How Do You Know If It’s the Right Time To Find a New Job?

We all feel it, but sometimes we don’t recognize it. We have to pay attention to our gut as it often knows what our head hasn’t figured out yet. It’s that uneasy feeling we get when something’s off, but we’re not sure why. It’s a time for self-reflection, and to figure out exactly what’s wrong or what’s missing.

The reality is, there is no right or wrong time to find a new job. There are many examples of people who graduated from university, joined a company they loved, and stayed there for more than 40 years. Many were extremely talented and had very successful careers. The majority of us, however, don’t do this. As time passes, something about a role or the company no longer fits. It may be dissatisfaction with compensation, poor work-life balance, stressful working relationships, a lack of learning, or a myriad of other issues. In most cases, it’s a combination of several factors. When that uneasy feeling in our gut gets more severe, we must recognize it’s time to take action. These are defining moments; opportunities for us to explore what else might be out there for us. When you are made aware of a better job that you are qualified for internally, go after it aggressively. When you believe it’s time to make an even bigger change, don’t hesitate to jump in with both feet when the right opportunity presents itself.

Well-calculated moves are often beneficial to our careers, as long as they don’t occur too often. A resumé depicting employment at an excessive number of firms can raise the eyebrows of prospective employers. Many get nervous about an applicant’s ability to make a long-term commitment. In my case, I worked at six companies over a 37-year career, averaging just over six years at each one. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that’s about two years higher than the US average.
My job at Research in Motion (RIM), the maker of the BlackBerry, may well have been the most meaningful and satisfying of my career. Before I joined RIM, I had already experienced the various benefits and challenges of working for some of the largest and smallest companies on the planet. I found the good and bad in both, and learned that what was most important to me was to work at a company where I believed I could make a meaningful impact. RIM certainly accomplished that and it made leaving the company tough, as it had formed a part of my identity. Nevertheless, in 2013, given the uncertainty the company was facing, I knew that the time had come for me to leave the new leadership and the rapidly changing culture. With one more move left in me, I was ready to take a final risk, but I was committed to holding on until I could make the wisest possible decision. I was seeking a job in an exciting industry where I could make a real difference. It had to be a company that had a level of corporate maturity but with the entrepreneurial spirit of a startup. I suppose I was searching for a role that encapsulated the best attributes of all my previous jobs. At times, it felt like a mutually exclusive list, but I was in no hurry. I knew I would feel the sense of enthusiasm I was seeking when the right opportunity presented itself.

A recruitment firm reached out to me about an executive role with Dematic. The company was, and still is, a leader in warehouse automation and robotics. Even though it was founded almost two centuries ago, it was continually reinventing itself. It was set up for growth, and well positioned to take advantage of the continuing rise in e-commerce. I believed their mission to revolutionize warehouse automation was as significant as RIM’s quest to revolutionize the mobile phone. Dematic was looking for a leader with the ability to transform software into a competitive advantage for them. There was no mistaking what my gut was telling
me. I felt the opportunity was a good match for my skills and I didn’t think a better one was likely to surface, given the parameters I set for myself.

While it is important to be patient and to have clarity when seeking a new opportunity, it is equally important to go after it without hesitation when the right opportunity presents itself. The majority of leaders who rise to senior levels follow relatively similar career paths. They move around every now and then, they take well-calculated risks, they gain experience at companies of varying shapes and sizes, and they commit to learning as much as they can through each step of the journey. The ones who are the most successful are those who remain as humble on the day they retire as they were on the day they graduated. They realize how far they have come, but they always treat everyone with respect, and they never take anything, or anyone, for granted.

Adapted excerpt from the recently released book, Decoding Your STEM Career, published by Business Expert Press. For over thirty years, Pete Devenyi led a storied career in technology, both globally and in Canada. He led enterprise software at RIM/BlackBerry for 9 years and was Senior Vice President of Global Products and Solutions at Dematic, one of the largest warehouse robotic automation providers in the world. For more information, visit petedevenyi.com.