

New Job Blues... Now What?

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You've landed what you thought was the job of your dreams. Each stage of the interview went smoothly – you sold them on your skills and expertise, and your prospective boss sold you on the position and benefits of joining the company. He/she seemed excited about extending an offer. And then, with offer in hand, it was thrilling to give your notice (or tell your friends you're finally employed after a long stint of unemployment!). All seemed right with the world.

You've now been on board a few days... a week... perhaps even a month. Suddenly you're not so sure you've made the right decision. The job that seemed like a dream is starting to feel like a nightmare. Perhaps the position isn't what you thought it would be; it's either too narrow, too broad, not challenging enough, or more of a stretch than you imagined. Maybe the company isn't measuring up. Or, perhaps your boss isn't the caring, supportive mentor you thought he/she would be.

In a state of confusion, you wonder what you should do. Stick it out? For how long? Leave? Then what? The decision to stay or leave a new job is a personal one, with no right or wrong answer, as everyone's situation is unique. And most people, at one time or another, have been faced with this dilemma. To help you think through your next move and determine what's right for you, here are some questions you may want to ask yourself:

Is it just the newness of the job? Changing jobs can be an unsettling experience. In your previous job, you knew your way around – you knew what was expected of you; you knew your job; you knew the players; you felt like you belonged. In a new job, however, it takes time to learn the ropes and feel like you're truly adding value. Sometimes it's best to give yourself time to get over the "newness" and then decide if the job is right for you.

Can you live with your boss? Hiring managers sometimes put their best foot forward in an interview, then do an about-face when a new employee arrives. Even though your boss isn't the supportive manager you thought he/she would be, can you live with the change? If so, it may be worth staying. If, however, you experience a nauseous stomach on Monday mornings or a rise in blood pressure every time he/she walks into your office, it may be wise to consider leaving.

Can you navigate the politics? Office politics can be the bane of many employees' existence. If you've been hired into a political crossfire, it will be important to assess your political skills to determine if you can make it work. If politics aren't your strength, you may want to leave before you find yourself failing without even knowing why. If you're good at developing relationships and working with differing styles, as well as "managing up", you may want to consider staying and seeing if you can make a tough situation work.

What will you learn if you stay in this job? Sometimes a seemingly wrong job can turn out to be a terrific opportunity to learn new skills, become exposed to new technologies, and gain valuable experience. Is it possible this job could be a stepping-stone to a better, more satisfying job down the road? Could it ultimately propel your career forward? If so, and you can tolerate everything else, it may be worth staying.

If the scope of the job has changed, can it be renegotiated? If the actual work turns out to be far different from what you thought it would be, you may want to speak with your manager to see if aspects of the job can be changed. If the scope is too narrow, can more responsibilities be added? If the workload is too great, can you get some assistance? If the job ultimately represents a step backwards and/or you're doing work you didn't feel like you signed up for, it may be worth looking elsewhere.

Can you afford to leave without another job to go to? If your boss, or the job, or the politics are so bad they're beginning to affect your health and personal life, then leaving sooner rather than later may be the best move. But can you afford it? Carefully evaluating your financial situation prior to jumping ship will help alleviate regrets later on. Consider also the momentum you had in your job search prior to starting your job. Can it be easily resurrected so your time of unemployment is minimized?

The decision to stay or leave an intolerable new job is a tough one. How long to stay is also a dilemma. Many have left after two weeks, never to look back. Others have stayed, only to regret staying too long. And still others have stayed and managed to make everything work out. Only you can decide what's best for you and your situation.

If you answer the above questions honestly, you will surely make the right decision for you. Pay attention to how you're feeling and what the job is doing to your health and self-esteem. Recognize that the longer you stay, the greater the requirement to add the job to your resume. Know that it's always an option to stay and look for employment on the side. If you do that, you may want to evaluate your job, boss, team, and culture requirements so you can develop some insightful interview questions to ask the next time around.

Talking with a trusted friend or colleague can be helpful during this time. Whether you choose to stay and hope for the best, or leave right away and cut your losses, trust that you've made the right decision. And know that regardless of the outcome, the experience has presented an excellent opportunity for learning and personal growth that will be invaluable in helping you manage the rest of your career.

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