

A

Shiori Kawamata, operations manager of Momuri, said that in the past year alone they received up to 11,000 requests from clients.

Located in Minato, one of Tokyo's busiest business districts, the firm launched in 2022 with a name that tries to resonate with their **helpless (1)** clientele – “Momuri” means “I can’t do this anymore” in Japanese.

At a cost of 22,000 yen (about \$150) – or 12,000 yen for those who work part time – it promises to help employees **tender their resignations (2)**, negotiate with their companies and provide recommendations for lawyers if legal disputes arise.

“Some people come to us after having their resignation letter **ripped (3)** three times and employers not letting them quit even when they **kneel down (4)** to the ground to **bow (5)**,” she said, in another illustration of the **deferential (6)** workplace culture in Japan.

“We sometimes get calls from people crying, asking us if they can quit their job based on XYZ. We tell them that it is okay, and that quitting their job is a labor right,” Kawamata added.

Some workers complain that bosses **harass (7)** them if they try to resign, she said, including stopping by their apartments to ring their doorbell repeatedly, refusing to leave.

Kawamata said people who contact them often work for small to medium-sized businesses, with those in the food industry most vulnerable, followed by healthcare.

B

Japan has long had an overwork culture. Employees across various sectors report punishing hours and high pressure from supervisors. These employers are widely known as “black firms.”

Human resources professor Hiroshi Ono, from Hitotsubashi University Business School in Tokyo, said the situation had become so serious that the government had begun publishing a list of unethical employers to impact their ability to hire, and warn job seekers of the dangers of working for them.

More than 370 companies have been added to the list since it was published in 2017.

“There are some issues with black firms, where working conditions are so bad, there’s no psychological safety, and some employees might not feel safe,” he said.

The stress has proven fatal for decades, as exemplified by a phenomenon called “karoshi,” or “death by overwork.”

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 54 people died from work-induced brain and heart conditions and received compensation in 2022, which is actually a major decline from the 160 deaths recorded two decades ago.

Hisakazu Kato, an economics professor at Meiji University in Tokyo, said the country has labor laws in place to protect workers and make sure they are free to resign.

“But sometimes the atmosphere in the workplace makes it difficult to say so,” he said.

A 31-year-old political reporter from national broadcaster NHK died in 2017 after suffering heart failure caused by spending long hours on the job. She worked 159 hours of overtime in the month before her death.

Five years later, a 26-year-old doctor from a hospital in Kobe died by suicide after working more than 200 hours of overtime in a single month.

C

So why resignation agents like Momuri have begun to appear only in recent years? That, experts say, is because of young people’s changing approach to work.

Many of them no longer agree with older generations’ thinking that one should do whatever they are told regardless of the job’s nature, Ono said, adding that when there is a mismatch of expectation, they won’t hesitate to quit.

“I think that younger people these days are more non-confrontational,” the expert said, noting that many lack social interaction skills at work due to Covid. As a result, young workers prefer to quit without having direct contact with their bosses.

But Ono suggested that it’s always good to have a discussion and not to burn bridges with employers, so he would recommend against contracting this type of services.

Kawamata, from Momuri, partially agreed.

“We honestly think that our resignation agency service should disappear from society and we hope for that. We think it’s best if people can tell their bosses themselves, but hearing the horror stories of our clients, I don’t think that our business will disappear anytime soon,” she said.

For now, Momuri offers a 50% discount for those who seek their service to resign the second time.

[Source](#)