

## Should I Stay or Should I Go?

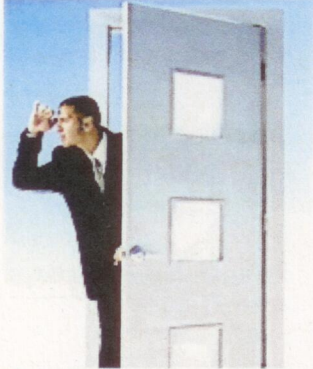
How do you know when it's time to make your passive job search active?

September 13, 2010

By Debra Donston-Miller

[ShareThis](#)

FILED UNDER: [Job Satisfaction](#).



*"So you gotta let me know  
Should I stay or should I go?"*

— *The Clash*

You're comfortable in [your current position](#). You make decent money. The company is relatively healthy. The people you work with are nice enough.

For the past couple of years, this scenario was often more than people could hope for, as millions of [jobs](#) were slashed and entire industries were walking wounded. Now, with the economy starting to show signs of growth, many people are taking a fresh look at their situations and deciding there is something better out there.

Or is there? How do you determine when it's time to go from a passive [job search](#) (where you casually peruse job listings) to an active job search (where the [process of looking for a new job](#) becomes a job in itself)? The decision is not an easy one, especially for high-level professionals who've invested time and political capital in their organizations.

As the Clash so eloquently asked: "Should I stay or should I go?"

There are several factors to consider when making that decision, according to career experts.

### Satisfaction

Tom Gimbel, CEO of The LaSalle Network, a professional staffing and recruiting company in Chicago, said personal satisfaction is a major consideration. "Before you make the jump to a new job, you must first ask yourself a few questions: Are you fulfilled? Are you challenged? Are you continually learning? If the answer is no to these questions, then it might be time for a job change."

With the job climate improving but still nowhere near healthy, personal and professional fulfillment may seem like a bit of a luxury if it means climbing out on a limb. However, future growth may depend on it. "Some believe if they are content with [salary](#), hours, co-workers, etc., then they should stay with their jobs," Gimbel said. "But without personal satisfaction and constant learning, it is impossible to grow professionally."

### Company checkup

While your own mental health is certainly a consideration, so is the health of your company — and your industry.

"Where is your organization going? Growing or shrinking? A shrinking company provides less opportunity to their employees. That's a fact," said Rich Gee, an executive coach.

### Industry checkup



In some cases, the health of entire industries has suffered, causing people to consider not just a job switch but a **career change**. Changing what you do – tantamount to changing who you are – is no small feat, nor does it come without a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety. But, experts said, the recession has opened some unexpected doors.

"The thing that I think is most striking is the opportunity to go into different types of jobs and growing types of industries that are emerging from this poor economy," said Dr. Robert Prescott, associate professor of Human Resource Management at Rollins MBA Crummer Graduate School in Winter Park, Fla. "[These include] green-related industries, public sector, technology, networking, these are the expanding types of industries, and that will probably be true in the next five to 10 years."

Just don't forget that if you do decide to switch careers, you're now the newbie, competing against all the unemployed people in that particular sector.

## **Manager maintenance**

You also need to consider the health of the relationship between you and your manager. If your manager is standing in the way of your success rather than supporting it and you've done everything in your power to manage the situation to no avail, it might be time to look for a position outside your company (or at least outside the reach of your manager). Conversely, perhaps a manager who has shepherded your career is leaving the organization and you think it might be time to do the same.

Ian C. Pilarczyk, director of International Business Law at Boston University School of Law, has been on both sides of the fence – counseling employees in toxic environments and, in the past, working to get out of such environments himself. Scenarios that should spur an active job search, said Pilarczyk, "include situations where a manager sets one up to fail rather than succeed, where the work environment is not safe, and where a manager stifles rather than encourages personal and professional growth."

## **Act fast**

People who do decide actively to seek a new job may find that there's no better time than the present. When hiring picks up after an economic downturn, Prescott said, the first wave of people to seek greener pastures is typically the best and brightest – something that hiring managers know and expect.

"I think there are some advantages for people who look to leave in today's market," Prescott said. "We find that the employees who leave our companies first are the good ones. Why? Because they are very opportunistic in their mindset, and they're always looking for those opportunities to grow, to enhance, to make more money, to improve quality of life. The perception is, to the hiring company, that the people who are coming to them now are not necessarily those who were laid off but those who are the best employees."

But hold your horses as long as you can, said Bruce A. Hurwitz, president and CEO of Hurwitz Strategic Staffing. Don't forget that it's much easier to find a job when you have a job. No matter how bad your job gets and/or how good the market gets, don't quit your job until you have a concrete offer.

## **There's no place like home**

That job change could very well be at the company where you currently work. Bettina Seidman, of SEIDBET Associates Career Counseling, said, all too often, people who are dissatisfied with their jobs neglect to meet with their managers to discuss the possibility of an internal change.

Gimbel agreed: "Before you make this job switch, make your voice heard. Have you talked to your boss about your boredom or asked your superior for more stimulating work? Have you brought up new ideas or taken it upon yourself to find more challenging work?"

Only after you have tried to improve your lot at your current employer should you start looking outside, Gimbel said.

Debra Donston-Miller covers work-life issues and difficult job-search situations for TheLadders.