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Career Decisions: Is it Time to Make a Change?

Have you started questioning whether it's time to make a job or career change? Are you bored at work, don't feel that you're getting the recognition you deserve, or find yourself dreading going to work? These are all situations that may cause you to pause and wonder.

You can use this guide for some practical strategies and tips to help identify some of the reasons you may feel it's time to make a change.

Let's Assess the Situation

Are you sure you want to make a change? As we get older, we find that change can be difficult, so make sure that you're not making a permanent change when all that's needed is a temporary fix.

There could be a variety of reasons why you are considering a job or career change. Some may be external, some internal, or it could be a combination of the two factors weighing in on your decision.

First, let's look at some internal factors.

Internal Factors

- ✓ How do you feel about going to work? Does anxiety or depression start kicking in on Sunday afternoon causing you to dread getting up on Monday mornings? Are you complaining about your job to others?
- ✓ Are you feeling physically or emotionally threatened at work? If so, maybe it's time to start developing an exit strategy.
- ✓ Have your skills become obsolete? Almost every industry has been impacted by technology, and if it's affecting your job, you may find there's a gap in the skills you need that are keeping you from successfully doing your work.
- ✓ Are you feeling overwhelmed by your job? Maybe you haven't articulated it yet, but if you're constantly worried at work because you can't fulfill your responsibilities or feel you haven't received enough training to help you master critical tasks, it could be hard to find enjoyment in your work.
- ✓ Do you feel bored at work? If you've been in a position for several years, no longer excited about your work, and not growing in your job it's going to make it easier to start thinking about doing something else.
- ✓ Is an opportunity for advancement unlikely? This tends to be more likely in a smaller company where you've already worked your way to a top position. There's just no where to advance!



- ✓ Do you feel unappreciated by your co-workers and/or boss? You're not feeling the love expressed by monetary compensation or accolades or even a simple "thank you."
- ✓ Is there something about your job that you no longer enjoy? For instance, there's no longer any thrill in traveling every week. It was fine when you were younger and had less responsibilities, but your priorities have changed.
- ✓ Have you researched competitive salaries for your type of job and discovered that your company pays less than the industry average? You may be motivated to seek out better compensation elsewhere if you've been turned down for a raise.
- ✓ Is there little or no opportunity for a significant salary increase in your current position? How are raises or requests for salary increases handled at the company? Is there a regular performance review process? Are there opportunities to increase your salary much beyond 2-5% annually?
- ✓ Have you come to the realization that you're not getting any younger? If the thought of working for your current employer for another year — or five years — makes you feel your mortality, it may be time to make a change to a different path.
- ✓ Is there something else you're more passionate about doing? Maybe there's an opportunity for you to turn something else you're doing as a hobby into a full-time job. Or, start a business of your own — either doing something related to your current work, or a current hobby or interest.
- ✓ Did you have a different plan for yourself? Maybe you didn't see yourself staying at this job, or in this career for so long. If your long-term goals don't align with what you're doing now, it may be time for a change.

Now, let's consider some of the external factors.

External Factors

External factors — that you have no control over — can also impact your decision to make a job or career change. These can include:

- ✓ A recent change in leadership or a company merger.
- ✓ The company you work for was bought (or they bought another company). Either action can impact your job as company management assesses redundancies in personnel between the two companies.
- ✓ There's been a change in leadership in your department or in the company. One of the top reasons for making a job change is when you get a new boss. Maybe she has her own former employees she brings into your department, or maybe her leadership style just doesn't feel right to you. In either case, it may lead you to think about making a change.



- ✓ You were asked to do the same job for less money. If this hasn't ever happened to you, you may not believe it's possible, but some companies ask their employees to take a pay cut but continue to do their full workload. If you can't afford to make less but work the same amount — or more — this may prompt you to look for a new job.
- ✓ Your workload was reduced, along with your opportunity to earn more. If you work in commissioned sales, you may find your sales territory reduced, which may impact your ability to earn even the same amount as before.
- ✓ You're in a dead-end job. For whatever reason, the job you're in now is "the end of the line" with this company. Folks who make it this far at this company usually don't advance any farther, and generally retire from this role.
- ✓ The industry you work in is dying or going through significant changes. Consider the mortgage industry in 2008, or the newspaper industry today. Or the feast-and-famine cycle of the oil-and-gas industry. If you're in an industry that is likely to go "bust," the decision to change careers may not be left up to you.

