When is the right time to leave your job

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For some people the answer is likely to be never, unless something is really going wrong. And this reflects a climate of political and economic uncertainty, as well as a high rate of unemployment and long time periods to find another job. Many people are very reluctant to even consider looking for another job, and should they think about leaving their current role, often the difficult job environment puts them off pursuing the idea.

Typically, this is what happens when the employment arena is filled with doubt and even fear. We hunker down and get on with what we are doing. We don't focus wide, think about possibilities and opportunities, and take risks. Even calculated risks. We stay put. And while this may be a way to play it safe, it isn't the best way to get ahead in your career. And in fact, it may not even work out for you. No matter how much effort you put into your current job, companies downsize, they go out of business, they let people go, they merge with or acquire another company, and a lot of restructuring takes place. And your job is not safe, no matter how loyal or hard working you have been.

Aside from having to leave a job involuntarily because of economic or company decisions, there are reasons you want to leave your job. Depending on the job, you cannot spend your whole life working in one company. If you are a founder of a company, or you are an associate and working your way up to partner, then possibly you can stay there, and your career will not be hampered. If you are like most employees and looking to build a career path, move up in your career, gain skills and experience, and improve your marketability, then staying in one company for life is not a good idea. In an ever-changing world you need a wide range of skills and experience. And that means you need to have worked for different companies, with different strategies, and different cultures. Not only do your skills and experience expand when you work for different employers, but your ability to adapt to change and learn to adapt and thrive in new environments improves. And employers want that. For many employers, the person who has spent twenty years in one company is often viewed somewhat sceptically. Questions such as, "Does this person have no ambition?", or "Is this person scared of change?", are asked. You also don't want to be seen as a job hopper. That is not usually appreciated. But you do want to be seen as someone who puts some focus on their career and is willing to change and learn new things.

So, given the current economic climate, and the importance of growing your career and getting marketable experience and skills, when is a good time to look for another job. Below are several situations where it can be a good idea to look for something new.

1. **Lack of opportunities at your current employer.**

If you are fairly young, and even fairly ambitious, you want to be moving ahead in your career. If you are working in a company and there are no prospects for promotion or growth for a number of years then you may need to look at finding something else to ensure you keep learning and growing in skills and experience.

2. **You want to make a complete career change**.

If you have decided you want to make a career change because you have changed, or you realise you pursued the wrong career path, then you may need to find another job. You may find one within the current company you are working in, but you may also need to look outside.

3. **The company culture and values don't align with yours**

Organisations have a culture and values. In every company, even if they do not have a specific set of defined and agreed upon values, they have values. Because anywhere there is a group of people certain behaviours will be rewarded and others not. If your own values are out of alignment with those of the company you will not be happy, and finding another company to work for where there is more alignment is likely to result in you feeling a lot happier as well as being more productive.

4. **You don't like the leadership**

When the markets, and hence investors, look at your company, the quality of the leadership plays a big role. If you are working for a company with poor leadership, it is not going to be valued in the market, and it is likely that the future of the company could be in jeopardy. Most people want to be part of a company where leadership does a great job leading the business, and the employees can learn from excellent leadership practices.

5. **Your manager or your department is toxic**

This usually means the workplace is a very unsafe place to be. Bullying and abuse occur and no one stands up to it or calls it out and deals with the abuse. Unless you are the abuser, you want to get out of a toxic environment and away from toxic managers and co-workers. If you are learning critical skills that you cannot learn elsewhere you may want to stay for a time in the organisation. However, the longer you stay the more damage to your self-esteem, your confidence, and ultimately your performance. Find another job and talk to people in the new company before you accept the job offer to find out if the new workplace is likely to be a pleasant one.

6. **Your pay is way too low**

Pay is not everything. If you are starting out your career, you may put the opportunity to learn invaluable skills and get critical experience above a high salary. Even if you are not new in your career you may still do that. However, almost no one can work productively and happily in an environment where they are paid an extremely low salary relative to the market. If you have done your research on what the market pays, and you have taken your findings to management in the company, and they still keep paying you a low salary, then consider leaving for a new job where you can get better remuneration.

7. **You get a better offer**

And yes, this could happen too. Despite the economic challenges, it is possible to get offered your dream job, or something close to your dream job. If you get a better offer, check it out carefully. Job scams do occur. Also check out the viability of the company and its financials. You don't want to join a company only to have it go into liquidation. If, once you have checked out the job and it is legitimate, and the organisation is doing well, then take the better offer.

For an employee today, the world of work is challenging. Some of what worked in the past doesn't work today. Loyalty seldom counts, and there is no such thing as a job for life. Anyone looking to build their career needs to think about what they want. You have to take charge of your career. Even in companies where there is career development, the company is not going to invest in your career unless you do. So, you need to decide what you want as a career. You need to think about what careers suit you and are needed in the workplace. And you need to think about how you will build the expertise required to get you to where you want to be. And then, once you start working, you need to think about how best to use the opportunities available to you, such that you can grow and learn, and develop in your chosen field.