on work that is outside of their job descriptions (Smith, 2022). The cause of this employee resistance has been the failure of employers to meet employees’ expectations about the nature of work – raising important concerns about the importance of organization cultures in leading today’s employees and the most effective ways to meet employers’ and employees’ long-term needs (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023).

The purpose of this paper is to address the status of employer-employee relationships in the modern organization and to identify what employers and employees can do to create healthier organization cultures so that organizations and employees can flourish in today’s challenging economic times. We begin by describing the current nature of the modern organization, identifying characteristics that typify unhealthy and toxic organization cultures, and summarize the current perceptions of Millennial and Generation Z employees who work in those organizations. We then explain the importance of employees and organizations thriving in today’s competitive marketplace. Drawing upon research about the modern organization, we identify ten recommendations to help organizations create healthier and thriving work cultures. Acknowledging the importance of a proactive response of employees, we also identify ten action steps which employees can take to help themselves and their organizations to thrive. We identify five contributions that this paper makes to practitioners and to the scholarly literature and conclude the paper by noting opportunities for future research.

The Nature of Organizations

Organizational culture is a by-product of a company's proclaimed values, the ways that people are treated, and the degree to which leader behaviors mirror their organization's priorities and standards (Kumar, 2016). When leaders, managers, and supervisors align their actions with the values which they espouse and create systems that reinforce those same values, their culture consistently earns the trust and commitment of their employees (Schein & Schein, 2016). Companies like Enterprise Rent-A-Car (Busse, Swinkels, & Merkley, 2017), Herman Miller Furniture (Euchner, 2014), and Southwest Airlines (Marshall & Adamic, 2010) are known for their corporate cultures; consistently outperform competitors; achieve greater employee engagement, and experience less turnover (Cameron, 2009).

Unhealthy organizational cultures consist of working conditions which seem to serve an organization's short-term needs but that are ultimately counterproductive – and those cultures fail to create relationships that are based upon mutual respect and shared values (Lyons, 2022). In organizations with unhealthy cultures, employees dread going to work, feel that they cannot always be honest with their managers, and believe that their organizations are often unfair in their treatment of employees (Mirza, 2019). According to a *Harvard Business Review* report written by Villanova University's Manuela Priesemuth (2020), abusive behavior at work is contagious and becomes the standard of “how it's done around here” in an organization.

Inevitably, mistreatment of employees undermines the ability of organizations to retain their best workers and generates negative employee deviance (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (2019), nearly one in every five U.S. employees left their organizations due to its culture during the five years preceding their survey with 58% of those employees citing their reason for leaving as weak organizational leadership. Consistent with those findings, an exhaustive study by Sull and Sull (2022) found that leadership ineffectiveness is the most significant root cause of a culture that is considered unhealthy.

Although a culture need not be toxic for employees to be critical of it, the factors that employees have cited as most contributing to toxic cultures include the following five attributes (Sull, Sull, Cipolli, & Brighenti, 2022).

Disrespectful – Treating employees discourteously and disrespectfully was cited as the greatest single attribute of a toxic work culture.

Noninclusiveness – The failure to make employees feel welcome, excluding them in decision-making, and cronyism or the preferential treatment of in-groups make up this multi-attribute category.

Unethical – Dishonesty, shading the truth, making false promises, or deceptive misrepresentations were part of this attribute – along with the failure to comply with applicable regulations.

Cutthroat – Ruthless internal employee competition, backstabbing, sabotaging peers, and other undermining behaviors by peers and supervisors make up this attribute.

Abusive – Sustained hostile behavior on the part of supervisors; bullying, belittling, or demeaning employees; verbal abuse, or other condescending behavior make up this category.

Labeled, “the great discontent” by Peter Buell Hirsch (2021), employees' response to toxic behaviors confirm that a workplace culture is unhealthy and ineffective. The onus of responsibility for creating a healthy organization culture is ultimately placed on an

organization's Top Management Team and includes the inability of leaders to create organizational artifacts, systems, and policies that align with proclaimed organization values (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Although cultural toxicity is an extreme condition, extensive research about organizations has confirmed that ineffective leadership is commonplace. Research obtained from 27 million employees over the past ten years found that leaders, managers, and supervisors are often perceived to be ineffective both in leading their organizations and in meeting the needs of their employees – and, remarkably, this research also confirmed that companies fail to hire or promote the best candidates an alarming 82% of the time (Beck & Harter, 2019). Consistent with Gallup's finding that 70% of the variance in employee and team engagement is attributed to the abilities of managers and supervisors, the importance of Top Management Teams taking the proper action to address leadership deficiencies and to understand the skills required for effective leaders are critical priorities in the modern organization (Harter & Atkins, 2015).