Remember, you want to assess whether the internal and/or external factors that are prompting you to consider the change are temporary (short-term) or something you would be permanently affected by.

You should also assess the "temperature" of these factors and how they affect you. Some of them may be more of a minor "inconvenience," while others may feel unbearable. For example, while you may be working in a dying industry, if you have a job, you may not be interested in switching jobs or changing careers. But you're a frog in a pot of water that is slowly heating up. The question isn't "if" you will eventually be affected by changes in the industry, but "when." If you take charge of managing your career, you will be in a better position to handle career change, not just react to it when your boss summons you into his office sometime down the road to let you know your services are no longer needed.

Worksheet: Job/Career Change Self-Assessment

On the following page, rate each of these internal and external factors on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "doesn't not apply to me or doesn't affect me" to 5 being "affects me greatly." Circle your answer for each line and then add up your score at the bottom.

23-46 points: You're starting to see reasons to make a change, but there's no urgency.

47-69 points: Look for opportunities to make little adjustments and see if that helps.

70-92 points: You probably need a change. Start thinking about what you want to do.

93-115 points: This ship is going down! It's time to act.

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	1	2	3	4	5
I dread going to work most days.	1	2	3	4	5
I fear for my physical safety in my current job.	1	2	3	4	5
My current job is a threat to my emotional wellbeing.	1	2	3	4	5
My skills are becoming increasingly irrelevant to my job.	1	2	3	4	5
Most days, I am overwhelmed at work.	1	2	3	4	5
My job is boring.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't move up in my current job/current company.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't feel appreciated by my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
I am not valued as an employee by my supervisor/boss.	1	2	3	4	5
My work environment is dysfunctional.	1	2	3	4	5
Part (or all) of my job requires me to do something I don't enjoy.	1	2	3	4	5
I make less (on average) than other people who do my job.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't make much more for the work I do if I keep working here.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't stand the thought of working here much longer.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm not doing the kind of work I'm passionate about.	1	2	3	4	5
I didn't see myself working here for this long.	1	2	3	4	5
This job doesn't fit into the long-range plans I had for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
My company was just bought out (or bought another company).	1	2	3	4	5
I've recently gotten a new boss.	1	2	3	4	5
I was asked to take a voluntary pay cut OR my pay was cut.	1	2	3	4	5
Part of my job responsibilities were given to someone else.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm in a dead-end job.	1	2	3	4	5
My industry is going through significant changes and/or is dying.	1	2	3	4	5
TOTALS					



Change Jobs or Change Careers?

Do you want to change the company you work for or change your career path entirely? Let's look back at the assessment you just completed. Ask yourself if making a change to a new company would fix the issue or issues you identified. Or, if they're issues that are embedded within the industry itself, and would only be fixed if you changed industries entirely?

Also, think about how you feel about the actual work you're doing. Do you still have a passion for the type of work you're doing but maybe not in your current work environment? If that's the case, changing jobs could improve your situation. You might not need to change careers.

Things to Consider

Even if you've identified that there are internal or external reasons that you may want to consider making a change, ask yourself this: "Is there an opportunity to improve my current situation?" As previously mentioned, some of these things may be temporary and the issue may resolve itself. But the other piece of the puzzle is you. Is there some way that you could make a change that would improve the situation? For example, could you transfer to a similar position in a different part of the company? Could you talk to your supervisor and see if there are opportunities for additional responsibility or advancement that you may not be aware of? Could improving your skills (for example, pursuing additional education, training, or certifications) help you?

Next Steps

If you feel your current situation can't be improved, the next thing to do is develop a plan. Make sure you have a plan for what you want to do next before you decide to make a change. Think before you act — don't be impulsive. Change can be difficult — the bigger the change, the more difficult it may be. Also, you want to make sure you're running towards something you want to do, and not running away from something you don't. Being impulsive may lead you to do something you may later regret — like one of those viral "I Quit" videos that are fun to watch but may lead to long-term ramifications when prospective employers Google your name.

