

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO???

When headhunters interview candidates there is one question they always ask (albeit in many different ways): 'What is your motivation for moving?'. The response is often the most insightful of the whole interview.

- The motivation question is also something that people considering a job change should ask themselves. And they owe it to themselves to provide deep, honest, meaningful answers.
- This section: deals with some of the key reasons people tell us why they move, and some ideas, questions, comments that we recommend you think about. It is not an exhaustive list but it does cover the main areas we as headhunters come across again and again. We hope that it helps give some insight into that difficult question: should I stay or should I go?

I WANT MORE MONEY

An almost universal desire when moving jobs, but very rarely the prime motivation.

- The package. Gain an appreciation for what is your complete package. So include share options, pension scheme, bonus, car. How does that compare to the market? (you can take a look at market standards). How realistic is your desire for more money?
- Are you certain more money is not available in your current role? It is usual that candidates who state their desire to leave a company are subsequently counter-offered by their employer. Whilst counter-offering is actually a pretty poor way to retain staff (most people who decide to stay put, end up leaving within 12 months anyway) its prevalence does illustrate that sometimes salary increases can be achieved without changing jobs.
- Money alone isn't usually a good reason to leave and – of course – would make a rather poor answer to the 'what is your motivation for moving?' question.
- ...but getting a firm understanding of what your needs and what is realistically possible is critical in deciding whether making a move is right for you, selecting what roles are worth pursuing and – later on down the line – salary negotiation.

In summary, factors related to money that may encourage you to leave include:

1. You have investigated salary increase options internally
2. Salary is not your sole motivation
3. You have conducted your research in the market place and believe you can raise your salary by moving

I'M UNABLE TO MOVE UPWARD BECAUSE MY BOSS ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

Very common, especially in smaller companies.

- Do you know for sure that your boss isn't going anywhere? The average length of tenure for a 'C' level person is around five years. Clearly it varies significantly with the individual but just working this statistic through, there's a 20% chance they will leave this year, 40% within two years.
- What succession planning is in place in your organization? It's a dangerous question: if succession planning is in place and you don't know about it, the chances are you are not part of the plan. A motivation to leave perhaps. Conversely many organizations don't formally make a succession plan, and asking the question could put you more

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in the frame. Is this a subject area you could approach your boss with? Clearly a matter to approach (very) sensitively.

- Do you genuinely know you want to move up? What about moving along (for instance to head up a different function)?

In summary, factors that may encourage you to leave include:

1. The only move you want to make is into your boss's role
2. You have a good feel that your boss is planning to stay for some time
3. You are not part of the succession plan
4. You see little value in investigating other roles outside your natural career path

I'VE MADE A HUGE MISTAKE JOINING THIS COMPANY...

- 20% of executives leave within a year, so you're not alone. That said moving on so quickly doesn't look great on your CV and will inevitably bring 'what prompted such a quick move?' type questions.
- But these questions are surmountable, especially if you have shown a good history of 'stickability' with your previous employers (and that means good 3+ year stretches with each employer), so don't let that hold you back.
- If you do have a history of changing jobs in quick succession, it may well be worth taking stock why. There may be deeper reasons why you are moving that won't be solved by a quick job change.

There is no simple answer to the question; how long should one stay with an organization. How long is too long and what is too short?

However: As a general rule of thumb, when people assess CVs, anything less than two years does raise potential questions about your 'stickability' with an employer. Why so short? Are you likely to leave your future employer just as quickly? Were you pushed? If the job wasn't what you expected, what went wrong with your assessment of the job before joining? The questions go on!

The reality is that from time to time we all make mistakes and if you don't have a history of changing jobs in short succession then making a move isn't so much of a problem. It certainly wouldn't get in the way of you being selected for interview. If you do decide to make the move here are some thoughts:

- Think very carefully about how you will explain why you are leaving so quickly. Negativity about your employer and comments like "I was misled" generally don't go down well (even if they are correct). Admitting you made a mistake and acting on it quickly (if that's what you did!) can be a virtue if presented in the right way.
- If you do have a history of changing jobs in quick succession, it may well be worth taking stock why. There may be deeper reasons why you are moving that won't be solved by a quick job change.
- There may be a temptation to resign straight away so you can search the market at your leisure. Generally not a good idea - it may give you the time to do it, but being out of work raises even more questions from potential employers and it can also be very psychologically draining on you.

In summary, if this is a one one-off, genuine mistake making a move may well be the right thing to do.

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I'M LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE

- There are plenty of people who have spent 10+ years with their organization and their CV reads as fresh and as full of challenges and achievements as someone who has changed jobs much more often.
- There are also plenty of people who have spent 10+ years with their organization and have a CV that looks rather less flattering, with long periods at the same level doing pretty much the same thing.
- The latter scenario is one you want to avoid.
- New challenges can come from your existing organization. In fact if the new challenge you seek is slightly outside the line of your natural career progress your existing employer might just be the one company which is prepared to take the 'leap of faith' with you.
- That said, a change of environment, with new people, products, services and markets to work with can make a real difference to you learning and development...and ultimately your career.

In summary, factors that may encourage you to leave include:

- You are fully up to speed with how the business is going to evolve and don't feel that this represents opportunities for a new challenge.
- The challenge you want doesn't require a 'leap of faith' in your skills by your employer.
- Your CV is at risk of looking stale.

I'M TIRED OF THIS CORPORATE CULTURE

- This is a difficult one; politics, poor communication, lack of clarity in the strategy of your organization, or lack of clarity in your role can make progress feel like you are walking through mud. A seemingly very good motivation to leave.
- It is important to understand which elements of this are down to your company (and therefore by changing company they may change) and which could – with a concerted effort – be resolved by you.
- If other companies seem attractive because they have the culture 'thing' sorted, it's worth remembering that looks (and brochures and websites) can be deceiving. After all, externally maybe your current company looks just as good.
- Even if you are planning on leaving make a point of understanding what you like about your existing company culture and make sure that exists (or you can deal without it existing) in potential employers. For instance you may want to move to a larger company because you are attracted by a greater level of support, but don't be caught out about how much you now miss the – say – entrepreneurial focus of your previous employer.
- Ultimately the culture of the company comes from the CEO. What do you think about him / her?

In summary, factors that may encourage you to leave include:

- You have a good objective view about what you don't like about the culture, and a firm objective belief that other companies offer a better environment.
- You feel that there is nothing you can do to change the situation.
- You can also understand what is good about the culture, and can live with leaving these 'good' things behind, or believe you'll be able to find them elsewhere anyway.