

What To Do If You Are Dissatisfied With Your Job

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I hope that you are extremely happy in the job you have; but statistically, more than 80% of the people I talk with are somewhat or very unhappy in their job, either with a part of it, or with everything about it. At some point, you may find yourself seeking another position, either because you were fired, terminated, laid off, or have chosen to leave. Perhaps you are currently dissatisfied with your job and are searching for a position that will be more satisfying.

If you are dissatisfied, take a long hard look at the reasons. Examine whether the reasons are objectively valid. Discuss your concerns and complaints with a few trusted people -- those with whom you can discuss the situation confidentially. Have you tried every possible way of solving the problem? Talking with others gives us the perspective we need to see new possibilities. Be cautious, though, that you are not perceived as a complainer. Discuss ways to improve the situation; don't just whine about it. It's easy to be displeased with some aspects of your job, but until you've tried everything, keep trying to solve the problems.

The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. Unfortunately, this is because of the amount of bullshit there, which makes everything look lush and healthy. Every job has its good and bad sides. There is no ideal job.

Many people change companies and find the same problems they faced at their previous job. Some people eventually realize that the reason the problems are everywhere they go is because their problem is on the inside.

If you have been at your job less than three years, take special caution -- more than one short-term job on your resume will make you look like a job-hopper. If you change jobs every two years (a pattern seen much too often), a company interviewing you may assume from your pattern that you will leave after two years. It usually takes a company one year to train you fully, and another year to make you a profitable contributor. It is only in the third year that the company can make a profit on their investment in you. Thus, two years at a job is not enough for a company to take the risk of investing in you by hiring you. Companies want some loyalty from their employees, even if the primary reason is the bottom line.

We live in a fast-paced society, and people tend to change jobs more often than they did ten or fifteen years ago. On the West Coast, short job moves are called "painful learning experiences." On the East Coast, they are termed "failures" and are viewed more critically. My advice is to work through the tough times, ride

over the waves of change, and show your dedication and stick-to-it-iveness. This quality shines brightly within a company, especially one which is having problems. No one wants to "go down with the ship," and if your company is really sinking, loyalty would be unproductive. But every company has up and down cycles. Don't "bail out" during the time you're most needed - when things aren't going so well. This is the time to dig in, make a contribution, and make others notice you. A rising star in the company may take you with them when they make their next move.

I have suggested in other articles that the way to get a better job (inside or outside your current company) is to do good work in the one you have: by achieving each task you take on, requesting more responsibility, and building a track record of your success.

If you decide to stay with your current company, let go of any feelings of dissatisfaction and concentrate all your energies on performing with 100 percent effort.

Be sure to try these ten things before you search for another job:

1. Talk with a spouse, counselor, or friend outside the company to get some perspective. Is it really so bad?
2. Talk with your direct supervisor (if possible). Put it in positive terms: "I'm committed to making the company better. This is what I perceive to be the problem. What can we do about it?"
3. Talk confidentially to a co-worker or mentor. Is the problem really outside you? Is it possible that you yourself are the source of the conflict? Could you change yourself in some way that would alter the problem or can you become the solution? If the problem is with a manager, how many of your co-workers have the same problem?
4. Document your concerns and complaints and your progress in discussing them: when you met, with whom, what was discussed, what was promised.
5. Determine whether the problem is company-wide or just with your own department or position. How have others successfully resolved similar problems?
6. If you must go over your manager's head, go to his or her immediate manager and explain that you attempted to get the problem solved with your supervisor but were unable to do so, and why. The best way is to request a meeting with both your supervisor and his/her direct manager. Examine the politics of your company carefully. Is this an acceptable move?
7. Examine your options within the company very carefully. Can you wait for a promotion? Transfer to a different office or division? Can you take on the problem and solve it?

8. Check to see whether you are prepared to lose your job if the company finds out you are looking at other opportunities, or if you are perceived as being a negative influence or a complainer.
9. Examine the option of "grin and bear it." This is the safest route to take. It maintains the status quo, and gets nothing changed, but it is secure. Every person has a comfort level with change, ambiguity, and problems. Take your own temperature - are you willing to step out and take a risk, or are you more security conscious? If you choose to stay and accept the status quo, really accept it, and don't become a complainer. Your attitude is heard loudly in spite of what you are saying. Be a positive influence. .
10. Request a confidential and private meeting with a senior officer of the company who has direct responsibility for a problem of that nature. You may be seen as a courageous hero if you bring potential solutions to the problem along with your valid complaint.

If you do decide to seek another position (or if the decision is made for you), how do you go about it? Of course, the strategy is different depending on who made the decision. If you have a job, it is easier to find another one than when you're unemployed. If you have given up or lost your job, you have more time to seek employment, and it must be treated as your new full-time job