

Career Moves

Is It Time to Find a New Job?

Five clues and a map

Ron Blair

Managing your career path is a lot like playing jump rope: It's a bit daunting to stand before that whirring cord, but once you dive in and get in sync with the rhythm, your world adjusts itself. You don't notice the speed of the rope that much until you start thinking about getting out. Then it gets tricky again—making a successful break is a matter of timing.

So how do you know when it's time to move on? Here are five clues that may indicate you've come to an important decision point in your career:

- 1. Your mental and/or physical well-being has declined**—You dread going to work. This is not the “I had a great weekend and now I don't want to be an adult again” scenario that we all experience now and then. No, this is the dark cloud, the heaviness that envelops you all day, every day. The resulting stress may manifest itself as migraines, insomnia, depression and low immunity to disease. Your family, friends and co-workers may be telling you that you're not the person you used to be.
- 2. You've hit the ceiling**—You've grown as far as you can in your present position, and there seems to be no impending opportunity to advance within your organization. If you still want to grow, transplanting yourself may be the only option.
- 3. You're undercompensated**—Compensation is a complex and emotionally charged issue. While you may feel you're not being paid fairly, your salary may be competitive within your market, so leaving your job may not help. However, if you know for sure that you could be commanding a higher salary elsewhere—either in your present position or by moving up the ladder—changing jobs may be a smart move.
- 4. Work is no longer stimulating or challenging**—You've lost the joy and sense of purpose you felt when you started your job. Maybe you feel trapped by month-end close and similar tasks when you really just want to work on projects. Perhaps you're tired of being in the same surroundings all the time, and you crave the stimulation of working in various companies and on a wide range of projects.
- 5. There's trouble in the workplace**—Disputes and feuds with your boss or co-workers can take a toll on you—mentally, physically and financially. If you're tired of office politics, you're never consulted for your opinion, and you feel you've been pushed out of the information loop, it may be time for a change. It's worth trying to repair relationships, but if your association with your boss and/or co-workers is truly irreparable, leaving may be your only good option.



Mapping cut your future

So you've made your decision to move on—to leap from one whirling rope to another. What now? As a financial professional, you have at least two excellent options: Going into another full-time position with a firm or stepping into project-by-project consulting.

The choice between the two really comes down to your career goals. Do you see yourself more as an expert practitioner or an employee manager? If you enjoy building and managing a long-standing team and/or you desire to move up the ladder in a particular company, you're probably better off looking for another full-time position. However, if your focus is on producing well-executed projects, you might prefer consulting.

Give consulting a chance

The greatest benefit of project consulting is flexibility. Consulting can be a bridge back to full-time work, if you so desire. You have a great opportunity to earn an excellent income while expanding your knowledge, capabilities and professional network, and you'll be exposed to a number of great companies you might be interested in joining in the future.

And if you decide to continue consulting, you'll find that your earning potential may even be greater than what you experienced in full-time work—particularly if you're willing to work overtime, travel and/or take on particularly challenging projects.

Another bonus: Consulting generally removes you from the corrosive effects of office politics. You still get to work for quality organizations, but you only have to complete the current project, then leave when it's over.

So if you're looking to get out of your current job, don't forget the lessons from jump rope: Time your move carefully, make a clean break and leap into a more enjoyable and rewarding future. ▲

Ron Blair is Senior Vice President and Managing Director in the Glendale office of Century Group, a firm that provides executive search and project placement for senior finance and accounting professionals to middle market, Fortune 500 and Global 1000 clients. He may be reached at rblair@century-group.com.