Millennial Job Hopping – Creating a Cycle of Unhappiness?

Serial Job Switchers Feel More Stagnant and Underutilized at Work

Recently, O.C. Tanner conducted a global study on workplace culture, surveying nearly 10,000 employees from 12 countries around the world. Taking a look at a portion of the data from the 5,142 millennials who took the survey, there is a strong association between the number of jobs that millennials have had and their discontent with their current organization.

According to the data, millennials who job hop from organization to organization are not connecting with the companies or their executives and are not feeling valued. They report that their job is not only stressful, but that it’s actually having a negative effect on their physical health.

Many people try different jobs at the beginning of their careers, but at a certain point job hopping appears to negatively impact a person’s outlook on their career and their current organization. Millennials who have a tendency to change jobs frequently feel underutilized, stagnant, stressed out and bored at work. This often becomes a repetitive cycle: A person feels unhappy and undervalued, so they switch jobs, but constantly switching jobs leads a person to feel increasingly unhappy and undervalued. How can companies help millennial workers break this cycle?

KEY FINDINGS

Millennials on the move

- A quarter of millennials (24 percent) have worked at 5 or more organizations
- The majority (60 percent) have worked at 2 to 4 organizations

Broken down by how many organizations they’ve worked at, millennials who say they...

- Don’t trust their direct manager:
  - 1 Organization: 20 percent
  - 2 to 4 Organizations: 28 percent
  - 5 to 7 Organizations: 34 percent
  - 8 to 10 Organizations: 41 percent
  - More than 10 Organizations: 46 percent
- Feel like their organization rarely sets goals:
  - 1 organization: 20 percent
  - 2 to 4 organizations: 27 percent
  - 5 to 7 organizations: 31 percent
  - 8 to 10 organizations: 38 percent
  - More than 10 organizations: 57 percent
- Feel stagnant/stuck in their current role:
  - 1 organization: 39 percent
  - 2 to 4 organizations: 45 percent
  - 5 to 7 organizations: 52 percent
  - 8 to 10 organizations: 56 percent
  - More than 10 organizations: 69 percent
- Feel like their organization only cares about its profits:
  - 1 organization: 36 percent
  - 2 to 4 organizations: 43 percent
  - 5 to 7 organizations: 48 percent
  - 8 to 10 organizations: 50 percent
  - More than 10 organizations: 66 percent
• Are often bored with their work responsibilities:
  ○ 1 organization: 33 percent
  ○ 2 to 4 organizations: 41 percent
  ○ 5 to 7 organizations: 43 percent
  ○ 8 to 10 organizations: 52 percent
  ○ More than 10 organizations: 64 percent

• Feel their job creates a great deal of negative stress in their life:
  ○ 1 organization: 38 percent
  ○ 2 to 4 organizations: 42 percent
  ○ 5 to 7 organizations: 47 percent
  ○ 8 to 10 organizations: 50 percent
  ○ More than 10 organizations: 61 percent

• Feel their skills are underutilized in their current role:
  ○ 1 organization: 38 percent
  ○ 2 to 4 organizations: 46 percent
  ○ 5 to 7 organizations: 53 percent
  ○ 8 to 10 organizations: 57 percent
  ○ More than 10 organizations: 67 percent

• Feel their job has a negative effect on their physical health:
  ○ 1 organization: 35 percent
  ○ 2 to 4 organizations: 36 percent
  ○ 5 to 7 organizations: 42 percent
  ○ 8 to 10 organizations: 51 percent
  ○ More than 10 organizations: 60 percent

CONCLUSION

The data suggests that organizational concerns, like feeling underutilized or bored, are leading causes of millennial job hopping, along with interpersonal reasons, such as lack of trust in a direct manager. Working directly with millennial employees to break the cycle of unhappiness will help them find a place where they feel valued and engaged.

The following tips can help employers establish a workplace environment where all can choose to stay and do their best work:

• **Focus on wellbeing and employee appreciation.** Taking an interest in employees’ overall wellbeing and recognizing them for their contributions builds trust and a sense of belonging.

• **Open channels of communication between leadership and employees.** Employees who feel heard and informed report higher levels of trust in both direct supervisors and senior leadership. Transparent two-way communication helps employees connect to a common purpose.

• **Build a strong sense of purpose within an organization.** Employees who understand and feel aligned to the overall purpose of the organization are more likely to work through challenges and stay longer at the organizations. Leaders who communicate the noble cause and clearly outline how the team’s work contributes build higher levels of trust and commitment.

• **Provide opportunities to make a difference.** All employees – including millennials – want to be challenged and make a difference others value. Finding opportunities for younger employees to stretch and work outside their normal jobs from time to time will go a long way to build a sense of opportunity, a key element of a great workplace culture where employees choose to stay.
ABOUT THE RESEARCH
This study began with a comprehensive review of engagement and culture models currently being used in business settings. Overall, over 30 models, all of which were published publicly by third-party organizations like Deloitte and Aon Hewitt, were reviewed. Upon review, a theory as to which aspects of culture were most important was developed. Once aspects were identified, an additional literature review was conducted for each area with an emphasis on work published in business magazines and academic settings.

O.C. Tanner’s initial theory was tested in a qualitative setting in the form of focus groups. It conducted six sets of two focus groups each in Columbus, OH, US; Toronto, ON, CA; London, UK; Sydney, AU; Singapore; and New Delhi, IN during the month of April 2017. These groups were made up of eight to 10 full-time employees working for mid- to large-sized companies (i.e. companies with at least 500 employees), between the ages of 25 and 50. These groups largely validated O.C. Tanner’s initial theory on corporate culture and highlighted large similarities across cultures.

Finally, a large-scale quantitative survey was conducted in order to further validate the qualitative research findings. O.C. Tanner sampled from full-time employees in 12 countries including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, China, Japan, India, Singapore and Australia. Online survey invitations were sent to panelists recruited from various panel vendors. Surveys were translated to ensure that a respondent could take the survey in his/her preferred language. Overall, we received 9,622 completed responses, 5,142 of which were from millennials. Responses were collected in May 2017.

ABOUT O.C. TANNER
O.C. Tanner, the global leader in employee recognition and culture, helps thousands of top companies accomplish and appreciate great work. Twenty-five of the Fortune 100 Best Companies To Work For® use O.C. Tanner’s cloud-based technology, tools, awards and services to engage talent, increase performance, drive goals and create great workplace cultures. For more information visit octanner.com.