

*Research Note*

# How Will People Re-engage Their Careers in 2022 and Beyond

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## About the authors

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## Abstract

Throughout 2022 and into 2023 career opportunities will abound. As the Great Resignation continues, employees are actively pursuing new careers that better fit their lifestyle and preferred career choices. While employers are seeking qualified and committed employees, career opportunities appear to be endless. Matching employees with the places of work, also, seems to be a challenge for employers and employees at the moment. The guidance of an experienced career coach may be a good step in facilitating a reflection on one's assessment of skills and capabilities, along with a realistic approach to establishing a long-term career trajectory. It may also allow employees, who engage an experienced career coach, to emerge from the coaching experience better prepared with more satisfying career options moving forward. Companies on the other hand can also benefit from the commitment and morale boost in their workforce if they are open to the change of approach towards employees. It may be a good way to prevent the knowledge and tacit capability from walking out the door.

In this white paper, we offer recent observations and suggestions for how to navigate this still developing scenario. And, hopefully, emerge successfully with desired career paths and new opportunities, where you can thrive and further develop your skills and goals.

**Keywords:** jobs, great resignation, knowledge, skills, career coaching, career changing, skill assessment

## Problem Statement and Background Cases

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have lost their jobs while others have decided to move away from their current work to seek new employment in fields where they can pursue professions they are passionate about. In November 2021, an article in Inc. Magazine, by Jessica Stillman, raises an interesting point regarding why 4.3 million people quit their jobs in August, which is 3 percent of the U.S. labor force (Stillman, 2021). Stillman states, "Clearly, something new and noteworthy is going on with American workers in the wake of the pandemic (Stillman, 2021). Most commentators have taken to calling this phenomenon 'the Great Resignation,' but not everyone agrees that this catchy descriptor correctly captures what's going on with employees. In fact, several top CEOs insist that, while it's true that at the moment, a better way to understand labor's current reassessment of their priorities and goals is to call this moment 'the Great Reshuffle.'" Stillman (2021) goes on to quote LinkedIn's CEO Ryan Roslansky's interview in Time Magazine, where he states an "unprecedented talent reshuffle happening globally." Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella, in a recent interview with Adi Ignatius of Harvard Business Review, agrees with Roslansky – "that he, too, prefers the term 'Great Reshuffle.'

As a Career Coach, with over 30 years of experience, and CEO of an online career management consulting firm, CareerCoachConsultants.com in Riverside, CA, one of the authors sees things a bit differently. I would call it, 'the Great Re-Careering' of the American worker. The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused many employees in the U.S. workforce to re-evaluate their jobs, employers, occupations, and the trajectory of

