

Know when it's time to go

Leaving a job may be difficult, but sometimes it's necessary

Although finding a new job is a pretty tough, quitting one isn't easy, either. It's difficult and daunting to seek new opportunities when you feel comfortable in your current position. But sometimes finding a new job is the best move for your career.

"People need to look at their careers strategically and always be aware of and ready for new opportunities that will assist them in achieving their goals," says Vivian Van Lier, a career coach based in Los Angeles. "A lot of times, jobs today are very stagnant, and the only way to achieve career growth is by moving."

For Aladdin Pettit, a Miami-based computer technician, quitting his job as an information services manager for a private business and vocational college was the best decision of his career—it allowed him to go back to school to finish his bachelor's degree in management information systems. In the long run, finishing his degree will benefit his career more

than sticking it out at a full-time job.

"I was attending school part time and I felt that I needed to graduate, so I decided to drop work and attend school full time," Pettit says, "I told my boss that I needed to go back to school and I could not work for him while I did so. He said, 'Do what you need to do,' and I will be graduating in December."

Unfortunately, the reasons for quitting a job often are not as clear-cut as furthering education or taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity. Here are some signs that you may be in need of a change of pace:

Lacking passion

The excitement of a new job can sometimes diminish after a few months, but if you feel that you lost all enthusiasm for your job, it may be time to look for something new.

"If you have lost the passion and excitement with what you are doing, if you wake up every day with a lump of

dread in your throat, it's a sign saying move on," says Gary N. Rubin, author of "Quit Your Job and Grow Some Hair: Know When to Go, When to Stay" (Impact Publications, \$15.95), and vice president for university advancement at Towson University in Towson, Md.

A new job can rekindle your passion in your career, and your enthusiasm for going to work every day.

"[Finding a new job] can be a good move because it gets you into a more vital and exciting environment," Rubin says. "Moving to a new place can reinvigorate you."

No opportunity for advancement

If you see no opportunity for growth in your current job—in terms of salary or advancement—finding a new job may be the only way to boost your career.

"Sometimes my clients' salaries get stalled out, and the only way to get a jump in salary is to change jobs," Van

Lier says. “Or if there’s no opportunity for promotion and they’re looking to advance in their careers, they move to a new company.”

Your long-term goals could include shifting your career to another area, which may be difficult to do within a company that values you for the position you currently fill.

“Let’s say you’re working in accounting but want to transfer to marketing. In your organization, you’re so identified with accounting you may not be able to make the switch,” Van Lier says. “But you can repackage yourself and retool your resume and go elsewhere.”

Unfriendly environment

Sometimes, it’s the actual workplace—not the job—that provides reason to leave.

“If you see the writing on the wall, and you see downsizing or eliminations coming, it may be time to leave,” Van Lier says. “It’s a very different paradigm from when we used to put the company first and stick it out, out of loyalty. People should give 100 percent while they’re there, but if the opportunity presents itself to better their long-range career plans, they should take it.”

Your job also may not have turned out the way you expected. If so, don’t be afraid to seek a better fit somewhere else.

“If it is not matching what your values are and your expectations of the position, or if you find the culture is not suitable, and there’s a better fit somewhere else, then it’s better to move on,” Van Lier says. “You have to look at long-term career goals and think strategically: What

is the best thing to do to achieve your long-term goals?”

Industry ailments could impact your career

What you once thought was a dream job might turn into a nightmare. In order to avoid spending too much time in a negative situation, learn to read the signs that point to the inevitable. Shelly Goldman, a career coach and founder of the Goldman Group Advantage in Washington, D.C., says employees should watch for negative signals from their employers.

“Reading the signs to see if it’s time to leave a job is never an easy task,” Goldman says. “But if you review the situation with honesty, keep your skills marketable and rely on your gut without overacting, then your ability to judge if it’s time to make a move will be based on sound information.”

Any of the following signs might indicate that you and your company may be headed in opposite directions:

- Your industry is in a big slump.
- Your employer is having trouble paying vendor invoices.
- Your company has experienced frequent reorganizations.
- Your boss is much less available.
- You’re unable to get the tools you need to do your job.
- There have been frequent changes of management.

Making a career switch is a difficult decision that should not be taken lightly.

“It’s important when considering a career change to put things into perspective,” says Goldman. “No matter where you look these days, you can’t escape the fact many people are not feeling job satisfaction.”