

IDENTIFYING PRE-QUITTING BEHAVIORS

Most organizations wish that they could identify which of their high talent employees might be thinking about quitting, so that they could intervene to retain them. Research that will appear later this year in the *Journal of Management* identifies common employee behaviors that exist prior to the employee voluntarily quitting, or pre-quitting behaviors (PQB). After extensive study, researchers found that a composite of thirteen PQBs were strong predictors of future voluntary turnover. These thirteen PQB items exhibited by employees are: 1. Their work productivity has decreased more than usual, 2. They have acted less like a team player than usual, 3. They have been performing minimum acceptable work more frequently, 4. They have been less interested in pleasing managers than usual, 5. They are less willing to make long-term commitments than usual, 6. They have exhibited a negative change in attitude, 7. They have exhibited less effort and motivation than usual, 8. They have exhibited less focus on job related matters than usual, 9. They have expressed greater dissatisfaction with their job than usual, 10. They have expressed greater dissatisfaction with their supervisor than usual, 11. They have left early more than usual, 12. They have less interest in working with customers than usual, 13. They have lost enthusiasm for the mission of the organization.

Key takeaways:

- Observable behaviors can predict voluntary turnover.
- These observable behaviors, termed pre-quitting behaviors (PQB), can serve notice to intervene to lessen voluntary turnover.
- PQBs appear to be negatively related to job performance, and positively related to workplace deviance.

Using data collected over five study phases to identify and then test their findings, the authors found evidence for being able to identify PQBs that could be used to predict voluntary turnover. The first three phases dealt with identifying PQBs and developing the 13-item measure. In the fourth phase managers were surveyed regarding one of their employees and found that PQB's were negatively associated with job performance, and

positively related to various forms of workplace deviance and the manager's expectation the employee would quit. In Phase five the researchers followed-up with employers after thirteen months to check on turnover outcomes and found that PQB's predicted voluntary turnover, and did so over and above traditional predictors of turnover.

Source: Gardner, T.M., Van Iddekinge, C.H., & Hom, P.H., (2016). If You've Got Leavin' on Your Mind: The Identification and Validation of Pre-Quitting Behaviors. *Journal of Management*, In Press.



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