Rather than making a commitment to meeting employees' needs, the management approach at many organizations frequently mirrors the “do it or else” philosophy of Elon Musk, CEO of both *Twitter* and *Tesla* (Hong, 2022; Lewis, 2022). This top-down “command and control” management style is increasingly perceived to be condescending and disrespectful by many of today's employees (Williams, Lu, & Burrell, 2013). In response to employees who are unwilling to go the extra mile, the response of some employers has been to intentionally make the work environment so intolerable that employees voluntarily choose to leave (Burga, 2022). This “Quiet Firing,” or constructive discharge approach, was cited in a *Wall Street Journal* article as the passive-aggressive response to Quiet Quitting and sought to communicate to employees that they were expected to perform at a high level or they need to leave the organization (Borchers, 2022).

Michigan State University faculty members, Ayalla Ruvio and Forrest V. Morgeson (2022), explain that Quiet Firing is sometimes an attempt by employers to trim the workforce or prepare for an anticipated recession by choosing to “intentionally create a hostile work environment that encourages people to leave voluntarily.” Quiet firing may include failing to provide clear expectations, feedback, supervisory or staff support, opportunities for career development, or recognition of contributions made in a way that makes employees feel ignored or disrespected and pushes them out of an organization. Gallup's Ben Wigert (2022) described Quiet Firing as a form of management gaslighting that undermines an organization's culture, reduces the credibility of leaders and managers, damages employee morale, and increases employee stress. Ultimately, Quiet Firing is a self-defeating response of organizations that serves to discredit the reputation of managers and leaders and erodes the culture of an organization (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023).

The negative impacts of ineffective managers and leaders that adopt such methods as Quiet Firing have increased the toxicity of the modern work environment, resulting in negative impacts on employee wellbeing, while costing employers goodwill as well as bottom-line productivity (Bhuyan & Caldwell, 2022). According to *Blind Spot*, the new book by Jon Clifton (2022) that reports the impact of dysfunctional organizations on today's employees, the work culture of modern business has created such enormous pressures on today's employee that 28% have exhibited chronic depression, extreme sadness, or other mental health problems as a result. When placed under this constant pressure, employees lose the ability to think

creatively and perform to the best of their ability (Steinhauser et al., 2007; Plessow et al., 2011, 2012) which reduces work place performance. Empirical evidence about the modern workplace affirms that employee well-being is closely tied to employee trust, commitment, and job satisfaction as well as organizational productivity, creativity, and overall performance (Clifton & Harter, 2021; Worline & Dutton, 2017).

Unfortunately, employer commitment to employee wellbeing and other employee interests has steadily declined over the past twenty years (Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2009; Wigert & Agrawal, 2018). Rather than treating employees like valued partners, many companies have failed to honor perceived duties owed to employees (Van Buren & Greenwood, 2008; Block, 2013). Among the most evident trends that reflect the current strategy of corporations has been the growing trend to hire part-time, temporary, contract, and contingent employees rather than full-time employees – creating what has come to be called “the gig economy” (Duggan, McDonnell, Sherman, & Carbery 2019).

A major study by Harvard’s Lawrence F. Katz and Princeton’s Alan Krueger (2019) found that 94% of the new jobs created in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015 were part-time, temporary, or contract. According to Strazzulla (2022), 32% of employers replaced full-time employees with part-time employees in 2021. A major research study by Staffing Industry Analysts alleges that the number of contingent workers in the U.S. has reached 33 million as employers have sought to cut costs by reducing employee benefits and increase organizational flexibility (Williams, 2023). This trend to hire contingent employees will apparently continue to pick up speed with 50% of the workforce being projected to be contingent employees by 2050 (Landhuis, 2023). A growing number of employers seem to be sending the message that they view the workforce as being made up of disposable and interchangeable personnel, rather than viewing employees as valued and talented partners (Mehta, Thanki, Panda & Trivedi, 2022).

The University of Michigan’s Kim Cameron (2020) has documented that downsizing and its accompanying efforts to eliminate expenditures associated with meeting employees’ needs have often resulted in what he labeled a “dirty dozen” set of negative dysfunctional organizational outcomes. Similarly, Stanford University’s Jeffrey Pfeffer (De Witte, 2022) noted that even in successful organizations this efficiency-focused approach to reducing employee numbers has led to copycat behaviors – even when cutbacks are detrimental to the long-term best interests of organizations. Employees who remain in an organization after cutbacks and their overworked managers and supervisors are frequently under intense job pressure and that constant stress is counterproductive to effective work relationships, detrimental to work-life balance, and counterproductive to organization success (Kiran, Noor & Khan, 2014).

A growing body of research about the characteristics of many of today’s leaders, managers, and supervisors provides insights into the source of employees’ dissatisfaction. The Edelman Trust Barometer (2023) has confirmed that trust toward leaders is low and continues to be a major organizational problem. Matthew Harrington (2017) had previously noted in a *Harvard Business Review* article that business, government, the media, and non-governmental organizations all suffer from decreased employee confidence in their leadership. The uncertain global economy and worldwide competition put tremendous pressure on organizations to become more efficient, and many organizations have responded by

downsizing, rightsizing, and other cut-back efforts in the attempt to survive (Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2010).

