

OPINION

## When is the best time to resign?

**I'm a department manager at a Japanese company where I spent almost 25 years. My Japanese boss keeps on pushing me to the limit by requiring me to complete many projects at the same time while I'm doing my regular job resulting in an average of ten work hours a day even at home. What's the cure for all this? Is this the best time to look for another job? — Moon River.**

### IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

**ELBONOMICS: Take it easy. The resignation process is an emotional one.**

A 10-year old girl from the city was visiting a farm for the first time. She had never seen many animals before. The first time she encountered an animal, she blurted out: "What a strange-looking cow. But why hasn't she got any horns?"

Her uncle, the farmer, explained: "Well, you see, some cows are born without horns and never have any. Others shed theirs, and some were dehorned. And some breeds aren't supposed to have horns at all. But the reason this cow hasn't got any horns is because she's not a cow. She's a horse."

Good advice requires an understanding of context. In your case, that means evaluating your current situation, understanding how it relates to your career goal, and harmonizing them all with your family and health concerns in mind. It's not easy.

Even if you've already decided to resign and find new work, you can expect a lot more emotional distress on your way out. That's why I'm advising you to take it easy. Think twice to come up with the best possible decision.

No matter how overwhelmed you are by the burdens of your job, resigning is not the best option, unless you've exhausted all available remedies. Even if you've done something to correct the situation and found the resolution wanting, looking for another job is another challenge that you weigh carefully.

#### AVAILABLE REMEDIES

If you want to be happy at work, you must take a broader view of your situation, by understanding what you can and cannot change. This means discovering the source of your dissatisfaction at work — which as you've said is the heavy volume of work you're doing. Sometimes, however, it's easy to jump to conclusions.

Instead of seeing what's bad about your situation, list down what you can do to help alleviate the situation. Then start exploring the following remedies:

**One, revisit the company culture.** Most Japanese companies and managers are known for working long hours. You've been in that company for 25 years, so you should be first to understand

what's going on. Try to discover if you're the only one feeling that way.

**Two, talk to your boss about your problems.** Most Japanese managers believe in horensō which requires you and other managers to regularly report, coordinate, and consult with them. While this mainly focuses on tasks, no one should prevent you from using it to discuss your personal concerns about the job.

**Three, offer temporary measures.** Discover ways to lighten your work load without necessarily burdening the company with hiring additional workers or buying new equipment. The Japanese are known for their *kaizen* mindset. Which means they are open to employee ideas, especially if it has something to do with making the job easier, better, faster and of course cheaper in the long term.

**Four, challenge the old ways of doing things.** The Japanese know the continuous improvement concept so well you may not encounter difficulty in making a proposal in that spirit, as long as your ideas are commonsensical and practical to implement. Remember, Japanese people are reasonable people, but you may need to explain your side of things.

**Last, agree on a priority list.** You need to be on the same page with your boss on what matters the most at any given time. Emphasize the fact you can't possibly do all things at once without adversely affecting the quality of work. It's a matter of doing an extensive horensō to prove your point.

#### IMPROVE THE SITUATION

There's a saying "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." In your current situation, knowing what you can change with the approval of your boss is an important step towards a successful career and in solving your concerns. There's no need to sulk in a corner or think that resigning is the only solution.

Try the abovementioned suggestions to see what works. Your Japanese boss may have to take it easy with you lest your case be interpreted as harassment involving a manager with 25 years of service. Seniority matters to the Japanese. Your issue may be transitory and need not ruin your work life.

Even if you can always leave for another organization, there's no guarantee that things will be better. You may not like the struggle, but try these options to see if you can make things at least tolerable. And manage what you can control.

Have a chat with REY ELBO via Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter or send your workplace questions to [elbonomics@gmail.com](mailto:elbonomics@gmail.com) or via <https://reyelbo.consulting>



# 60% inflation triggers Turkish pay protests

ISTANBUL — For five years, Zahide Sogut asked her bosses at a car parts factory on the industrial fringes of Istanbul for a pay rise. With inflation soaring, they finally agreed, but for Ms. Sogut it was too little, too late.

