



When to leave your job

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Although unemployment is high, and finding a job takes time, there are still situations when it is to your benefit to look for another job. And I am not just talking about when you get retrenched or the company you work for folds. Almost everyone benefits in their career from working in different organisations. That is how we build new skills, understand different company cultures, and become more knowledgeable about business. The days of working 20 or 30 years for one company are gone (unless it's your own company). Prospective employers want to know that you can change and learn and be flexible. Some of that you learn from changing jobs.

If you can, don't leave your current job until you have a new job lined up. There are some people who have told me they wanted to walk out the door immediately. And I get that. Sometimes the work environment is so terrible that you do just want to leave and never go back. It is however, easier to get another job if you are still employed, and if you have a job, you feel more secure and confident going into the workplace to find something else.

What are some of the good reasons to leave a job?

1. The first one has to be a **toxic work environment**. If there is bullying, abuse, belittling, threats, overwork, constantly changing roles – in other words constant stress and unhappiness, then you do want to leave. If the company offers you the opportunity to learn fantastic skills, then try and deal with the toxic environment. If you cannot change it though to make it more tolerable, then leave. The damage to your physical and mental health, and also your career, do not make it worth your while to stay there. The Monday blues and exhaustion and burnout are often signs that you need to leave. Often people leaving a toxic work environment are terrified they will end up in the same or worse situation in a new job. To avoid this, before you accept a new job offer, talk to people already working in that company so you can get an idea of what the people and the culture are like.
2. A second reason for leaving a job is because the company is undergoing **significant negative growth**. This could be losses year after year. Poor leadership and no attempt to change that. If the future of the company is not looking good, and you are not in a position to work with leadership to turn things around, you probably should start looking around. I have encountered a number of people extremely bitter and angry because they stayed loyal to a company that was not doing well and eventually lost their jobs.
3. Another reason to look for a new job is if your **ethics are compromised**. Quite apart from the violation of one's personal ethics and morals, there are also career implications. People in many different jobs are required to belong to professional bodies such as CA's, lawyers, engineers, etc. If you are found to have violated standard ethics and norms for doing business,

irrespective of whether the company leadership told you to do so, you will have compromised your career. So, if you are required to do tasks that you know are unethical and unprofessional then consider finding another job.

4. If there are **no growth opportunities** in the company you may also want to leave. This depends on age and career experience. If you are young, then you will want to get more experience and move up the career ladder. If the people occupying the positions you would like to move into are going to stay there for the next 10 years or so, and there is no chance for you to progress in your career, then think of looking outside the company for your next job.
5. **Changes in personal circumstances** may also mean it is a good idea to look for another job. You may need to if you move house to another geographical location and the commute is too long. If you have a young child you may prefer a job with more flexible working hours or even a part-time job. Changes in your financial circumstances may also mean you need to look for another – better paying – job.
6. I know of people who have taken a new job and found out it was not at all what the recruiter or the company made it out to be. Sometimes you can start a job, and within a few months the company will **change** it drastically, or perhaps as part of a restructuring, **get rid of the job you were hired for** and get you to do a very different type of job. If, for whatever reason, the job you are in does not match your skills or fit with the goals and career direction you want to take, then consider finding another job.
7. If you are **grossly underpaid** and you have consistently raised the issue and provided market-related evidence to show that you are underpaid, and no one has done something about it, then look for another job. Unless you are independently wealthy and really love what you do. Generally though, if everyone else in the company appears to get a market-related salary and you don't, then consider leaving, if no one is going to do anything about it.
8. And the last reason, which is a more positive reason, is if you have a **wonderful opportunity** come your way. If you do get something wonderful, and you have checked out the company, then take that opportunity. Fantastic opportunities don't come around every day.

It is always easy for us to get snared into the negative scenario. Unfortunately, our brains are wired that way to ensure we survive. When the world around us looks bleak it is easy to hunker down and stay where we are. We are, however, meant for more than survival. If you are going to get overwhelmed by all the negative news out there, and run your life in a defensive mode, you will miss out on some great opportunities. Despite what is happening in the world, you need to think of your career and your future. You cannot play it too safe. You will go nowhere. So don't take unnecessary risks; but do consider new job opportunities. And go and find them if you need to. In the long run you still need to be building your skills, your experience, and your personal brand. Playing small just results in you becoming smaller and smaller over time. You want to thrive in your career, you want to thrive in your life, you want to be successful and happy, and a lot of the time that means you need to go and find another job.