Work Expectations of Generation Z and Millennials

At the same time that employer assumptions about the workforce have changed, so have the expectations of the two largest cohort groups of employees. The worldwide Gallup survey identified findings about what Generation Z and Millennial employees believe constitutes a great job. That list includes 1) a full-time job that provides the income required for a reasonable lifestyle; 2) an opportunity to learn and grow as a person and as a professional; 3) the respect which treats each employee as valued individual rather than a commodity; and 4) work which accomplishes a meaningful purpose worthy of one's best efforts (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Similarly, research by S. Mitra Kalita (2022) reported that today's employees seek an adequate paycheck and benefits, the opportunity to develop their skills, fair compensation for excellent performance, and respect and fair treatment from employers.

Both Generation Z and Millennial employees consider personal flexibility and well-being to be important at work, but Millennials – who often work as Generation Z supervisors – are far less risk-willing and outspoken about their priorities and are typically more concerned with job security than their younger counterparts (Goldberg, 2021). Summarizing the needs of Millennials and Generation Z employees, Clifton and Harter (2019) concluded that Millennials and Generation Z employees want purpose rather than just a paycheck, personal development rather than simply job satisfaction, ongoing conversations instead of annual reviews, and supervisors who were coaches rather than fault finders.

It is this vastly different set of perspectives about what employers have been doing and what employees want that has created the Great Resignation and the Quiet Quitting phenomena. Given the increasing trend toward contingent employment, employees lack confidence in the commitment of their leaders and managers to employees' welfare (Harrington, 2017). This decline in trust in leaders and organizations, reinforced by the fact that many managers and supervisors are ineffective if not incompetent, has resulted in a workplace environment that is rife with employee dissatisfaction (Dua, et al., 2022).

The fact that fully half of all employees in the workforce are unwilling to take on extra-role job assignments, are disappointed with their organizations' leadership, and are looking for opportunities working for other employers has resulted from the mismatch between employer practices and employee expectations that can actually generate dysfunctional behaviors (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Employees who are coerced into going that extra mile and taking on extra-roles for the job may ultimately respond with deviant actions, justifying their behavior as a retaliation intended to counterbalance their bad treatment (Yam, et al., 2016). In a recent study reported by Matt Gonzales (2023), 18% of today's employees report that they are negatively engaged or in conflict with their organizations, its values, and how they are treated.

Thriving and Its Importance

Employees who are thriving and committed frequently experience a sense of vitality, positive energy, and personal growth at work (Spreitzer, et al., 2005). Thriving at work is characterized by an integrated sense of vitality and learning that reflects a high degree of personal investment and engagement (Kleine, Rudolph, & Zacher, 2019). It is this engagement that enriches the quality of work life for employees while generating increased employee efforts,

greater personal dedication, and increased levels of concentration and focus (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In the real world of work, thriving is subjectively defined and must be viewed by each individual in the long term, based upon one's personal definitions about life, one's values, and identity (Caldwell & Anderson, 2023). How individuals respond to their circumstances – including the context of their jobs – is a function of one's perceptions and thoughts about those circumstances and is ultimately an intentional choice (Burke & Stets, 2009; Fishbein & Ajzek, 2015). Thus, thriving is about choosing how one will respond to their circumstances, rather than the circumstances themselves (Castillo, 2008; Eger, 2018).

The significance of thriving and flourishing in the modern organization is characterized by creating organizational cultures and relationships that thoughtfully integrate individual and organizational priorities (Trebesch, 2015). Kim and Beehr (2020) noted that great organizations challenge their employees to be excellent while 1) emphasizing the meaningfulness of work performed and 2) reinforcing in employees a sense of their self-worth and their value to the organization. Similarly, Imran and colleagues (2020) reported that organizational support systems and aligned employee relations policies generated both organizational and employee flourishing as well as increased levels of employee engagement.

The expanding research about *Positive Organizational Scholarship* has identified the correlation between positive leadership and creating a virtuous organizational culture which generate outstanding organizational outcomes and improved employee performance (Cameron, 2012 & 2021). This correlation between organization success and thriving employees is a well-established pattern achieved in high-performance and high-trust organizations (Beer, 2009; Francis, Holbeche & Reddington, 2012; de Waal, 2021; Graziano, 2023) and is characterized by organization cultures that treat employees like valued partners (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Ahammed, 2023). The struggle of organizations to reverse *Quiet Quitting's* trend of employees withholding their best efforts acknowledges the importance of extra-mile employee efforts as a key requirement for innovation, excellent customer service, lower turnover, and productivity (Ocampo, et al., 2018).