Earlier this year, she and dozens of her colleagues launched a strike and protests outside the plant as annual inflation topping 60% triggers a slew of demands for higher wages and labor rights among low-paid Turkish workers.

"We've learned during this resistance that no one will give us our rights, we have to fight for them," Ms. Sogut, 30, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation during a protest at Farplas Automotive, her former workplace.

Ms. Sogut and about 150 of her colleagues who had tried to unionize workers at the factory were fired and police were brought in to break up the ensuing protests. The fired workers have been demonstrating outside the factory ever since.

Farplas Automotive did not respond to a request for comment, but the chief executive of its parent company Fark Holding told local media the firm had not interfered in union organizing, and denied the protests were linked to wages or labor rights.

Turkey is ranked among the world's 10 worst countries for workers by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) citing widespread union-busting, repression of strikes, and arrests and prosecutions of union leaders.

"Otherwise successful unionization drives are prevented by sacking union leaders, relocating them to workplaces hundreds of miles away, or calling in police with pepper spray," said ITUC Deputy General Secretary Owen Tudor.

The Labor Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. However, workers from couriers to shipbreakers have launched a series of strikes in recent months, in some cases winning rare concessions. At least 108 strikes were staged in January and February — more than the average annual total seen in recent years — according to data gathered by the Labor Studies Community, a group of researchers studying workers' rights in Turkey.

All but one was considered unauthorized by officials.

"Due to the huge economic precariousness, workers, especially young ones, are interested in new forms of collective action and organizing," said Isil Erdinc, a researcher on Turkish trade unions and politics who is affiliated with the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Unions have long faced a difficult road in Turkey, where many were shuttered after a 1980 military coup. Legal barriers to enter into a collective bargaining process or declare a strike remain high, and laws on work-

ers' rights are often poorly enforced, labor advocates say, noting a high level of informality in the workforce.

Only about one in 10 employees are in a union, showed the latest 2019 data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), though membership was on the rise. However, much of that growth has been in conservative-leaning unions with ties to the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said Erdinc.

Following a failed coup in 2016, Erdogan's government has tightened rules which heavily limit the right to protest. Those rules are often used to prevent strikes, said Alphan Birelma, an assistant professor at Ozyegin University in Istanbul.

Since 2016, police have intervened in almost one in five labor-related protests, compared to about 5% previously, he said. In one of the most high-profile recent protests, warehouse workers for the supermarket chain Migros were detained by police and then fired from their jobs, drawing public sympathy and calls for a boycott.

Seeking to limit the impact of inflation on workers, the government raised the minimum wage by 50.4% from January, but union confederation Turk-Is said that scarcely put low-paid workers above the hunger threshold. Opposition parties and some economists have cast doubt on official inflation data, suggesting the real figure could be much higher, and polls show Turks believe inflation is higher than official data suggests.

Like Ms. Sogut at the car parts factory, many workers say they decided to protest because pay offers meant to compensate for inflation were insufficient to cover surging living costs. Some of the most prominent protests have been in sectors that gained visibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, from mass walkouts by health-care workers to noisy street demonstrations by couriers for the major Turkish e-commerce platform Trendyol.

The Trendyol couriers and the workers from the Migros supermarket chain were eventually offered increased wages, and the fired Migros workers were reinstated. "Their gains weren't huge, we shouldn't exaggerate them, but labor protests in Turkey aren't usually that successful," said Birelma, noting many of the recent strikes were organized by workers themselves or with help from small independent unions.

Turkey's unions will need to modernize their approach if they are to attract new members on the back of the protesters' successes, said Huseyin Sevgi, an associate professor of labor economics and industrial relations at Kiriakouli University.

