

LSST voices: Britain's staff shortages and labour instability – Part One

written by Kunal Chan Mehta | November 1, 2021



Image: LSST Marketing/Unsplash

Since COVID-19 collapsed society as we know it, the balance of power between employees and employers has been surreptitiously and steadily shifting. With record breaking staff shortages, Britain's 'missing workers' have created recruitment difficulties destabilising global supply chains. Here, in part one, we gather expert LSST voices to delve deeper into the 'Great Resignation'.

Throughout 2020's tremulous lockdowns, COVID-19 placed the British economy in deferment. The public were asked to stay home. Organisations everywhere soared into new-fangled contingency modes or, to their detriment and dismay, ceased operations.

However, a collective descent into a sense of comfort occurred that created an unbeknown recruitment gap – the Great Resignation – that would not be entirely filled again after lockdowns.

But in terms of ennui, things were just getting started. In one respect at least, working from home meant that people could stop worrying about where they are travelling to, so feasibly more jobs opened to them. In another, the furlough scheme kept staff out of circulation, and many did not return to their employers.

‘Who would have thought that as we come out the other side of the pandemic – we would be focusing on global staff shortages?’ said Dr Wendy Wigley, LSST’s Head of Student Life-cycle. ‘Although staffing solutions are needed now, there will be lessons learned in terms of preparedness planning – but this will take many years to uncover.’

Subsequently, lockdowns also led to the destruction of [millions of jobs](#) while propelling the superposition of digital homes for working and shopping. Irina Barariu, LSST’s Student Union President, calls this a stage of ‘arduous apathy while waiting for the world to open up again’.

Irina continued: ‘I have noted there is a major shift in the balance of how people appraise their own time. Our students that work, appreciate that time with family and how their education makes for a better standard of living even when there is less spend.’

This paints a clear picture that the Great Resignation is more about a job quality problem, rather than a job quantity problem – as well as a job obligation problem. As more people reject the office, spend more time with their family, or avoid returning to work entirely, this may be a pivotal turning point in the relationship between labour and capital.

Additionally, employers are also having to rethink and redefine what their employees really need. Throughout the pandemic there was much praise for the NHS and essential workers – now paradoxically the focus is on essential jobs.

A revolution in employee expectations

‘Keeping track, in terms of the global reset and transformation, was unpredictable as everything was – and is – developing in real-time,’ asserted Mr Mohammed Zaidi, LSST’s Deputy CEO, summing up the consequences of lockdowns and COVID’s troublesome relationship with the world. ‘It is a toxic mix of the pandemic, Brexit and individual anxiety. There is growing evidence that supply chains are severely

struggling to keep up with the resumption of demand as we gradually and safely emerge from the pandemic. This will turn up inflation no doubt. Sadly, this will discriminate against those on lower incomes.'

'This is quite frankly a revolution in employee expectations and, as a lasting effect of the pandemic, is a new phenomenon in its own right,' added Mohsin Riaz, Dean of LSST Birmingham. 'This could be a major change in the balance of what we understand about employee and employer relations. History will be hued by these recent real-time events.'

'The pandemic led people out of their habits and routines and cut off locations and relationships,' added Mr Ali Jafar, LSST's Marketing and Admissions Director. 'Further, the shock of the pandemic provided a relatively rare opening for people to [re-evaluate their lives and their values](#). It seems that the Great Resignation will do the same for organisations.'

This winter, although COVID-19 will continue to demand our attention, there is a simple observation: the essential reasons for the labour-employment gap are complex and, as Dr Wendy pointed out, this will not be fully understood for years to come.

To be continued in LSST voices: Britain's staff shortages and labour instability: Part 2 – Supply Chains. LSST's press office invites students

and staff to contribute to this ongoing and progressive series by emailing the author kunal.mehta@lsst.ac

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