Highly-motivated employees who are not content with dysfunctional organizational cultures and ineffective leaders have opted to take their own initiative and adapt by incorporating a *Quiet Thriving* response, rather than succumbing to *Quiet Quitting*. *Quiet Thriving* is an effort to proactively become engaged at work by seeking to identify opportunities to define one's role and clarify opportunities to become more fully engaged at work (Alderman, 2022; Ramos, 2023). In explaining the importance of pursuing this *Quiet Thriving* option, neuroscientist, Laura Ellera (2023) offered the following insights about the importance of thriving and the best response to *Quiet Quitting* for individuals.

We are built to thrive as human beings – we are naturally inquisitive and even if we say we're happy just doing the bare minimum until something better comes along, deep down we feel that lack of purpose. We notice the clock ticking as our careers seem to drift by us. We are nagged by that feeling that there's got to be more to life than this. We want to make a difference. We need to be appreciated. There is a drive to reach our full potential, whether we care to admit it to ourselves or not. Quiet Quitting, while a retaliatory gesture to a dysfunctional organization, does not enable us to thrive and is ultimately a self-defeating "lose-lose" option.

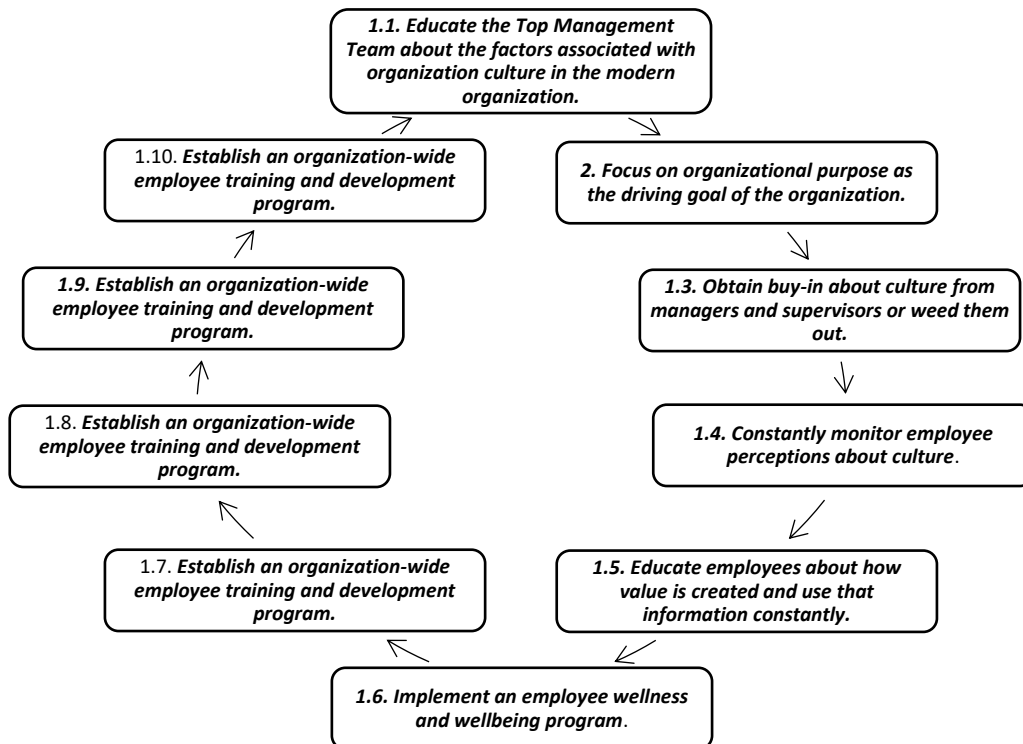
Quiet Thriving on the part of employees is an effort by employees to take back control of their personal wellbeing while honoring their moral responsibility to their organizations, the people with whom they work, and themselves (Ward, 2023).

What Organizations Can Do

Although much has been written about what organization leaders should strive to do in order to create healthier organizational cultures, the challenges facing many Top Management Teams in the highly competitive global marketplace make it difficult for organization leaders to know exactly what to emphasize and where to focus their efforts (Day, Riggio, Tan, & Conger, 2021). Unfortunately, many organization leaders seem to be unwilling, unprepared, or unable to effectively address the *Quiet Quitting* phenomenon (Hare, 2022). The evidence from the past century has confirmed that obtaining and sustaining success is difficult even the most highly respected leaders and organizations have often struggled (Barnard, 1938; Pfeffer, 1998; Collins, 2001; Peters & Waterman, 2006).

Organization cultures depend upon the commitment of leaders to principles and values that is demonstrated by both personal example and the creation of organizational systems and processes that reinforce, support, and are aligned with those same standards (Covey, 1992 & 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2023). We suggest that organization leaders adopt a ten-step approach to increasing their ability to thrive and flourish that incorporates the concepts contained in *Figure 1*, provided here.

Figure 1: A Ten-Step Approach to Organizational Flourishing and Thriving



Gleaning from the insights of many of the most respected organizational leaders, we present ten recommendations for leaders and organizations to adopt as they seek to earn and retain the commitment of today’s employees.

