

New Year, New Career: what to consider before you change jobs

More people seek a job change during February and March than at any other time of the year.

This is not entirely surprising; the start of a new year often prompts reflection. Am I doing what I enjoy? Is there something better I could be doing? Could I be earning more? Am I where I want to be in my career?

In today's world, individuals will change careers on average seven times in their lifetime, compared to only a couple of decades ago where it was a 'job for life'. And this rate is rising.

There is no longer a stigma associated with changing jobs often and there is clearly more choice available to us – especially for those with talent, drive and ambition.

But before you start flipping through LinkedIn and SEEK for the next opportunity, stop to ask yourself what's driving you and why you would really want to change jobs.

It's a simple question with an often complex answer.

Career Coach and former Fortune 500 executive, Lisa Quast recommends identifying the reasons first.

For example, maybe you want a new job because you feel like your manager isn't supportive of your career development, or you're bored and want to do something more challenging. Whatever your reasons, write them down.

Now, read through your list of reasons for wanting to leave your job and see if you can put each reason into one of these three categories:

1. Issues within my manager's ability to control
2. Issues within my ability to control
3. Issues that fall outside my manager's and my ability to control.

Have you considered the situation from all angles? Have you taken the time to define your career aspirations? Have you created a career development plan that includes actions you believe are needed to achieve your goals? Have you shared this information with your manager and asked for his or her help and support? What might seem like a reason to look for a different job could turn out to be something within your ability to control and change.

Similarly, if you are bored and seeking greater challenge. What have you done to identify different value-add tasks or projects and communicate these to your manager?

Sometimes, what you gain by staying in a job can actually surpass what you would have learned by simply giving up and looking for new job. Instead of running away from a problem – you may actually gain more from working through the issues:

- If you feel you're underpaid, try fixing the issue before looking for another job. Pull together salary research along with a list of all your key projects and tasks and then sit down with your manager for a discussion.
- If you want to learn new skills or improve weaknesses, talk with your manager to find out if there is budget available for you to attend training courses, seminars, or classes.
- If your lengthy commute to work is lowering your quality of life, negotiate with your boss so you can work from home a few days a week.

Consider too if you are taking a good job or simply running away from a bad one. No job is perfect and it's doubtful that you'll enjoy every aspect and every minute of your job – people rarely do.

Changing jobs isn't always the only answer – the key is taking time to understand why you want to change jobs and whether or not changing jobs is in your best interest.



If a new job offer does eventuate, you need to be just as clear on what appeals to you about the new opportunity – not just what you don't like about your current job.

If you are simply seeking a life raft from your current job, you may want to think again. The goal should be to find a job you are truly excited about.

This takes research.

- Find out as much as you can on the company's culture, financial stability, project or work pipeline, clients and leadership (especially your new manager). Utilise your networks, social media and www.Glassdoor.com for information.
- Ensure you understand the total compensation package. Are you being paid your worth in the current market? Does the package include benefits you may be seeking that your current company does not offer like health insurance, flexible working hours, volunteer days or increased superannuation contribution?
- Understand the requirements of the role that are not always detailed. This might include regular travel, covering others during absence or a high administrative load. These things might be what you are looking for, but be clear.

Consider which company – your current or the new – offers more room to grow and advance.

At the end of the day, the only person responsible for your career is you. But it's certainly beneficial to have an employer that supports your professional development. Options like formal mentoring programs, training, tuition reimbursement and opportunities to attend industry conferences can keep you moving forward professionally.

And finally, ask yourself, 'am I letting fear drive my decision?'

Just as it may be unwise to leave a job for the wrong reasons, you should not allow fear of the unknown to hold you back from accepting a new one.

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