

MULTIFAMILY NEWS
MHNBLOG

Guest Blog: 'Change Versus the Devil You Know' with Matt Slepín

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As a recruiter, we are in the change business. But we try to be balanced in our advice. So, both for job seekers and for our clients, how do we advise thinking about “change versus the devil you know?” The multifamily business is clearly in an upswing, so there’s a lot to consider. For companies thinking about their organizations and, particularly, about their senior management team, here is the yin and the yang of old blood versus

new blood:

Stability has its place; change has its place. Too much stability can be stultifying. Constant change is disorienting and confusing.

When I look at a website and note that the senior management team has all been with the company for 20 plus years, I think, “inbred” (...shades of the movie *Deliverance*).

Outside hires offer the possibility of shaking things up and bringing in outside perspective, particularly the opportunity to bring in the “playbook” of strong, admired competitors. There have been several recent articles about the lower success rate of bringing in expensive, recruited CEOs versus hiring the internal candidate. Sure and, if you have the no brainer candidate, go for it. Better yet, do a search and see what you can find. Use the process to deeply consider alternatives; a well-handled search brings the value of exploration, whether you select an outside candidate or the strong performer you already know. If you hire the internal candidate, he/she has been more deeply vetted in a competitive marketplace *and* you have had the opportunity to look more deeply into competitor organizations’ behavior. We love to execute searches with this broad mandate.

The internal candidate should always gets the benefit of the doubt. The opportunity for promotion is a positive corporate value, but not one worth blocking up an organization.

For people managing their careers, there is a similar balancing act. People are constantly coming to us asking for help in finding a new job. I am amazed how poorly these folks can articulate a parallel strategy for managing their careers with their current company (i.e., the devil they know). Here are some perspectives.

A strategy for managing your career:

Always have a strategy for managing your career in your current company.

Always excel for your company to build your resume for whatever is next. Success in your current role is the calling card both for opportunities within as well as outside. Even if you are in an unbearable company, use your remaining time with your current employer to your advantage. In the real estate business, keep doing deals, build track record, and make more contacts and friends in the business.

Use your current perch to network. In most jobs, it is not irresponsible to your employer to be networking among peer companies and colleagues. Do it, always. For people in jobs without an external mandate, find a way to do it anyhow. Don't allow yourself to be isolated within your company. Always be networking.

Few people spend their whole careers in a single company. Job hopping is a negative. But staying at one place forever can be stultifying. Changing every 7-10 years is natural and healthy as long as it is for worthwhile growth opportunity.

How can you change the game internally? Particularly if you are planning to leave in any case, then you have nothing to lose. Be willing to be vulnerable and ask your boss or mentor how you can take on additional challenges, even be honest that you are looking externally. Change to a positive attitude, if necessary, about your current employer, at least while you are still there.

Sometimes, however, the devil you know is indeed the devil. Some companies are indeed evil and staying too long at these firms will hurt your reputation in the industry. Work on excelling in your current job to build your resume, but make sure you have an exit plan so you don't risk being a long termer in a bad firm.

The trick is to balance the opportunity and quest for change with the stability of the devil you know. Companies need to balance this in their corporate culture and in their search for industry leading management teams. Individuals need to balance managing their careers with their current employers with their quest, ultimately, for their best path to

opportunity.

About Matt Slep

Matt Slep is the Founder and Managing Partner of Terra Search Partners, a retained executive search firm helping real estate companies build great teams. Terra Search Partners serves many of the country's foremost REITs, private equity firms, pension fund advisors, private developers and owners, family owned businesses and non-profits. Matt writes frequently on matters pertaining to human capital in the real estate business. To see additional articles written by Matt and others at Terra Search, click through to www.terrasearchpartners.com. Contact Matt Slep at matt@terrasearchpartners.com or 415.433.2244.