1. Educate the Top Management Team about the factors associated with organization culture in the modern organization.

Until an organization's top leadership understands the factors that affect employee attitudes, they are unlikely to create organization cultures that effectively address employees' needs and expectations (Cameron, 2008; McCann & McCann, 2022). Top Management creates culture, establishes systems that reinforce values, and models those values if a healthy organization culture is to be created and sustained long-term (Schein & Schein, 2016). According to a *Harvard Business Review* report by Boris Groysberg and colleagues (2018), aligning an organization's culture with the values of its employees can create momentum towards a shared purpose and strengthen the ability of a company to excel.

2. Focus on organizational purpose as the driving goal of the organization.

McKinsey and Company have confirmed that today's Millennial and Generation Z employees are deeply purpose driven. To respond to their employees' commitment to mission and purpose McKinsey and Company stresses the importance of emphasizing its organization's purpose, desired outcomes, and contribution to society as key factors in attracting and retaining the best employees (Dhingra & Schaninger, 2021). This recommendation confirms earlier research by Collins and Porras (2004) who found that employees are motivated by their company's mission and purpose much more than by financial goals.

3. Obtain buy-in about culture from managers and supervisors or weed them out.

Without buy-in and ownership by mid-managers and supervisors, an organizational culture is unlikely to be fully implemented (Mathes & Crocker, 2016; Yohn, 2021). Training, coaching, and monitoring managers and supervisors; weeding out those who are ineffective; and improving the ability to develop and select effective managers are all necessary elements of a culture that is aligned and trusted (Winterton & Winterton, 1999; Tripathi & Agrawal, 2014). Identifying toxic leaders, coaching them to improve their performance, or removing them from leadership positions are tangible actions organizations can take to root out people who are undermining corporate culture (Sull, et al., 2022).

4. Constantly monitor employee perceptions about culture.

Regularly assessing employees' attitudes and perceptions about the organization, the alignment between behavior and core values, and how leadership and the organization culture is perceived make it possible to identify opportunities to address areas needing attention and to reinforce values and behaviors that get off track (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Building confidentiality and anonymity into that monitoring process is essential if it is to be credible (Serrat, 2017) – and responding appropriately when feedback identifies potential problems reinforces the importance of culture (Huebner & Zacher, 2021).

5. Educate employees about how value is created and use that information constantly.

When employees understand how their individual efforts create value for their organization, those employees are much more likely to use that information to improve their job performance (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Hussinski, Klanto, Vanhala, & Ritala, 2017). Using value-added information in communication, performance improvement, and employee compensation decisions reinforces the importance of the organization's ability to track its accomplishments – even when value added is non-monetary (Epstein & Yuthas, 2022). When employees understand how their work creates value, their daily efforts become more meaningful (Geldenhuis, Taba, & Venter, 2014).

6. *Implement an employee wellness and wellbeing program.*

Wellness and wellbeing are high priority topics for Millennials and Generation Z and organizations that acknowledge the importance of employees' welfare and wellbeing have been shown to be more profitable and have happier and healthier employees (Clifton, 2022). Such programs need not be expensive, but educating employees about managing work-related and personal stress and creating supportive Human Resource Management systems that demonstrate a commitment to employees have been found to improve employee morale and performance (Krekel, Ward & De Neve, 2019).

7. *Establish an organization-wide employee training and development program.*

Investing in employee training and development is a high priority for organizations that want to attract and retain top talent (Nda & Fard, 2013). Job-related training and development are most effective when Top Management and supervisor input and participation is involved (Kum, Cowden, & Karobia, 2014). Employees at all levels should have the opportunity to improve their skills and acquire abilities that they can not only apply on the job but utilize to have a more fulfilling and satisfying personal and family life (Broadhurst, 2012).

8. *Rethink and reevaluate the practice of hiring contingent and part-time employees.*

Although many organizations rely heavily on part-time, temporary, and contract employees, understanding and evaluating the contributions and limitations of contingent employees is difficult to determine and not always in an organization's best interests (Santra, 2021). The level of commitment of contingent employees often generates concerns about their dependability and the quality of their work (Feldman, 2006). In addition, the onboarding, compensation, and socialization of contingent employees can raise issues about the equity and fairness of an organization and affect perceptions about an organization's values and culture (Hughes & Palmer, 2007).

9. *Increase the emphasis on employee empowerment to improve decision-making and increase engagement.*

Develop employee decision-making skills by training managers and supervisors to adopt a "power with" rather than a "power over" philosophy of management (Follett, 2013; Anderson & Caldwell, 2019). Organizations benefit by teaching managers and supervisors to coach as the means of developing employee strengths, and by delegating authority and accountability to those individuals with the greatest knowledge of decision factors and customer needs (Follett, 2013). When done properly, empowering employees increases organization morale and decision quality (Caldwell & Anderson, 2020).

