Taking time out.
The workforce after dinner and to imagine how women can be resigned over the past two years.
CONVERSATION: INNOVATION

Akméniné Sancerre
White: Sébastien Riffault,
Red: Domaine Trapet, Gevrey-Chambertin
Blanc de Noir
For the apero: Weingut Adank

THE MENU
Lemon meringue tart
Corn tostada with hazelnut butter
White asparagus with cashew crème fraîche

The way we work has transformed in the past two years. In the first of five stories, the Adecco Group’s Innovation Foundation invited diverse thinkers to discuss the Great Resignation over dinner and to imagine how women can be helped to re-enter the workforce after taking time out.
The Great Resignation, adapting to new ways of working and finding creative ways to re-enter the world of work.

THE VENUE
Zinah “Zizi” Hattab’s vegan restaurant Kle is a cozy eatery in Zürich District 3, boasting a refined plant-based menu that mixes influences from Morocco and Spain.

First course
Corn tostada with a herb sauce and roast onion reduction

THE SPEAKERS

CYNTHIA HANSEN
Managing Director, Innovation Foundation
A specialist in strategy and social impact, Cynthia leads the Innovation Foundation (the corporate foundation of the Adecco Group) as a social innovation lab on the future of work.

NAZRENE MANNIE
Executive Director, Global Apprenticeship Network
Nazrene specialises in the future of work and youth employment strategies. She leads the Geneva-based Global Apprenticeship Network which partners with development agencies to shape work-based learning opportunities.

OMAR BAWA
CEO, Goodwall
In 2012, Omar co-founded Goodwall, an online platform that helps young people find professional opportunities, jobs and scholarships. It now has two million members.

SUBA UMAVIEVAN
CEO, Drossos Foundation
Umavievan runs the show at the Drossos Foundation, an organisation that aims to unlock the potential of young people in the Middle East and North Africa as well as Germany and Switzerland.

WELCOME
As the first in the series, this evening sets the scene for the discussion on how women are experiencing the Great Resignation, adapting to new ways of working and finding creative ways to re-enter the world of work.

CYNTHIA: It’s so nice to have you all with us this evening. I’m really excited to be hosting the first in this series of dinners on women re-entering the workplace. I had the pleasure of choosing tonight’s guests, so I know that you’re all fascinating people and I’m sure that we’re going to be having some seriously dynamic conversation. Tonight we’ll be enjoying some of Zizi’s delicious food as we explore the theme of the so-called Great Resignation – the fact that employees across the world have been quitting their jobs in record numbers – and its implications for women around the world. What I’d like to know about this phenomenon is how much of it comes down to the issue of choice. Is it a luxury to be able to quit your job or up and find a different one?

OMAR: But I think it’s important to distinguish between choice versus necessity in this context. There were those who had the choice to resign because they had an existential crisis and wanted to find meaning in life. On the flipside, almost everyone was asked to work remotely during the pandemic and many mothers had no choice but to work and take care of their children at the same time. This led to so many cases of burnout, where women felt that they had to resign – not because they wanted to but because they were up against a wall and that was the only option.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION
Part of the reason why more women than men dropped out of the workforce during the pandemic is that they were looking to re-enter, it’s not always an easy path.

KITRHONA: We’ve started looking into the Great Resignation at the Geneva Graduate Institute. The term was coined with reference to white-collar professionals’ experiences with more flexible remote work but it was accelerated by the pandemic. We really saw the effects was among semi-skilled workers doing human-facing work such as delivery; this kind of frontline work became high-risk during the pandemic. It made people sit up and think, “This isn’t worth it.” They started realising that they had choice and that there were better, higher-paid jobs out there.

SUBA: The pandemic did have some positives when it comes to getting
women into work, though. I work in the MENA region where, proportionally, fewer women are an active part of the workforce. The pandemic exacerbated this issue but it also created opportunities. Women I’ve been working with in countries such as Jordan now want to enter the workforce from within their own home. Now that’s more possible than ever.

**CHRISTIAN:** I agree. Legislation has real momentum-changing potential.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

Getting women back into work is a complex challenge without a simple solution. Modern recruitment methods are stacked against candidates who take a break.

**CYNTHIA:** And what about women who would like to be in employment but struggle to get a foot in the door due to career breaks. How can they be helped?

**OMAR:** Today’s recruitment methods favor those with traditional work experience, and discount experiences like motherhood. If we adapted recruitment methods to value and assess talent based on skills, parenthood could be a plus on a CV, but a skills-develop experience valued by employers.

You need experience to get experience — and you’re not able to get through an automated system. That’s why we need face-to-face interactions, for empathy.

**CHRISTIAN:** To be honest, I don’t think it’s just the [digitally] automated thing. We as humans have the potential to be very automated. What we see again and again at recruitment centres is that you don’t get diversity. There’s so much bias in society as a whole.

**NAZRENE:** The other day a colleague shared with me an article about recruitment without CVs.

**ANNA:** That sounds like a utopian future but how would employers find the time to speak to every applicant?

**CHRISTIAN:** It’s the future, seriously. The CV is just a selection tool. We can find better selection tools. For example, I’m recruiting right now in Cameroon. They don’t have a culture of writing CVs, so we have someone there who talks to people. It works better for both parties.

**OMAR:** That’s where skills come into the equation. If you’re not able to hire based on experience or the companies that you’re associated with, it comes down to the skills you’ve acquired.

**CYNTHIA:** I’m really interested in the idea of cataloguing the skills involved in lived experience. Something like doing the shopping for the week. That involves budgeting, decision-making, time management.

**OMAR:** A big thing is recognising those skills. You might be a mother but you’re not realising that you’re acquiring and demonstrating those skills.

**KITRHONA:** It’s interesting how value is defined, captured and communicated.

**NAZRENE:** And a CV doesn’t always give you the full picture.

**ANNA:** But a CV rules out 60 per cent of the people who I don’t have time to see.

**CHRISTIAN:** True. But there are better tools to do the same thing.

**CYNTHIA:** That’s exactly the kind of lateral thinking we’re looking at with this Innovation Foundation. Identifying these “better tools” and seeing how they can form practical solutions to help women re-enter the world of work. We’ve touched on some really intriguing themes so far and you’ve set a very high bar for the rest of the dinners in the series. Let’s see how the topic unfolds and what we learn by the end of the series.