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Should I stay or should I go?

Returning to the workforce after the end of year festive season break is often a time of career reflection for many, and for some, the time to commence a search for a new position.

But like any major life decision, when you make a job or career change you need to have thoroughly researched and planned your move to ensure the best possible outcome. Don't end up making a hasty or ill informed decision and ultimately a leap into the unknown but rather, spend some time devising a strategy that will maximise the chances of a successful move.

For example, consider what is motivating you to seek a job change, what you want in your next position and in your personal life more broadly, what particular skills and strengths you will bring to your next role, how the job market is performing at present, etc.

So let's look at the assessment and planning process you should undertake.

1. List the positive and negative aspects of your current position. Look at things such as daily responsibilities, team environment, management style, career progression, training opportunities, company culture and values, location, salary, etc. Also reflect on what changes you would seek in your next role with respect to these criteria.
2. Consider your recent behaviour at work as a signal that you might need a job change: are you bored or anxious, feel unappreciated or trapped, experiencing a lack of challenge or focus, had a poor performance review or been overlooked for a promotion or special project?
3. Ask yourself whether your need for change is directly related to your work or is a personal issue the real source of your anxiety? You need to identify what it is in your life that is making you feel dissatisfied and how this is impacting on other aspects of your life such as your career.
4. Also ask yourself whether the problems with your current role can be resolved by discussing your concerns with management? Are you likely to experience the same problems in a new role or will a job change improve your current situation?
5. Spend time reflecting on what overall talents you possess, what you enjoy doing at work, what you are excited or passionate about outside of work. You need to consider how your natural abilities, personality, skills, experience and lifestyle will fit with your next role.
6. Understand what experience you possess that will be sought after in your next role and what skills you have that can lead to a successful transition to another position (e.g. interpersonal and negotiation skills, organisational skills, leadership ability, computer experience, client management and relationship building skills, etc.)
7. Consider more general career objectives relating to your future employer – size of the organisation and your immediate team, your manager's style and approach, hours of work and flexibility, traveling time, etc.
8. Also consider any potential skills shortfall that you might have and investigate relevant training that will address these issues over time.
9. Another key consideration is current economic conditions and whether a move is prudent (or available) in the current climate. Coupled with this is the financial outlook of any prospective employer. If you can, try and obtain a snapshot of their sales, market share and employee numbers and whether these are on the rise.
10. Also strive to maintain and build your network of contacts relevant to your industry and profession, and use this network to obtain market insight and intelligence that can assist you in any job search activity.

The more effort you put into this process the more likely you will find yourself in a job which is both satisfying and rewarding, (whether that is negotiated with your current employer or a new employer altogether), and one that will hopefully offer you the long term career potential that you desire. **m**

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