10. *Increase the organization's focus on the strategic role of human resource management.*

The research about human resource management confirms that Top Management Team members consistently underutilize the strategic role human resource management – often because the staff members working within their organizations lack adequate training or understanding of that strategic role (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 2015). The seven key strategic functions of human resource management are focused on assisting the Top Management Team to achieve its goals (Ortega-Cotto, *et al.*, 2023) and each of those functions can play a major contributing role in strengthening an organization's culture and increase employee commitment, under the direction of organization leaders (Bailey, Mankin, Kelliher, & Garavan, 2018).

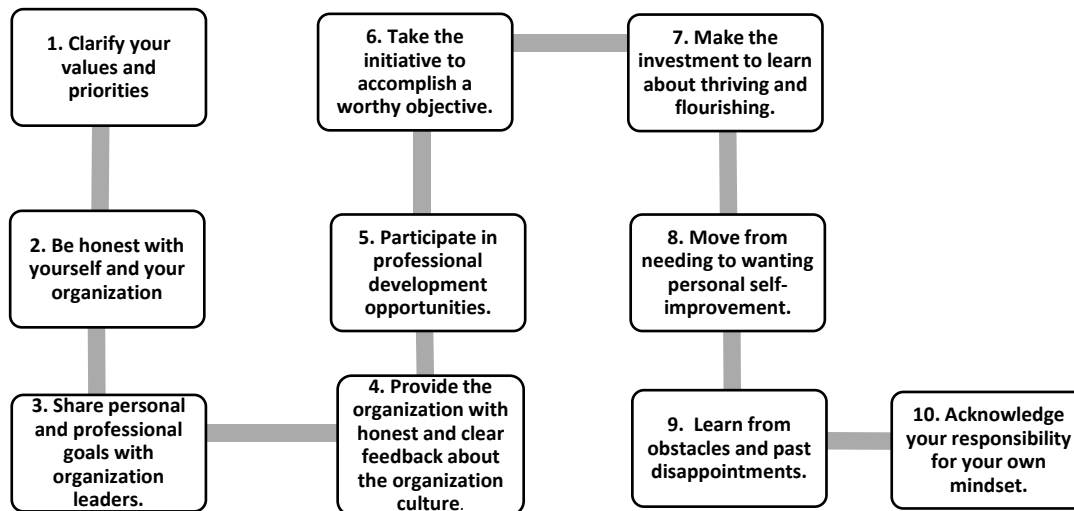
Organizations must earn employee commitment and loyalty, not simply expect it or demand it, and trust is earned by creating inclusive organization cultures (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2022). Leaders can make a profound difference in their organizations when they create

stronger and healthier organization cultures that address the expectations and priorities of their employees (Attiq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2017; Akpa, Asikhia, & Nneji, 2021). By recognizing the importance of each of these recommendations, Top Management Teams can reduce the incidence of Quiet Quitting and the reluctance of employees to invest in their organizations. Meeting employee needs not only creates greater personal commitment but is also a moral obligation that make up the “covenantal” or quasi-sacred duty of organizations to their employees (Greenleaf, 1983; Pava, 2003; DePree, 2004; Covey, 2004; Bennis & Nanus, 2007).

What Employees Can Do

The relationship between employers and their employees is most productive when employees and their leaders work collaboratively to achieve shared goals – but that relationship is far more than simply a *quid pro quo* exchange of a pay check for tasks performed (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Rather than being transactional, the employment relationship achieves its highest potential when employees seek to become more focused on helping the organization excel (Burns, 2010). Figure 2, provided here, identifies ten specific things that employees can do to take the initiative to thrive and flourish in the modern organization.

Figure 2: Ten Employee Actions to Promote Thriving and Flourishing



We suggest that Quiet Quitting can evolve to become Quiet Thriving for employees when employees do these ten things.

1. Clarify your values and priorities.

Burnout is an emotional, mental, or physical response to stress that occurs when individuals face prolonged pressures to accomplish responsibilities and lose the ability to protect their own self-interests (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). Trying to be all things to all people and allowing others to govern their decisions is unhealthy when those choices conflict with one’s personal values and priorities – including the priority to protect one’s own health (McKeown, 2021). Employees who choose *Quiet Quitting* typically do so conflict with the demands of their jobs (Zenger & Folkman, 2022). Consciously clarifying values and priorities can enable employees to recognize how their jobs can promote their present and future welfare and enable them to thrive.

2. ***Be honest with yourself and your organization.***

For employees to honor themselves, they may need to acknowledge that the decision to quietly quit can be a profoundly dishonest moral choice. Identifying what is truly important and fundamentally essential in life is ultimately a defining driving force of personal happiness (McKeown, 2020). When employees are dissatisfied with their position, certified life coach and M.D., Rebecca Caldwell (2023), explains that continuing to work in an organization that is unhealthy is actually an affirmative choice. That choice ultimately compromises one's most important relationship – the one that we have with ourselves – and leads to personal unhappiness, and lower self-esteem. Choosing to quietly quit makes thriving and flourishing impossible and undermines one's ability to fully value oneself (Ellera, 2023).