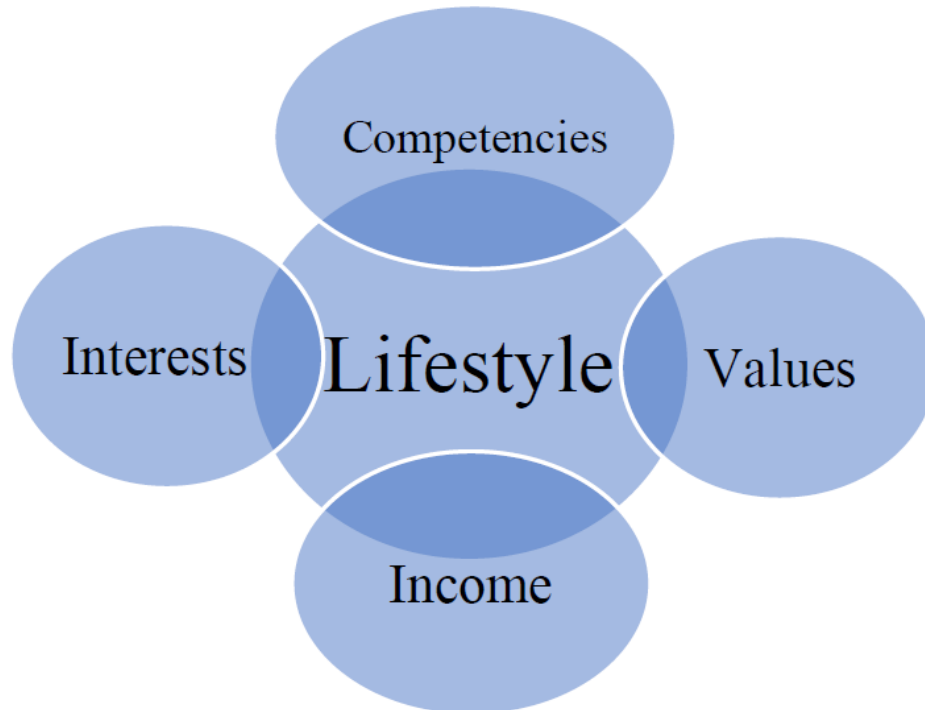


Fig. 1 C.I.V.I.L. building-blocks of a person's Career-Core

their current career path. Working from home – as many companies, government agencies, and many other organizations mandated in 2020-2021– has made people rethink their work and lifestyle, as indicated by a PWC March 2021 report. This “Reshuffle” makes people wonder if their work is meaningful and rewarding. They may have also realized that their employers and/or jobs – or their current career path – are no longer fulfilling their needs, whether they be economic, social, lifestyle, and/or psychological.

Let us address these concerns of so many employees, who are in search of new jobs, especially those that offer flexibility with regards to work-hours, working from home, and other incentives. In 2018, when I served as the Director of the Career Development Center at the A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management, at the University of California – Riverside, I wrote an article for the School of Business Magazine, entitled “What is Your C.I.V.I.L.?” This acronym, which I coined earlier in my career, while I served as the Director of the Feld Career Center at the Questrom School of Business at Boston University, stands for Competencies/skills; Interests; Values; Income; and Lifestyle, is represented in Figure 1. I believe these components are essential building-blocks of a person's Career-Core. The supporting elements of competencies, interests, and values were supported by a necessary level of income, which delivers the lifestyle one aims for.

A thorough understanding and an articulation of preferences under each topic can lead one to find the right kinds of occupations, jobs, employers, income level, and lifestyle – which includes factoring in ideal geographic locations, climate preferences, family dynamics and responsibilities, school systems, pursuit of continuing education and training, access to recreational opportunities, and the pursuit of happiness. With people ‘Resigning,’ ‘Reshuffling,’ or what I prefer to call it – experiencing an ‘Awakening’ that leads to the

“Re-Careering.”

Clearly, many workers are feeling frustrated and demoralized at their place of work, and the Pandemic has magnified these issues, perhaps concerns that had been overlooked when people were busy at their jobs. Having this time to awaken to their new reality and to experience their feelings that have been previously neglected. To use this time wisely, someone considering a career shift needs to ask one underlying question – How do I want to manage my personal and professional life? Understanding how one’s components of C.I.V.I.L. affect occupational choice is essential to developing a satisfying career. Therefore, one may benefit from seeking the assistance of an experienced career coach and learning how to manage and leverage the elements of C.I.V.I.L. in one’s professional and personal lives.

### **Three Examples of Recent Coaching Clients**

Recently, I have worked with several clients coaching them to leave their current employer and assisting some to consider a change of occupation.

Harry, a 45-year-old, has been with his current company in the insurance industry for nearly 15 years. He likes the field and is a high performer in marketing and sales. He has been overlooked for several promotions and believes his supervisor is not supportive of promoting him. Harry has become bored with selling the same products to the same clients. The solution became clear to Harry that he needed to resign from his position and make a move to a larger insurance company – working in a similar role, but with new product-lines and different clients. Harry contacted me as he needed a career coach to help him assess options with a different company. Since accepting a new position, he has been happy with his decision and feels challenged selling new products and in a new sector. He also makes a higher salary, with performance bonuses; there are also greater opportunities for promotions within this larger insurance provider. He finally took the leap and is now enjoying new responsibilities, which feels like a new beginning.

Beth is a 40-year-old client making a healthy salary in pharmaceutical sales, but is suffering from burn-out in a very competitive industry. She needed advice and counsel on other kinds of career paths she could pursue, and any additional education and training needed to make a transition to another occupation. For now, she has accepted an offer from a smaller company offering a unique line of medical products, which offers a less stressful environment. Meanwhile, she has discovered other occupations to pursue through career and personality testing. Beth’s new target is now to seek opportunities in a university. Utilizing her sales and marketing skills she would like to work in college admissions.