Assess your marketability at another company or for another career path. What skills, education, and experience do you have to offer? Inventory your accomplishments. In the next section, where we address practical strategies, we'll talk about the value of having your résumé professionally written so you can see how you stack up on paper for your desired next job or new career.



Timing

Consider the timing of making a change, if you decide that's what you want to do. For example, you may not want to leave your job in November if you'd earn an annual bonus by staying another month. The same is true for things like vested options in a stock plan or retirement account — make sure you manage the timing of your departure to maximize your benefits. Basically, don't leave money on the table if you can help it.

Planning

Along with considering the timing of your departure, do you need to do some things before you change jobs or careers? Perhaps you need to take some classes or earn a certification in preparation for making a job or career change. Create a Personal/Professional Development Plan (PDP) for yourself, outlining the steps you need to take to bridge the gap between where you are now (skills, education, and experience) and what you need in your new job or career. Checking off as many of those items as you can will help make the transition smoother.

Finally, it's easier to find a job when you have a job, so don't just quit your job. And don't burn bridges at your former employer, if you can help it. Give ample notice, offer to train your replacement, prepare a checklist or cheat sheet for your replacement, etc.

Practical Steps for Your Job or Career Change

Once you've decided that you do want to make a change — whether that's a new company or a new career — here are some practical steps to take to make your transition move along smoothly.

Finances

The first step is to get your financial house in order. You'll be in better shape to make a change if you're on sound financial footing. As you start this process, make sure a financial evaluation is part of your plan. Are there expenses that you can cut out — even temporarily — that will help you stockpile cash in the short term? Maybe you need money for additional training or certifications. Identify how you can save that money so that you have it ready when you need it. If your research shows that you may need to take a pay cut initially to make a job or career move, start cutting back now so that it's not as big of a shock later.



Identify What You Want

The next step is to decide on a target — what do you want to do? How will your next job — or career — be different from what you’re doing now? Take some time to identify what you want. Invest in career testing and/or meet with a therapist or career coach who specializes in helping with job change/career change. (This will also help you identify whether you may be suffering from anxiety or depression, which can affect your work, your decision-making ability, and your choices.)

Research

Next, research your new career. Talk to people who are actually doing the job you want to do — especially if you’re moving into a new career field. Research the qualifications for candidates who do what you want to do. Again, consider the idea of creating a Personal/Professional Development Plan (PDP) so you are prepared to make the transition.

Disengage

Once you decide you are going to make a change, start slowly compiling the information you need and slowly start disengaging yourself from your current job/current employer. You don’t want to take a full box of knick-knacks home at once, but you may start decluttering your files (both paper files and on your computer) and taking some personal items home so that you don’t have to pack them up all at once. Be careful when doing this, however, as it may tip off co-workers — or your boss — if too many personal items start disappearing.

Talk to Recruiters

Take calls from recruiters — or reach out to connect to them. However, keep in mind this strategy will only work if you’re staying in the same industry. Recruiters specialize in placement, so they want to put “round pegs in round holes.” They won’t be interested in helping you make the change from being a computer software developer to a teacher.



Get Professional Help

Finally, one of the best things you can do, once you have a job target in mind, is to engage a professional résumé writer to help you develop a résumé for your desired job. This is especially helpful if you are considering a career change as this action can help you identify transferable skills that you have to offer and boost your confidence when you see the evidence of your qualifications on paper. Your résumé writer can also help guide you in collecting the information you need to develop your new career documents.

Be prepared to invest in yourself and in the development of this document, because your résumé writer will have to spend a considerable amount of time to prepare a résumé that demonstrates how your skills, education, and experience are applicable to your new career path. It can be a worthwhile investment as a tool as you make a change in your job or career.

If you would like to speak with me regarding your score on the worksheet or to learn more about how a career professional can be of help, let's schedule a chat by visiting

<https://moscareerservices.com/schedule-a-chat/>

To your success,

Marcia Baker

Marcia Baker
Résumé Writer & Career Consultant

“Every experience in
your life is being
orchestrated to teach
you something you
need to know to move
forward.”

— Brian Tracy