

Top 5 Things to Consider When Looking for a New Job

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Few people are exactly alike when determining what makes them happy at work, but there are some key drivers of job satisfaction. "Having performed countless exit interviews and evaluated job satisfaction criteria from a variety of employee surveys, I've found that there are a number of common factors that are important to employees: happiness, fit and sense of well-being at work," notes Rich Lakis, a Human Resources professional with more than 25 years experience in HR.

Before making a leap into a new job, Lakis suggests you consider each of the following areas and ask these tough questions of yourself and your potential employer.

Relationships

With Manager: How employees and their managers get along is one of the strongest employee retention drivers. Ask your prospective manager during the interview process how she makes decisions and how she evaluates talent or superior performance. Can you work with the answers she gives?

With Peers: Ask who you will be working with and how the people within the department interact. How have the relationships been in the past? Is there much interdependence? What will your colleagues expect of someone in your position?

With Subordinates: Ask about the strengths and weaknesses of employees who might be working for you. Then decide if you have the skills to effectively manage them or if they have the skills to help the team achieve success.

Work/Life Balance

Location/Commute: Be honest with yourself in deciding how far and how much time you are willing to devote to your daily commute. Will it impede your ability to do things that are important to you, your significant other or children? Consider people important to you in making your decision, because home stress can make you less effective at work.

Travel: Will having a job that requires frequent overnight travel be an issue? Where will you draw the line? Are you willing to travel 20, 30 or 50 percent of the time? Ask how much travel is required and if it's spread out evenly or concentrated during certain seasons or business cycles.

Amount of Work: Try to determine if the culture is one where there is frequent overtime. It's reasonable to assume that many professional jobs will require you to do the work necessary to complete the job, but excessive overtime could mean insufficient resources or poor planning.

The Kind of Work

Autonomy: Do you like to work with little supervision or do you prefer detailed assignments? How might you handle being micromanaged?

Type of Work: Ask questions that will help you gauge what portion of your new job involves project work, building client relationships, developing strategy, implementing tactics or doing creative work? Decide before taking on a new job what you like to actually do.

Contribution: Will the work you do make a notable difference in your department? The company? Society? Does it matter to you?

Growth Opportunities: What is the internal environment like relative to promotional opportunities? Ask if internal candidates have been considered for this job. If not, ask why and what that will mean to you in the future.

The Company

Values: People who feel disconnected with the values of the company often want to leave. Ask what the values are and how they are manifested in the day-to-day environment. Do employees just recite the company mantra

or are they able to describe how these are applied in the workplace.

Leadership: Are the leaders of the company people who you and others respect, admire and want to work for? Find out how long top management has been in place, what their backgrounds are and where they came from.

Industry: Does the company/industry provide products or services with which you would want to be associated? Research news articles to determine if the industry is healthy and growing or if it companies within the industry are going through mergers, acquisitions or frequent restructurings.

Financial Considerations

Base Pay: Are you being offered a salary commensurate with your worth in the marketplace? Make sure it is enough to warrant leaving your current job/company.

Incentive Pay: If you perform at a superior level, is there an upside opportunity or incentive pay? Consider how the total compensation compares to your past earnings and current expectations.

Lakis suggests that once you have the answers to these questions, make a list of pros and cons and assign them relative weights of importance before making the final decision to accept a new job. You will be better off and better-prepared for what lies ahead.