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A photograph of a blue and white train engine with a large white star on its front, traveling on tracks through a wooded area. The text "THERE'S MORE TO US" is overlaid in large blue letters. Below the text is a white outline of North Carolina with a red pushpin in the center. At the bottom is the "EXPLORE CABARRUS COUNTY NC" logo, the name "JASON ARNOLD", the phone number "704.456.7970", the email "JasonArnold@ExploreCabarrus.com", and the website "ExploreCabarrus.com".

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Job Hugging: When Holding On Becomes a Signal, Not a Shrug

Deanna Jones

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Here we are once more, handed another word to label the workforce mood. Job-hugging. Sounds gentle, protective. But peel back the cover, and it rings clear: disengagement disguised as refusal to let go. It's not comfort. It's fear.

I've stood in that hush. In jobs where nobody ever asked what stirred my curiosity, what ideas pulsed beneath my fingertips. They liked me where I was. Please stay in your lane, they seemed to say. That quiet acquiescence planted me in holding patterns that didn't belong to me. That's job-hugging from the inside—stuck, not by joy, but by omission.

Employers, take a look and lean in. This new term isn't just another phrase. It's a signal. Especially now, for Millennials and Gen Z—those who won't settle for ping pong tables and lattes. They hunger for spark, for space to move toward what sets them alive.

Marcus Buckingham nails it in *Love + Work*—real love in work is not about doing tasks that fill time, but lighting the gut. It's not about a job. It's about the connection to what energizes your bones. And too often, people assume roles because that spark is invisible to them.

And demographics don't whisper—they roar. Another worker shortage is coming; markets always cycle. The question isn't if, but when. And when that tide crests, will your people hug your company, or slip away?

This is your moment. Don't just hope your employees stick around—give them a reason to. Help them discover the projects, skills, and opportunities that not only keep them occupied but also keep them alive. Maybe we don't need them to “hug the job.” Perhaps we need them to embrace the work itself, the part that fuels them and makes staying feel less like clinging and more like choosing.

So ask yourself: are your people hugging in fear of leaving, or hugging because they've found something worth holding close?

Read more about the trend here: [What is job hugging? — Fast Company](#)

About the Author:

[Deanna Jones](#) brings over 35 years of experience in the technology sector with a focus on sales, operations, and project management, including 25 years at a Fortune 100 technology company where she led initiatives, built partnerships, and supported growth. She is President of the Harmony LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce. She contributes her leadership on the DEI Committee for Meeting Professionals International and the Membership Committee for the National Speakers Association Carolinas, and is also a proud member of AENC.

Deanna holds an MBA from Elon University and a Master's in Instructional Technology from the University of Maryland Global Campus. Outside of her professional roles, she is active in her community, sharing stories with The Monti in Durham and coaching T-Ball.

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