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**TECHNOLOGY**

# How Triangle tech firms are battling employee burnout



A recent survey found that one in three employees think about quitting their jobs once a week.

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By Lauren Ohnesorge  
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2 hours ago

As the tech talent pool tightens, retention has become a top priority at Triangle firms. And while their goals are the same, there's no one-size-fits-all-solution to keep talent in the door.

Retaining employees takes more than higher paychecks and remote working. That's particularly true in the Triangle where most tech employers tell *Triangle Business Journal* they have already raised wages and implemented the flexible policies that consultants reacting to the "Great Resignation" have labeled as standard for the “new normal.”

“You want people not to take the phone call, not to take the first interview,” said Erikka Buracchio, chief people officer at Cary-based Brightly, the facilities management software firm formerly known as Dude Solutions. “A lot of that comes from much more than pay. ... It's not just a paycheck.”

Recent surveys bear out that finding. A FlexJobs survey found that 62 percent of respondents called out “toxic company culture,” not salary, as the reason they quit. A recent survey from SimpleTexting found one in three employees think about quitting their jobs once a week.



Erikka Buracchio, chief people officer at Brightly  
BRIGHTLY

Paige Oimet, a finance professor in the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, said the issue of employee burnout is “pervasive” and a big issue driving retention challenges.

“We're seeing these same issues across different industries,” she said.

Oimet said that while allowing employees opportunities to decompress is important, the key issue is vacancies. A tight talent market means it's harder to recruit. Employees have to take on additional work to compensate for absent desks - something many have been doing for a year or more.

"The companies that are going to succeed the best here are the companies that are going to recruit and retain their employees ... but it's tough," she said.

### **What Triangle technology companies are doing**

At Brightly, wages definitely play into the equation - but aren't the only differentiator. Buracchio said the company routinely analyzes market data to ensure its salaries are competitive. But, calling it the "Great Reset" and not the Great Resignation, Buracchio said developing loyalty involves recognition.

"It's the soft contract, who cares about me at work, who recognizes me, who is going to take care of my careers?" she said.

Buracchio said Brightly combats burnout with what it calls "global recharge" days, one day every quarter where employees can be offline and take a break.

"It's not work-life balance, it's work-life integration, at this point," she said.

While Brightly, like many software companies, has a flexible work-from-anywhere policy, it also encourages in-person connections with bimonthly "collaboration days."

"It's an effort to, yes, get people back in the office, but more so get people interacting with each other," she said.

Buracchio said it can't just be managers developing these policies. The company implements regular employee surveys and focus groups.

"You really do have to give people that flexibility," she said. "You have to think about that soft contract. What do they want in order to do good work for you? ... The listening

piece is absolutely important because we think based upon our own experiences only, and we forget about other people's perspectives."



Jay Strickland of WingSwept

WINGSWEPT

WingSwept, a managed IT service provider based in Garner, said culture is absolutely critical in keeping employees in place.

"You can't sort of wait until there's 40 percent inflation to decide: Hey, people need to like working here," he said.

In addition to raising salaries, WingSwept has beefed up its benefits, providing more choices, Strickland said. The firm is focused on flexibility. And like Brightly, it's planning activities to "welcome people back to the office."

"We offer flexibility as it makes sense," Strickland said. "No ultimatums here."



Billy Marshall, CEO of ServiceTrade

SERVICETRADE

At ServiceTrade, a field management software firm in Durham, CEO Billy Marshall said the retention strategy is to look past the current position. He aims to make all hires see opportunities for promotions. Marshall said training and trajectory are integral to the culture the company is building.


“We’re happy to bring in early career people pretty much across the spectrum and have them be trained here and mature into more high responsibility roles at a relatively quick pace,” he said.


The company prioritizes developing internal talent, a strategy Marshall said is behind its turnover rates of less than 7 percent.

Marshall uses baseball team analogies, saying, “We’re not playing the free agent game super aggressively.”

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