

# The When and How of Changing Jobs

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## **Is it time for me to consider changing my job?**

This is a question which must have crossed the minds of many of you. It could have been triggered off by a particular situation that you faced or it could be something that has been on your mind for a while due to certain aspects of your current job. For first-time job changers it would be a tougher decision as they would have no prior experience in what it takes to change a job. Whatever the situation, whoever the person, changing jobs is something that needs a lot of planning and thinking through. It is definitely not a decision to be taken in haste.

Be clear about the reason why you want to change jobs. You feel that you need to change? This is a question which must have crossed the minds of many of you. It could have been triggered off by a particular situation that you faced or it could be something that has been on your mind for a while due to certain aspects of your current job.

For first-time job changers it would be a tougher decision as they would have no prior experience in what it takes to change a job. Whatever the situation, whoever the person, changing jobs is something that needs a lot of planning and thinking through. It is definitely not a decision to be taken in haste. This feeling is not reason enough. You should be able to look at your current job situation objectively and analyse the problem, if any, that is prompting you to consider a job change. A job change is a significant decision that can affect your career and your future plans. It should not be taken on an impulse, or on some thumb rule that you need to change jobs after so many years in a company. Nor should it be that you feel you could do with a substantial jump in your pay packet. Instead, your need for a job change should be based on some sound rationale.

Some examples of reasons could be:

### **1. Work-related**

- A bad boss (who is a hurdle to your progress)
- A boring and uninteresting job (not a challenge for you)
- Unsuitable organisation culture (you have problems relating to colleagues)
- Need for more responsibilities (to match your capabilities)
- Achieved the limit in what you can learn (you have a higher career goal)
- High stress levels (more than you can handle)

### **2. Benefits-related**

- Higher pay /more benefits (your work/skills are valued more than what you get)
- More convenient location (you work too far away from home)

Your reasons for changing jobs could be one, or a combination of these. What you need to do is to evaluate your reason against certain criteria that are important to you. Do a cost benefit analysis to see whether it is advisable to change now. Would you benefit overall by this move? This is not meant to discourage people who consider changing jobs. Nor is it a case in favour of loyalists to one company. All that is being re-iterated is that

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use the problem solving approach in this decision to change jobs. Your overall objective should be to improve your level of job satisfaction at the new job.

For example, if you are moving primarily because of a bad boss, you have no control over the kind of boss you will have in your next organization. You may need to consider other factors as well such as a higher pay or the job content to ensure that you at least improve your working conditions in your new job. The worst thing for you would be to be doing the same job with the same responsibilities, in a new organization and with a tougher boss!

### **Identify your long-term career goals**

Once you have arrived at the reason for why you need a job change, how can you go about it? When is the right time to change jobs? The most important step here is to identify your long-term career goals. That is you should be able to chart out a realistic career path for yourself. You could ask yourself the following questions:

1. When do you want to be at different positions /designations in an organization ?
2. What is your job description at each of these levels?
3. What responsibilities do you need to handle to get there?
4. What skills do you need to be able to work efficiently at each level?
5. Do you have all the skills?
6. How will you acquire additional skills with increasing responsibilities?
7. If you are changing fields, do you have the functional skills that work in any industry?
8. How long will it take you to achieve this goal in your existing organisation?

With this clarity on your future plans, you will be in a better position to decide the right time to change your job. This will also help you aggressively go out looking for jobs that fit in with your career plans, or suitably evaluate offers that come your way. In the meanwhile, update your knowledge and skills regularly.

### **Stay well informed.**

You need to look out for the right job which will give you a higher level of job satisfaction, and match your aspirations. Of course, there could always be a certain error in judgement, which you could not anticipate, of accepting an offer which later on turned out to be a disaster. But the idea is to avoid such situations as far as possible. Try and minimise such risks. This especially, despite the dangling carrot of significantly higher pay and benefits. You need to watch out for the following situation: (name has been changed).

Dheeraj passed out of a well-known management institute in 1986. He joined a large multi-national consumer non-durable company, in marketing. After working there for 2 years, he quit to join a small advertising agency. Within a month, he quit and then joined a publishing house. After working there for a 3 year period, he quit to join a large advertising agency. In two years time, he was ready to move on yet again. This time he

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joined another advertising agency where he stayed for just a year. Next move was to a newspaper. After a year, he moved on to another newspaper at a higher pay packet! 7 jobs in 13 years! Whatever Dheeraj's motivations were, his frequent moves just go to show that not much thinking and planning went into his decisions. His moves do not seem to have been backed by adequate research or sound rationale, regarding the company he was planning to join, or the reason for his needing a change!

The point, therefore, being made is: **“THINK THROUGH YOUR CAREER PLAN, AND CHANGE JOBS AFTER PROPER RESEARCH!”** Evaluate the counter offer objectively before you accept or reject it .

### **What if the organisation you are currently working for makes a counter offer after you told them about your intention to resign?**

How should you react? Well, the first step is that do not get carried away by emotion and feel so touched that someone wanted you to stay. Or do not let this situation inflate your ego so much that you suddenly feel indispensable to the organisation and develop unrealistic expectations. Yes, it definitely feels good to know that your organisation felt that you were important enough for them to make a counter offer instead of just letting you go. But remember, you need to still do some thinking before you decide to accept the counter offer. Some of the issues you need to consider are:

1. Can the counter offer compensate for your reason for quitting?
2. If quitting for higher pay, can the counter offer satisfy your need?
3. If quitting for higher career goals which you perceived could not be met by your current organisation, can the counter offer influence you to stay?
4. Is the increment just a red herring to keep you till your replacement is found?
5. If you accept the counter offer, will you be seen as a dissenter who threatens to quit to get his promotions? Could this adversely affect your chances of future promotions?

Think through such issues before you get carried away to accept the counter offer. It may turn out that you did well to stay on in your current organisation. But, let that happen after you have gone through a thought process like the one above.

### **“DO NOT RESIGN AND THEN LOOK FOR A CHANGE”**

Before you consider your next job change, you could keep in mind the following tips:

1. Review your job situation to see if you are on the right track to achieve your career goal. Identify if there is a need for you to look for a change.
2. Do not resign and then look for a change. It reduces your market value. It is advisable to continue working and then look out for better opportunities.
3. As long as you are not a compulsive job-hopper, there is no stigma in changing jobs. In fact, a positive view to changing jobs is that it adds on to your experience and skills, allowing you to advance in your career. You can also contribute better to your new organisation by bringing your expertise acquired in your previous job.

4. Keep yourself aware of developments and information in your industry/field. Stay updated as it would help you in your getting a better job.
5. Research alternative job options before taking a final decision This would reduce the risk of job dissatisfaction after the change.

Whatever you do, let's hope that you find what you are looking for in your new job!

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