

Job Seekers: Consider This – Before You Change Jobs

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Tags:



Whenever someone comes to me for coaching to obtain a different job or change careers, the first question I ask is, “Why do you want to change jobs?”

It sounds like a simple question, right? But, it’s actually pretty complex, and it often leads to some soul-searching to discover why the person is unhappy in their current job and whether or not changing jobs is in their best interest.

Are you considering a different job? Before you jump into the job seeker process, take the time to consider why you want to change jobs. Grab a cup of coffee, sit down, relax, and write out your list of reasons.

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:

Issues within **my manager’s** ability to control

Issues within **my** ability to control

Issues that fall **outside** my manager’s and my ability to control.

Think deeply about the underlying cause of each issue. If you feel like your manager isn’t supportive of your career development, you might at first put this into the “Issues within my manager’s ability to control” and then think to yourself, “Yeah, right. Like he/she even cares one way or another about my career.”

But what if you looked at the situation from a different angle? 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.

Let’s look at another example of why you might want to leave your job – you’re bored and want to do something more challenging. You might think this issue is outside your manager’s and your control because, hey, it’s the job, right? Wrong. Have you told your boss that you’re bored and given him or her examples of the projects and tasks you’d like to take on to improve your skills and broaden your experience? Managers generally have a fair amount of discretion when it comes to allocating work to their direct employees. Taking the time to talk through this with your manager might improve your situation enough that you won’t need to look for a job elsewhere.

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.

No job is perfect and it’s doubtful that you’ll enjoy every aspect and every minute of your job – people rarely do. Maybe you’re looking for more meaning or purpose in life and think you can find that through your work. Possibly. Or, maybe you can find a hobby or perform volunteer work on the weekends that will bring you additional happiness and the purpose in life you’re seeking. Changing jobs isn’t 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.