3. ***Share personal and professional goals with organization leaders.***

When employees share their career goals with their company, they identify a future role that enables both the company and the individual to optimally benefit (Moran, 2018). Crafting a personal professional development plan which has the support of the organization increases the value of the employee, demonstrates employee commitment, and increases employee motivation to perform effectively on the job (Kneale, 2007). That job crafting process includes identifying what interests a person most about their job and focusing on improving how to perform that job aspect more effectively (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013; Alderman, 2022).

4. ***Provide the organization with honest and clear feedback about the organization culture.***

By providing clear and constructive feedback about the organization and its culture, employees can assist that organization to improve working conditions and positively affect employee commitment throughout the organization (Baker, et al., 2013). The willingness of employees to provide honest feedback reflects their commitment to the organization's success and is a source of important information about how an organization can improve its competitive position (Albrecht, et al., 2015; Ward, 2023).

5. ***Participate in professional development opportunities.***

Taking the initiative to attend a professional development workshop or training class can increase personal commitment to the job while also increasing job-related skills. Employer-provided training is often the most important training in which to participate and active participation in training increases internal employability and job security and communicate to managers an employee's capability to strengthen the organization (Hansson, 2009).

6. ***Take the initiative to accomplish a worthy objective.***

Identifying an opportunity to improve the organization and taking the initiative to act is personally motivating. Taking personal initiative positively impacts an individuals' mental attitudes, increases their level of engagement, and is personally empowering (Grant, et al., 2011). Initiative taken out of personal interest, curiosity, or enjoyment positively enhances individuals, reduces stress, and provides an opportunity to excel (Alderman, 2022). When taking an initiative that benefits the organization, a win-win outcome is also created, but this personal initiative must also be backed up by the support of management to ensure the employee's initiative is recognised appropriately.

7. ***Make the investment to learn about thriving and flourishing.***

As with virtually every topic, learning about personal growth, self-improvement, and flourishing provide great opportunities to improve one's understanding about how to be more successful (McKeown, 2021). Making the effort to acquire knowledge about

managing stress, developing personal effectiveness, and overcoming obstacles in life are self-empowering ways in which those important life skills can be developed and refined (Matsuo, 2019). Seeking self-improvement requires a full personal commitment, rather than a periodic half-hearted effort, but with that commitment individuals can redefine themselves and exponentially improve the quality of their lives (Sedikides & Hepper; Duckworth, 2018).

8. *Move from needing to wanting personal self-improvement.*

Seeking self-improvement because it is a conscious desire is much healthier than feeling compelled to improve because it is an unmet need (Maslow, 2019). Ironically, most individuals are out of focus as they engage in the self-improvement process and focus on the gap between their present state of being rather than on the positive improvements that they have already made in their lives (Sullivan & Hardy, 2021). Emphasizing the distance between becoming the best version of oneself, rather than the significant improvement that has already been achieved is psychologically frustrating and self-defeating (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The ability to love oneself and to value one's past accomplishments encourages the heart. Tracking one's personal growth also makes it possible to keep reality in perspective and staying committed to personal growth – even though one is not yet perfect (Bhuyan, Williams, & Caldwell, 2022).

9. *Learn from obstacles and past disappointments.*

Life is an ongoing learning process and we need not be defined by past mistakes (Peck, 2003). Healthy individuals recognize that inflated expectations about what one can accomplish are critical to the personal growth process. The inability to learn from failures is an unrealistic assumption about life and the greatest of all failures (Eskreis-Winkler & Fishbach, 2019). Many of the great lessons of life come from recognizing the importance of learning from past experiences and acknowledging the need to redouble one's efforts to make personal growth a reality (Altucher, 2013). The story of great women and men who have turned seemingly impossible trials into astounding triumphs confirms that failures often contain the seeds of future opportunities that can redefine one's life and transcend one's life (Holiday, 2014).

10. *Acknowledge your responsibility for your own mindset.*

In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Stanford psychologist, Carol S. Dweck (2016) emphasized that mindset involves owning that what one believes about self is the key to the personal growth process. The commitment to thriving is about proactively making changes in one's mental model of oneself and the job to feel more engaged at work (Ellera, 2023). Recognizing that each person is responsible for her or his view of the world is a self-empowering choice that can profoundly influence one's trajectory and happiness (Caldwell & Anderson, 2020).

Thriving employees are more capable of adapting to change, are more resilient in facing difficulties and adversity, and are healthier than other employees (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). Quiet thriving is a positive and optimistic approach to the workplace that enables an individual to make work less stressful, more enjoyable, and more productive (Ramos, 2023). When stress is removed from the workspace, employees have the capability to think logically, creatively and problem solve making the workforce more productive (Arnsten, et al (2012), Vartanian, et al (2020)). These ten steps enable employees to thrive and flourish personally as they seek to discover and achieve their highest potential (Covey, 2004).