They must convince younger workers of their relevance, improve their use of social media and outreach to service-sector workers, he said. — Thomson Reuters Foundation

## US Fed risks shattering pro-job policy by taking hammer to prices

JEROME POWELL wants to quell inflation without sinking the labor market. Success or failure will be a defining part of the Federal Reserve chair's legacy and the pro-employment policy he's championed.

"Can we cool down — sort of — labor demand without causing employment to fall?" Fed Governor Christopher Waller said on April 11. He sounded cautious, calling interest rate policy a "brute force" hammer that sometimes breaks things: "That's the tricky road that we're on."

What happens to the US job market, where unemployment currently stands at an ultra-low 3.6%, will rank alongside Mr. Powell's widely-praised emergency pandemic response in dictating how history records his two terms at the helm of the world's most powerful central bank.

Mr. Powell will have one of the final words on the imminent policy outlook before the US central bank enters its usual pre-meeting blackout when he addresses an International Monetary Fund panel on Thursday. The Fed next meets May 3-4.

The careful response of the Fed to surging price pressures has been slammed by some for being too slow. But it was rooted in an approach the central bank called its new framework, adopted in August 2020 as the economy still grappled with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

That policy explicitly repented from pre-emptive strikes on distant inflation threats that left workers — often from minority communities — mired in jobless recoveries by slowing the economy too soon.

The Fed carried the framework into the post-COVID expansion, pledging not to raise rates off zero until the labor market reached maximum employment. Both the jobs market and inflation overshoot rates that the Fed estimates are sustainable.

Mr. Powell recently described the labor market as "tight to an unhealthy level," citing more than 1.7 job openings for every unemployed person. Inflation measured by the Fed's favored gauge rose 6.4% for the 12 months ending February, more than three times the Fed's target of 2%.

If the framework delivers neither stable prices nor maximum employment — no matter what shocks arise — that raises questions about how much future support it will have and whether it needs to change.

"The framework didn't look ahead to these circumstances. It encompasses risk manage-

ment but only in a very limited sense," said Derek Tang, an economist at LH Meyer, a policy-analysis firm in Washington. "I am not sure it is going to survive in its current form until the next review."

Fed officials intend to undertake a public review of their strategy, tools, and communication practices roughly every five years.

Policymakers partially excuse their late start on the inflation fight, saying they have been faced with unexpected shocks, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and another round of virus lockdowns in China.

There is a lot for workers to like about how the job market galloped out of the pandemic downturn, even if opinion polls repeatedly show high prices are a pressing concern among Americans.

The US added almost 1.7 million jobs in the first quarter versus 527,000 in the first three months of 2019.

The unemployment rate for people with high school diploma and no college education stood at 4% last month. The jobless rate for Hispanics was 4.2%, as low as it got in the final quarter of 2019, and for Black Americans it was 6.2% in March — above the 2019 lows.

Workers in lower-wage jobs have bargaining power and some are unionizing. Women are also coming back to the labor force, after being pushed out during the pandemic by a lack of child care and in-classroom schooling.

Sue Bortone, a senior partner at the executive search firm Talentfoot, says it is a great time for them to jump back in. Companies are offering better benefits and more flexibility to keep valuable employees.

Fed Governor Lael Brainard, in a live-streamed interview with *The Wall Street Journal* April 12, said she was optimistic that tighter monetary policy, slowing international growth, and less fiscal stimulus could slow labor demand without raising unemployment.

Job openings would fall, but not employment in the Fed's baseline outlook.

Fed officials' March forecasts show the unemployment rate staying around 3.5% over the next three years as they raise rates. Inflation glides back down to 2.3% in 2024.

The economist Claudia Sahm looked at what happens when the three-month moving average of the unemployment rate exceeds the minimum over the last 12 months by just 0.5%. — Bloomberg

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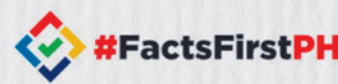


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