James is a 32-year-old male and has a BA and an MS in Human Resources. He has worked five years for a company that provides technology support for other companies. In his position, he has not been promoted, has grown tired of the daily routine, and is frustrated with his supervisor who refuses to promote him. He has completed skills and interests as well as personality inventories. From our first coaching session, it struck me that he has been working in the wrong industry and at a company whose corporate culture is not a good match for his values. Although he enjoys working in HR providing new employees with onboarding, orientation, and training activities, he feels like he needs a change. After our second session, where we

reviewed his skills and personality profiles, it seemed he might enjoy working at educational institutions or non-profit organizations – all whose missions may be more closely aligned with his values. Frustrated with his current situation at work, he has decided to resign and move back to his home state near Washington, DC.

## Solutions for Three Typical Coaching Clients

These three clients, whose identities have been disguised, raise key issues that are common complaints of many American workers: boredom with the day-to-day routine and subject matter that comprise their job duties; a lack of interest in the industries they work in (Rudolph *et al.*, 2021); frustration with their inability to get promoted, obtain additional financial incentives, and difficulties with their supervisors (Mironko, Muriungi, and Scardino, 2021). Their situations remind me of a very apt phrase by Peopledynamics (2019), “Employees leave bosses – not companies.”

A recent report by Kim Parker and Juliana Menasce Horowitz of PEW Research Center shows that most people left their jobs in 2021 due to low pay and lack of advancement opportunities. Additional reasons were that employees felt disrespected at work, due to child care issues, and not enough flexibility as to when to put the hours round the top five. These reasons may remain pervasive moving into 2023 as employees want to reevaluate their options and as a younger generation of workers begin their careers.

With so many transitions taking place in the job market in 2020, 2021, 2022 and going into 2023 we see that people are also hungry to deeply contemplate: what kind of work is going to be more fulfilling, enhancing job satisfaction, improving skill sets, and leading to greater happiness according to Executive Briefing by McKinsey and Company. With over 100,000 career coaches in the United States, it’s likely that workers will take advantage of these coaches to examine and assess their competencies and skills, to better understand their interests and life goals, and determine which related industries and organizations are most appealing (Savickas *et al.*, 2009; Lodi *et al.*, 2021; Santilli *et al.*, 2021). People are also thinking about their personal values and how they align with the corporate culture within organizations, hence examining more closely the mission statements, ethics, and policies of companies. Employers will also need to become more flexible at meeting the needs and wants of their employees, addressing quality-of-life issues (Felber and Hagelberg, 2020), and sweetening the benefits and compensation levels to attract and retain a more enlightened and discerning worker.

Unions have also grown stronger in recent years and seem to be in the cat-bird seat with negotiations with management. The recent IATSE strike-vote in the movie and entertainment industry, in late October of last year, threatened to shut down the entire industry in greater Los Angeles; the union members approved accepting the new contract on November 15th, 2021 as described by Hart (2021). Kaiser Permanente health care employees accepted the offer from management on November 12th, 2021. Similarly, 10,000 John Deere employees walked-off their jobs in mid-October in Iowa and Illinois. Their union rejected the company’s first and second offers. Finally, the company came back with a much sweeter deal as reported by the Associated Press on October 14, 2021. The company’s strategy focused on intensive communications with workers,

trying to convince the union membership to vote on management's third and final offer. The University of California faculty and staff recently accepted the latest contract (Julius, 2021) and will receive substantial salary increases according to University Council-AFT (2021), in addition to a \$1,500 signing bonus to accept the contract, which resulted in the contract being ratified by union membership (id).

An article by Fox Rothschild, and posted in General Labor Law, News & Publications, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) developments, negotiations, union activity, union strikes, suggests that "Recent data show that workers are quitting their jobs in record numbers – the so-called "Great Resignation" – and the overall job participation rate remains low. Workers are becoming ever more assertive in their demands, not just for higher wages and benefits to keep up with inflation, but increasingly with regard to social and political issues. Indeed, Cornell University reports that over 25,000 workers walked-off the job in October, more than double the average over the previous three months (Nagle, 2021). One thing is certain: the John Deere strike is one of the highest profile labor actions in recent memory, but it certainly won't be the last" (Nagle, 2021).

