
Couching It

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► Contemplating quitting?

So, you think it's time to leave your current job. What got you to this point? Not feeling the love? Where you bypassed for a promotion? Or is that you recognize that it's just not the right fit?

Of course, if it truly isn't the right fit - move on. You'll never find real success in an environment that is not suited to you. But, if your desire to move on comes from being bypassed on the path to glory, consider this:

One of two scenarios generally exists in today's work environment: promoting from within or hiring from the outside. In most cases, the higher you move up the corporate ladder, the more likely it is that a company will look to the outside. When it's time for filling a top position, does your company have a legacy of promoting from within or hiring from the outside?

Regardless of which scenario exists, when you've been bypassed you have to ask yourself 'Is it really time to move on, or is it just time to improve my performance?' Too often I've seen candidates throw the baby out with the bath water and never rebound. Taking the wrong job because of an emotional career choice can be professional suicide. Countless times, I've seen people walk away from the right position and never regain their career status. In certain situations, a bad decision and a bad exit strategy pave the wrong road.

► Never quit.

I remember a friend telling a story about his kid looking for advice. His son said, "Dad, I got a new boss, and it's apparent he doesn't like me. What should I do?" Dad told his son, "QUIT."

I don't know what the son did, but the answer isn't to just quit. The grass really isn't always greener [then again, sometimes it is]. More importantly, under any circumstance, don't leave until you are assured of a new position or a foolproof contingency plan, and then make it clear that you are not quitting - just moving on. Quitters are viewed as bad decision makers. Once you quit [especially without a new job], any new prospective employer will always have that in the back of their mind, not to mention the loss of a credible reference from your previous employer.

► A fork in the road.

Over the years, I've watched people walk into their boss and say, "I've got another offer but I really want to stay." Some companies will immediately show you the door while others will negotiate to keep you. If you are ready to leave a company - then leave. If you want to stay and you feel it is time to negotiate a better program - then negotiate in good faith. No company likes to be held hostage or threatened.

► Your reputation is your professional currency, earn it and build on it.

What's really helpful is to seek a credible, confidential, and neutral source when doing your self-assessment [of course, AP Professionals can be of real service in that regard]. Once you've established where you are in your career and where you'd like to be down the road, approach your boss in a casual atmosphere [not a formal sit down where they have time to prepare a 'correct' response] and sincerely inquire about where you really stand. You should get a straight up answer about the future. If you get a lot of double talk - that alone is a good indication of where you stand. You'll have a better understanding of where the fast track is and if you are on it.

In the event you decide to leave after this approach, then they know that you really wanted to stay. It's all been done in good faith. It leaves a better taste and is the best strategy to leave the door open in the event you ever decide to return. It works, not to mention a stronger reference in the future.

When it is all said and done, your reputation is intact.