

# IS IT TIME FOR A JOB OR CAREER CHANGE? There's a Lot to Consider...

There's a saying in the careers industry that you'll know it's time to make a job or career change when you start asking yourself if it's time to make a change.

While there is truth to that, there's more to making your decision. This guide will help you identify some of the reasons why you may want to make a job or career change and give you practical strategies and tips to assist you with your decision.



## What May Make You Want to Make a Change?

The first step is to assess the reason — or reasons — why you may want to make a change. Change can be difficult — it usually is — so you want to make sure that the reason you are considering a switch isn't something temporary that will fix itself if given enough time.

Some of the reasons why you may be considering a job or career change are internal reasons. These can include:

- ✓ How you feel about going to work. Do you dread getting up and going to work on Monday? Does that feeling spread its way into your weekend? Do you start feeling anxious or depressed on Sunday afternoon as you anticipate the upcoming workweek? Do you find yourself complaining about your job to others?



- ✓ You feel physically or emotionally threatened at work. If you are in danger physically or psychologically at work, you should start developing your exit strategy.
- ✓ Your skills are becoming obsolete. Technology has had a dramatic impact on almost every industry, and if it's affecting your job, you may find you have a gap in the skills you need to be successful in doing your work.
- ✓ You are overwhelmed by your job. If you find yourself constantly worried at work because you can't handle the responsibilities of the role, or didn't get enough training to help you master critical tasks, that can make it tough to enjoy your work. You may not have articulated it, but you're overwhelmed.
- ✓ You're bored at work. Maybe you've been in your position for several years, and you're just not excited anymore about the work you're doing. If you're not growing in your job, it's easy to start thinking about doing something else.
- ✓ There is little to no room for advancement in your current job. Maybe you've worked your way up to the top spot you can get in the company. This is particularly the case for smaller companies, where a limited number of management positions are available.
- ✓ How you feel about your co-workers or boss. Do you like those people? Are you appreciated for the work you do? (Lacking expressions in either a "thank you" or in your financial compensation.)
- ✓ Company politics are affecting your work. For example, you work for a family-owned business, and there is animosity among the family members.
- ✓ If your job requires you to do something that you no longer enjoy doing. For example, traveling four out of five days of the week might have been fine when you were in your 20s, but it's wearing on you now that you're in your 30s and have a family. Or you take customer service phone calls, but you're tired of being beaten up by unhappy customers.
- ✓ You researched competitive salaries for your type of job and discovered that your company pays less than the industry average. If you've previously asked for a raise and were turned down, you may be motivated to seek out better compensation elsewhere.
- ✓ There is little or no opportunity for increasing your salary significantly 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?



- ✓ You realize you're not getting any younger. If the thought of working for your company for another year — or five years — makes you feel your mortality, it may be time to make a change to a different path.
- ✓ What you're doing now isn't your passion. Is there an opportunity for you to turn something you're doing as a hobby into a full-time job? Or could you start a business of your own; either doing something related to your current work, or a current hobby or interest?
- ✓ You have a different plan for yourself. Maybe you didn't see yourself staying at this job, or in this career, for this amount of time. If your long-term goals aren't aligned with what you're doing now, it may be time for a change.

## External Factors

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

- ✓ The company you work for was bought (or they purchased or merged with another company). Both of these can impact your job as management assesses redundancies in personnel.
- ✓ There's been a change in leadership in your department or the company. One of the top reasons for making a job change is when you get a new boss. Maybe he has his former employees he brings into your department, or maybe his 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 receive 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 typically 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 remember 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 external factors that are prompting you to consider the change are temporary (short-term) or something that could affect you permanently.

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, as long as 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.

## **Change Jobs, Or Change Careers?**

Do you want to change the company you work for or change your career path entirely? Take a look back at the assessment you just completed. Ask yourself if a change would fix the issue or issues you identified. Or are there issues that are embedded in the industry itself.

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 this particular 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 unknown or unadvertised advancement vacancies? Could you improve your skills (for example, pursuing further education, training, or certifications)?

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, make sure you’re running towards something desired, and not running away from something unwanted. 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 result in 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 resume professionally written so you can see how you stack up on paper for your desired next job or a new career.

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 if you stayed another month. The same goes 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. Don't leave money on the table if you can help it.

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 before you'll be prepared to make 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 for your new job or career. Checking off as many of those items as you can 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.

The first step is to get your finances 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.

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 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.)



Next, research your new career. Talk to people who are 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.

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 de-cluttering your files (both paper files and on your computer) and removing some personal items 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.

Take calls from recruiters — or reach out to connect with 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.

## **Final Thoughts...**

One of the best things you can do, once you have a job target in mind, is to engage a professional resume writer to help you develop a resume for your desired job. Especially if you are considering a career change, this can identify transferable skills that you have to offer and boost your confidence when you see the evidence of your qualifications on paper. Your resume 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 the development of this document, because your resume writer will have to spend a considerable amount of time to prepare a resume that demonstrates how your skills, education, and experience apply to your new career path. But it can be a worthwhile investment as a tool as you make a change in your job or career. Let's talk about your score on the worksheet below. I can be reached at [bgs@resumecareerservices.com](mailto:bgs@resumecareerservices.com).

Brenda Goburn Smith  
Resume Writer and Career Strategist



## Worksheet: Career Change Self-Assessment

Rate each of these internal and external factors on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “doesn’t 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.

	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 that matches my passion.	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
Parts 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
<b>TOTALS</b>					

**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 take action.

