

Employees leaving the workforce or switching jobs in droves

When Ashley was offered a job at a digital agency over Zoom during the last lockdown, they thought they had found the perfect set-up. Flexitime would be a given. Working from home would continue post-pandemic. The office would be a place to pop in only occasionally.

By the time they'd started the new role six weeks later in Leeds, everything had changed. Cast iron guarantees of flexible hours had melted away. Promises of remote working had crumbled. Even before social restrictions had ended, staff were expected to be in the office every day, from 9am until 5.30pm. "It was incredibly frustrating," Ashley recalls. "All these changes were done between my interview and my first day – and my new boss decided they didn't need to explain their decision making."

Rather than ride out the disappointment and stick with the new role, Ashley decided to join 'The Great Resignation' and the millions of others who have quit their jobs over the spring and summer months. "Lockdown provided an opportunity to reflect – and help me realise what I want from work," Ashley explains. "I want a job that suits my life and means I'm not tied to a desk all day, every day. And if I don't feel happy, I can just quit. There are more than enough jobs out there."

Hard data is backing up this anecdotal evidence – workers are drafting up resignation emails, handing in their notices and heading for the exit door in their droves. The trend is worldwide. In the UK, job vacancies soared to an all-time high in July, with available posts surpassing [one million](#) for the first time. In the US, [four million](#) people quit their jobs in April – a 20-year high – followed by a record [ten million](#) jobs being available by the end of June. A [Microsoft study](#) has found that 41 per cent of the global workforce is considering leaving their employer this year.

Demand for talent is fast outstripping supply – it's now an employee's market. "In the past six months the friction to move has been completely eroded," explains John Goulding, CEO and founder of employee communication platform Workvivo. "Someone can finish at a company on a Friday evening, have a new laptop delivered, and start a new job on Monday morning without leaving home."

"We've all taken a step back and reassessed," Goulding says. "Covid has provided an opportunity for workers to reflect on their role, whether their skills are being put to good use, and to find a much stronger sense of their own value."