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New hires quitting in droves – adapted from www.japantoday.com

“This year, we showed the movie ‘Hayabusa’ to our freshmen, and within one month there was a guy who quit,” the man, who works for the personnel division of a company listed in the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange, tells Shukan Gendai (Aug 4). “The movie noted that our company was a supplier to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, and he had hopes of being assigned to JAXA and working on aerospace development. But we are primarily a manufacturer of electronics and he was assigned to a job with no connection to JAXA. When he asked to resign, the expression on his face looked as if he felt he’d been cheated.”

Barely three months since the year’s crop of fresh new hires joined their companies, they’ve been quitting in droves. Their reasons vary widely, but all point to the fact that commitments don’t mean what they used to.

Take young Mr A, age 23, who joined one of the megabanks in April.

“I’m a graduate of the University of Tokyo, and they hired me to count banknotes?” he asked incredulously. His resignation letter was submitted within a month of his joining. During training, he was annoyed by the simplistic and repetitive tasks, and felt his superior was a buffoon. Finally, while being taught how to count banknotes, he blew up.

He’d had hopes of researching money markets or corporate results, or perhaps a job related to investment funds—not sitting at a teller window serving individual customers.

Young Mr B, also age 23, had obtained a degree from an elite U.S. university and was hired by a major insurance firm.

“I expected that I was brought in as part of the strategy to hire globalized human resources,” he mutters. “But instead of the Tokyo headquarters, I was assigned to Tottori! Can you imagine, someone with my background being made to work for some old geezer, where I’d spend my time calling on small- and medium-sized businesses to peddle insurance policies?”

He couldn’t either. He quit before taking a single step toward Tottori Prefecture.

It’s stating the obvious, but individuals as those introduced above do not take kindly to the typical corporate approach of making young staff members start their careers at low-level apprenticeships.

In Mr C's case, however, it was being assigned to his company's Nagoya branch, where he could no longer play basketball with his teammates, that he couldn't handle.

“Unlike the way things were before, young people today grow up using personal computers and cell phones,” says personnel consultant Shigeyuki Jo, president of an outfit named Joe's Laboratory. “One can say they are brought up doing only the things they like. For example, before when the family only had a single TV set in the living room, in order to watch programs they liked, they were forced to communicate with other family members. But now they've got PCs in their own rooms, and don't need to communicate anymore. This is tied to the current phenomenon of associating only with those with common interests. So to them, the most important things in life are their own interests and circles, and work is secondary.”

Another problem child, Mr D (age 24), was unable to separate from his parents.

“One day, he called the office of his company, a marketer of outdoor goods, to say he wasn't coming in because he caught a cold. I told him to take it easy and get better,” relates his manager. “But not long after his call, I got another one from his parents, complaining that what I'd said to him was akin to telling him not to come back to work. I never saw him again.”

These kinds of overprotective parents have become so numerous in Japan, it's said that 5,000 a year have PTA meetings at universities. “It's become quite common to see parents deliver their child's letter of resignation to the office,” says labor and social security attorney Daisuke Nozaki. “They are so overprotective, it gets to the point that their children are incapable of doing anything on their own.”

Questions

1. Do you think that younger employees have less commitment than previous generations?
2. Do you have sympathy with any of the people in the story? Which ones? Why? Why not?
3. Do you think any of them had a good reason to quit their jobs?
4. Do you think companies sometimes mislead potential new employees about the jobs they will do?
5. What kind of low-level duties did you do when you started your career? Did you think it was unreasonable?
6. Are parents over-protective nowadays? Are you over-protective of your children?

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