



Rodney's Take

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Everyone's a Quitter... Blame COVID

Until Princeton and then Harvard adopted the college board test (SAT) to assess applicants from unknown high schools and locales outside of New England, colleges were regional entities that were also fed by legacies. The new SAT process allowed the schools to bring in promising students from across the nation and eventually from around the world. Other schools soon adopted the SAT and then the ACT, which are still the most accurate forecasts of how students will do in college.

But then universities took it a bit further. Instead of relying on students to find the universities, the schools went looking for the students. They began sending marketing materials to college kids who achieved certain scores on standardized tests, inviting them to apply or schedule a visit. Such efforts dovetailed with Internet access and common applications, which led to high school kids applying to 10 or more colleges, including several "reach" schools. The result has been a dwindling acceptance rates at selective universities, because so many more kids are applying to them. The math makes it look like these schools are much more selective than they were just a few years ago, which helps in school rankings, even though most of the changes are due to so many more people applying.

The same sort of thing is happening in the workplace.

According to the latest numbers from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a record number of people, 2.7% of the labor force, quit their jobs in April. This is supposed to indicate that the economy is in full swing and workers are confident that they'll find another job. That's part of it. Employment

opportunities are plentiful as the economy reopens, but it's not just about GDP growth. It's also about reach.

Many businesses adjusted to the economic shutdowns from COVID-19 by sending employees home. We were forced to work from our living rooms and kitchen tables and to accept the fact that many people's family lives often spilled into view on Zoom calls. But we got used to it and, much to everyone's surprise, we found that many employees are just as productive when working from home as they are in the office.

Once employees work remotely, the distance becomes a secondary concern. Whether workers are across town or across the country only matters if face-to-face meetings will be necessary on a regular basis. Free from distance concerns, companies can now search for employees across the nation and even around the world, and the same thing is true in reverse. Employees can search online for companies that will hire them remotely, which dramatically increases the number of jobs available to each potential worker.

Much like with selective colleges, this doesn't change the absolute numbers. Even though more jobs are available, the number is still finite. But because remote work is now common, workers have many more choices than even just a year ago, which should increase churn as workers look for jobs that closely match their skills and interests.

This isn't a bad thing. In fact, it should be a positive. If productivity among remote workers remains high, then both employers and employees should find more suitable matches than in the past, because both groups have more choices available when they're looking for a change. Of course, now more people will apply for each job and, as happened for slots at selective colleges, competition will increase. So, when applying for jobs online, try to remember to wear business clothes and keep the kids and pets out of the frame... at least until you've gotten the job.

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Got a question or comment? You can contact us at info@hsdent.com.