

New Job Not What You Expected? Here's How to Decide When to Leave



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Before punching out on the first day of my new job, all I wanted to do was go and not come back.

It was a marketing position with a company in an industry I knew nothing about. I felt like a fish out of water, ill-equipped to do what they needed. My gut told me to find something else immediately. But my brain told me to stick it out for six months to a year — otherwise, I'd look like a job-hopper on my resume. So which was right, my gut or my brain?

If your new position isn't panning out the way you expected, what should you do? To find out, I asked some experts: **How soon is too soon to start looking for a new job?**

Evaluate the Situation Before You Put in Your Notice

When times get tough and there seems to be no hope in sight, it's easy to consider packing up your desk and never returning to that cube farm. But before you hit the eject button, evaluate the pros and cons of your current job.

Timothy Wiedman is a retired associate professor of management and human resources at Doane University in Nebraska. Before getting into academia, he spent 13 years hiring, training and supervising employees at different companies.

He advises anyone thinking about departing a position they recently started to ask themselves these questions before beginning a new search.

Have I Been Here Long Enough to Understand the Company?

First, ask yourself if you've been at the company long enough to evaluate its long-term potential. "That's pretty much a case-by-case basis," Wiedman says. For newbies, it can take some time to learn the dynamics within your department and figure out whether or not you're in a dead-end gig.

Have I Discussed My Career Path With My Boss?

If your boss hasn't already asked you about your long-term professional goals, set up a time to talk. During that meeting, Wiedman suggests, share with your manager your aspirations and where you want to be professionally in five years. Your boss might have some insight that can help.

Do I Need Additional Training?

If you find yourself not understanding your work, maybe it's time to consider improving on your weaknesses instead of jumping ship. Wiedman says that many industry groups offer classes, seminars and certifications to help improve your skills.

"A lot of times companies will even pay for that if they realize you're serious about working for them," he says.

Do I Have Enough Experience in This Field?

Given your current education and skills, do you foresee the same problems reappearing at another company? You might have the right college degree to get your foot in the door but lack sufficient work experience. If you've yet to learn some things your boss expects you to know, you're probably going to run into the same problem after you leave.

"If you job hop, you may find open doors to get in, but you may not be any better off," Wiedman says.

The Sooner You Get Out, the Better

If after doing some soul-searching all signs still tell you to go, then do it. Wiedman doesn't recommend staying at the job any longer than needed. Even if you think it'll look good on a resume to hit an arbitrary time, such as six months or a year, bad stuff can happen.

“What if you become bitter or, if you have friction with your boss in the first place, end up getting fired?” Wiedman says. “Well, that doesn’t look good on a resume.”

But how will your resume be viewed when it has a job on it that’s less than a year old? Fear not, because your resume shouldn’t be discounted as long as it’s an isolated occurrence, says Robin Schwartz.

Schwartz is a managing partner of MFG Jobs, a manufacturing jobs and career advice site. One of her primary roles is handling internal recruiting for her clients. She understands things happen and a position may not turn out the way it was promised to a candidate. So as long as your resume shows positions with multiple years of tenure or an upward career trajectory, you’ll be fine.

One short-lived position on an overall strong resume is not going to hold you back, she says.

Consider Leaving Short-Term Jobs Off Your Resume

When deciding whether or not to include a short-term job on your resume, ask if the position helps tell your work story. Elissa Unton, the CEO of the career guidance company ArcVida, advises young professionals to leave off positions that lasted less than six months.

The only time you should include short-term employment is if you gained something, like learning a software program or foreign language — basically, anything that may add value to your prospective employer. If you’re departing a short-term job because it wasn’t a good fit, leave it off.

If you do include the short-term job, she says, be prepared for the hiring manager to ask about it.

“There’s a narrative behind that question of ‘Why did you take this job and leave so quickly?’ that is ‘Are you going to take my job and then leave right away?’” she says. “So leaving it off is better than including it.”

If you do stay at your position longer than six months, keep it on your resume, she says. A gap longer than six months will lead to questions of why you were out of work instead of discussing the skills you can bring to your new employer.

If they ask about your [resume gap](#), Unton says to talk “clearly and honestly but not at length” about why the job wasn’t a great fit and what you learned from it. Spin it in a positive way without throwing your former company, co-workers or boss under the bus.

Before You Eject, Find a New Job

When you’ve had enough of a bad situation, it can be tempting to tell your boss “I quit!” But don’t do that. Do your best to have something lined up prior to leaving.

It’s a lot harder to network and job hunt when you’re unemployed. Unton warns that finding the right position sometimes takes longer than you think. Some of her more diligent job

hunters may find a new gig in five weeks, but for other people it can take three months or longer.

"If you have a paycheck," she says, "you can take the time to be thoughtful, considerate and make sure you do find the right fit."

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