Contributions of the Paper

Understanding the issues associated with the achievements of the modern organization and the role of employees as full partners in contributing to that success is fundamental to the study of leadership and the role of business in society. The disconnect between employees and present-day managers, supervisors, and leaders has been well documented in scholarly research and is a topic of major concern for organizations of all types (Harrington, 2017). In addressing the issues associated with Quiet Quitting and the importance of understanding the problems that have caused that employee response, this paper has made five important contributions for scholars and practitioners to consider.

1. ***We have affirmed the importance of organizations and their leaders understanding organization culture and leadership.*** We have documented the dysfunctional factors that have undermined organizational cultures and contributed to the perpetuation of the Quiet Quitting phenomenon. In so doing, we have confirmed the need for today's leaders to reexamine the strategies that they have undertaken to succeed in today's difficult work context.
2. ***We have identified ten practical recommendations for improving organization cultures, emphasizing the importance of Top Management Teams leading that process.*** Citing from a broad variety of management experts, we have incorporated into those ten recommendations important insights about organization culture and leadership for leaders to address as they seek to improve their organizations. We specifically emphasize the important potential role of the employer-employee relationship and the need for Top Management Teams understanding fully the strategic human resource management function.
3. ***We have proposed ten action steps that can assist employees as they seek to thrive and flourish in their organization roles.*** We emphasize the importance of employees transcending the nature of the Quiet Quitting mentality and argue that there is a broad array of ways in which today's employees can rise above the self-limiting nature of Quiet Quitting to thrive and flourish.
4. ***We have emphasized the importance of trust and employee commitment as they relate to the employer-employee relationship.*** Trust is and always has been the critical element of interpersonal relationships and being worthy of employees' trust is the key to engaging and empowering them – yet today's leaders and organizations seem to be overlooking the importance of trustworthiness.
5. ***We have explained why leaders and organizations must not only understand the importance of values but must create systems that convert those values into organization practices.*** If organizations and employees are to thrive and flourish, Top Management Teams must not only articulate their values but demonstrate that they matter by implementing policies, practices, programs, and systems that honor those values.

These five contributions acknowledge the accountability of individuals at all levels in the quest to create flourishing organizations. As individuals and organizations contemplate how they can be more successful and improve themselves, this paper offers opportunities for reflection and study.

Opportunities for Further Research

Although much has already been done in the scholarly literature to examine the factors that influence employees in today's organizations, there continue to be many significant issues

that merit extensive additional research. For leaders and organizations, the challenges that organizations face in competing in a world that is rapidly evolving continue to be uncertain. For example, despite extensive evidence that confirms that companies with high-performance work cultures are more profitable than their competitors (Lawler, 2005; Beer, 2009; Thornton, 2020; Daly, 2021), organizations have demonstrated limited interest and their leaders have lacked the commitment, or the ability to implement such high-performance organization systems.

The long-term cost/benefit of hiring part-time and contingent employees is also a topic that seems to demand immediate study. Remarkably, even the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the US Government has failed to keep track of the contingent employment hiring trend (Kosanovich, 2023), despite the research that identified the fact that 94% of new jobs being created were part-time, temporary, or contract (Katz & Krueger, 2016). The how and why of this failure to track the trend toward hiring part-time contingent employees needs to be understood and studied as well.

Understanding more fully the motivation of Millennial and Generation Z employees in context with the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting also seems to be a topic worthy of extensive additional research. As we have reviewed the existing literature about these two important cohort groups, the sense of personal entitlement which these younger cohort groups have exhibited and their expectations about their role in tomorrow's work force seem to merit much greater study if employees and organizations are to succeed in the future (Graves, 2012; Al-Saad, 2014; Chakrabarti, 2019; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Evans-Reber, 2021).

Finally, the strategic role of Top Management Teams merits much greater understanding on the part of both scholars and practitioners. We have noted that the present management philosophy adopted by many businesses has often proven to be unhealthy and toxic (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Rather than treating employees as valued partners, the downsizing of organizations and hiring of contingent workers has been the overwhelming choice of organizations and the commitment to the long-term interests of employees has eroded employee trust and commitment. Ironically, a study by the American Institutes for Research confirmed that most academic institutions are as guilty as corporations in relying on part-time and contingent employees who now constitute the majority of faculty on college and university campuses (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2019).

In their book, *It's the Manager*, Jim Clifton and Jim Harter (2019, p. 5) have observed, "The practice of management has fallen behind how people work, live, and want to experience their lives. We need to adapt." Clearly, the evidence about employee engagement and their growing lack of commitment affirms that many of today's leaders and organizations are clearly out of step with the priorities of their employees – and those organizations need to change if they seek to be globally competitive. We suggest that current assumptions about the organization, the importance of redefining the organization culture, and the commitment to treat employees as valued owners and partners are ultimately critical to the flourishing of both individuals and organizations and must become a priority for both practitioners and academic scholars.

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