

# These Workers Wanted to Quit, but Promotions Persuaded Them to Stay; As U.S. resignations set records, more companies are doling out new titles and raises to keep talent from walking out the door

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## FULL TEXT

As a record number of workers quit their jobs, some are finding good reasons to stay.

For some people, talking to supervisors about the need for a change or a raise came with quick results in recent months. Requests that would often be bumped down the line, or turned down completely, resulted in promotions and more pay.

Taylor Pratt, 37, was feeling burned out, so he quit his group product manager job last January at Zapier Inc., a business software provider. He rejoined in October after agreeing to a new manager role and commitments to address the burnout issues.

"They genuinely listened. It wasn't just like a lot of 'yeah, uh-huh,'" he said. "They cared that I was making the right move coming back and to make sure that we found the right fit."

Many employees feel empowered to strike out in search of higher salaries and bigger roles, and they aren't afraid to quit. In a recent Gallup poll of more than 14,000 U.S. workers, 48% said they were actively looking, up from 46% in 2019. Workers handed in a record number of resignations in November—many of them to take new jobs. Now, more firms are budgeting more money to pay raises in the hopes of keeping talent from walking out the door.

Ebony Martin, a lab technician in Chicago started looking for a new job after separating from her husband during the pandemic and feeling stalled in her career. The 38-year-old considered other companies and even new industries as she tried to break out of her role at a Chicago hospital. Finally, she talked to her supervisor about the need for better hours, given her experience and desire to spend more time with her son.

Ms. Martin's boss was sympathetic and tipped her off about a soon-to-post role in another lab at the same hospital. She put her hand up, landed the higher-paying job in October and decided to stay.

"I was really happy—not just because of the job benefits, but the work-life balance and being able to spend more time with my three-year-old," Ms. Martin said, adding that she would have quit if the new job hadn't materialized.

Andrea H. Pagnozzi, a Boston-based career coach whom Ms. Martin worked with, said she has seen a recent uptick in clients who want advice about whether to stay in a job they had considered quitting when their bosses offered them a new role or raise, or produced a counteroffer when they tried to resign.

"There's such a war [for] talent right now that it's a candidate's market and they're holding court," said Tiffany Dyba, a New York-based recruiter and career consultant. Ms. Dyba said she's seen more companies make counter offers with promotions or raises and retain employees she had hoped to recruit.

John Gross started thinking about quitting his consulting job in Pittsburgh in the early days of the pandemic, even though he'd only been at the firm for eight months.

"I am always looking at my options," he said. "At the end of the day, you're an employee who is working for a company, and it's your job to make sure you're getting your market value."

While eyeing other roles during 2020, the 35-year-old earned a promotion in his project-management role that December. It came with a 20% salary increase. In June 2021, he started a new role in business development. By December, he earned another 8% raise.

Mr. Gross said the opportunities at his existing employer have slowed his move to a larger market and bigger firm. He decided it was worth prioritizing learning new skills from his new roles, banking on that knowledge proving useful over his career.

"You can't guarantee you'll get that skill set somewhere else," he said.

After getting passed over for a promotion, Jordan Lawshe contemplated quitting his job as an operator at a chemical plant where he has worked since 2018.

"It was really discouraging and I wanted to give up," said the 27-year-old, who lives in Baldwin County, Alabama. "I put in a lot of hard work there and invested so much time. I thought that would speak for itself."

Mr. Lawshe looked for other jobs but ultimately decided to hang on at the plant in the hopes there would be another round of openings. This summer he was promoted from operator to supervisor and said he was happy to learn other supervisors put his name forth as a contender.

"I feel a whole lot better now," he said.

Write to Ray A. Smith at [ray.smith@wsj.com](mailto:ray.smith@wsj.com)

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Credit: By Ray A. Smith

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