On November 12, Ben Casselman of New York Times reported that 4.4 million people quit their jobs in September, which is a little higher than the number reported in August, another 3% of the U.S. workforce. A report by NPR concluded that people are looking for better working conditions, more money, flexibility, and are thinking more about their careers in general (Hsu, 2021). On the following day, ABC News stated the same and added that workers are also seeking better benefits and childcare. AARP Report states that about one-third of the people leaving the workforce are retirees – some people taking early retirement at 55 (Marcus, 2021) – typically from state and federal agencies, which allows workers to claim their pensions after 20 or 25 years of service – and then those retiring at their full-retirement age of 66 or 67. Automation and AI is also replacing workers: from burger flippers, to manufacturing workers, to warehousing personnel, to accounting professionals (Rogers, 2021).

## **Which Factors Contribute to Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction?**

The major factor in deciding to move on from one employer to the next seems to focus on employee engagement and job satisfaction. Many employees in the American workforce in 2022 seem to have reached the tipping point in deciding to pursue careers with a better fit. Anthony Klotz, an organizational psychologist and professor at Texas A&M University, who presented the term "great resignation" points out that the great resignation will slow down, while remote work is here to stay, and hybrid work arrangements will become the norm (Klotz et al., 2021). In the process employees need to gain new skills which will let them pursue better fitting jobs. Also, they must learn to discern and highlight transferable skills they already have, as we have done in the examples above. A recent, 2021 report published by The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) contrasts the differences between engagement and job satisfaction.

During the pandemic, many workers have learned to work remotely and enjoy working from home. The

thought of returning to a 5-day, 9 to 5, work schedule at the office is not very appealing. Therefore, employers may want to offer a hybrid option to employees where they can work two days from home and two days in the office each week, essentially creating a four-day work week. This flexible approach may entice many workers, who have resigned from their employers, to return to work at their former company or to re-enter the job market finding another position elsewhere. If this 4-day work-week were universally adopted by organizations, it would allow employers to rent less required office space – resulting in significant savings. This new paradigm could also re-energize the American workforce to work smarter four days per week and to play harder three days per week.

## **Conclusion, Resources, and Recommendations**

The main question remains: How will workers manage their transition back to the workforce? For the moment, the workforce reshuffle creates a pause and allows employees and employers to reflect on what priorities each has going forward. Sooner, or later, the majority of employees will want and/or need to return to work to build their careers and to make a living. For many, engaging a career coach may be a very effective way to determine one's future professional and personal goals. We are sure it will be time and resources well spent. Employers can also benefit from engaging career coaches to help employees determine their career change directions, while improving morale, retention, lowering turnover, and reversing the “great resignation” trend. This can be a solution for companies to prevent the loss of tacit knowledge, expertise, and skills learned at the company, by workers who want to walk out the door (Mironko, 2018).

According to the article in the Harvard Business Review by Cook with over 70 million workers who have left their jobs in 2020-2021, most of these workers will have to re-enter the workforce within the next year, if they want to get back to work (Cook, 2021). A longer time away from work will prove challenging for re-entry (Cook, 2021). Here are some of our recommendations for returning workers:

- Career Coaching can assist workers in evaluating ways of engaging more fully with their work and evaluating better-fit companies to target for future opportunities.
- Coaching can also help individuals to re-assess their skills and the corresponding best occupations and jobs to pursue.
- Career coaches also help workers to negotiate better work/lifestyle balances, salary, and benefits, such as hybrid work schedules, 4-day work weeks, and performance bonuses.
- Coaches also provide a forum for clients to speak to an objective listener, who can provide information and advice about realistic career goals and plans.
- Organizations such as the Small Business Development Centers – hosted by many colleges – are an excellent resource for entrepreneurs who want to start their own companies.
- OneStop Career Centers – hosted by most large cities – can also assist unemployed workers with obtaining unemployment insurance, free career-related workshops, and one-on-one career coaching.
- Enrolling in a certificate or degree program at a community college or at a local university's community extension program can add to a worker's skill sets and credentials, as many jobs require ongoing

professional development courses.

- Graduate degrees can also provide more fortified skills that may also help workers to negotiate and obtain higher salaries.
- Typically, 4-6 hours of career coaching can serve as a good foundation on which to address many of the issues that employees are facing and grappling with today. People may also want to schedule several follow-up appointments to check-in with their coach on a quarterly basis.

In summary, there have been major paradigm shifts taking place in the American workforce since 2020, which will require both employees and employers to reconsider the future of work and how both parties will engage with each other going forward.

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