



It's Better to Run TO a New Job Than FROM a Current One

Description

A person reached out to me sometime back about a potential job change. A company had called him to recruit him. It is always exciting to know a company feels highly enough about us to reach out. The conversation made me think about how employees approach new job offers. Are they excited about moving on to a great opportunity? Or are they mostly relieved to be escaping bad circumstances? And what role has the current company played in bringing them to this decision?

I wrote an article called "The Long Goodbye." The point was when a person leaves an organization, it is not usually a spur-of-the-moment decision. My message is each day to re-recruit your employees. Great companies have great employee retention. That said, regardless of how great a company is (or is *not*), it's important for the person considering making a change to be as objective as possible in their thought processes.

When someone shares their thoughts on a job offer, I listen to how they are analyzing the situation. Are they running *to* a new opportunity or mostly running *from* their current situation? At times, if one is in an unhealthy work environment, it *is* healthy to run from that work situation. Sadly, there are dysfunctional workplaces. There are also times when the fit is not conducive to a person's situation. For example, a person may have a job that requires travel. For a while, they enjoyed seeing different places. Then their family situation changed, and travel no longer worked. Or, it could be that a person is looking to advance their career, and their current place of work does not offer much in advancement. Situations are usually not clear-cut.

One of the experiences I am grateful for was being invited to take part in a committee to discuss leader competencies for the Harvard Business School. A major skill that was identified was understanding and navigating change. There are some consistent actions that take place during change. If one is aware of these normal change characteristics, it is easier to navigate them. Not easy, but easier. In the workshops I facilitate, change is often a major topic.

This week I was speaking to someone who is starting a new job. She shared that she is nervous. This is an experienced person, and she will do great. My message was most people are a bit anxious in these situations, and this is not an unhealthy emotion. It is normal anxiety. However, don't let it be more than it is. You went through a long interview process and were selected from lots of candidates, and you will be fine. While she knew that, I feel it helped her to talk it out.

Another person reached out. As he described the situation, it appeared to be much more of a *running from* scenario versus a *running to* scenario. When one is in this thought process, it is common to look at all the not-so-great parts of the current job and put the potential job on a pedestal. It's the "grass is greener" syndrome. This person from all perspectives is doing very well. He is in a top leadership

position at a younger age than most. While there were challenges along the way, there had been nothing he did not navigate relatively well. With the pandemic and some other corporate changes, he was feeling overwhelmed.

To me, he was at what I call a *performance wall*. This is much like what happens when a marathon runner hits a wall. Without knowledge of how to run a marathon, a first-time runner would stop when the wall is hit. This happens in work too. We hit a wall, and it is a fight-or-flight moment. I have found those who quit once find it easier to quit each time. This person was in a “fight through it” or “run (or fly) to another opportunity” crossroads. As he walked me through his current job and potential new job, it was clear there were plusses and minuses to both. I then shared back with him what I had heard. He seemed to be underplaying the plusses and overplaying the challenges of his current job and doing the opposite for the potential job.

It was evident if he took the new opportunity, it would be a short-term fix. I know this has been my personal experience. I was looking at a different job. I wrote down the plusses and minuses of both. I shared them with another person. Their feedback was I had skewed my list. There are times when the list makes it evident that a change is good and times when it shows we are running *from*, not *to*.

Some tips:

1. Study change management. If you would like to send me a note, I will give you some recommendations. There are times when performance walls pop up. It is important to realize these are common. At those times, we can either keep going or stop. However, if we stop once, it is easier to stop the next time we hit a wall.
2. Hold up the mirror. Are you overplaying the positives of a place you have not yet worked? Is the grass really greener somewhere else?
3. Do your research. Seek out people who no longer work at the place you may be going to. Those you are talking to are trying to recruit you. Talk to people who left and you may get another perspective. This just adds another data point. In the example above, the person who called me also talked with someone who had previously worked at the company for more insight.

When people call me about job changes, I find those who are happy in their current job make the best decisions. In fact, the best time to leave a job is when you are happy. You leave for the right reasons, and it just leads to more solid decision-making. Years ago, when Baptist Hospital in Pensacola called me, I was working at Holy Cross in Chicago. I was very happy there. Looking back, I can see that the move was the right decision for the right reasons.

This is probably true for most people. If you are happy where you are and after a lot of thought you end up leaving the job, you’re most likely leaving for the right reasons. You are moving *to*, not running *from*. This mindset makes all the difference and sets you up for success when you move into your new job.

Date Created

July 19, 2021

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