

## Move On or Keep With the Devil You Know? Balancing Change and Stability.

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Though some may fear it, change is an essential part of growing and strengthening any business – and any career. But for both an entrepreneur and employer, it can be hard to know when to make a change as opposed to sticking it out with the devil you know.

For entrepreneurs thinking about their organizations and, particularly, about their senior managers, there's an emphasis on balance. You need to strike the middle ground when it comes to change. While too little change can leave employees bored and restless, constant change can leave them disoriented and confused.

This is especially true when it comes to hiring practices. Keeping a senior management team on for too long, without adding any new faces to the mix, can lead to complacency and a stagnant atmosphere that can stifle creativity. Outside

hires offer the possibility of shaking things up and bringing in outside perspectives, particularly the opportunity to bring in the “playbook” of strong, admired competitors. These fresh viewpoints can oftentimes strengthen an organization. A mix of different perspectives can lead to new ideas and innovation.

Inevitably, though, we’ve all heard the argument about the lower success rate and longevity of bringing in expensive, recruited CEOs versus hiring the internal candidate. Sure, and if you already have the candidate who is the obvious fit on your team, go for it. There is nothing inherently wrong with the devil you know.

However, even if your gut tells you to go with the internal candidate, doing a search and seeing who else is out there can be a boon to your organization. A well-handled search brings the value of exploration, whether you select an outside candidate or the strong internal performer. 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 the practices and behaviors of competitor organizations.

For people wondering whether to leave their current job and strike out on their own, there is a similar balancing act. You must learn to manage your career with your current company, as it is crucial for future success within your industry. Think of excelling in your present role as building your resume for whatever is next. Success in the position you

hold now will bring you opportunities within your company and gain you recognition outside your organization. Getting your name out there will help bolster your reputation and foster your credibility on a greater scale within your industry, thus laying the groundwork for your next role outside your current company.

Even if you are in an unbearable company, use your remaining time with your current employer to your advantage. Keep growing and strengthening your track record. Keep making more contacts and friends in the business. It's integral to use your present 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. Few people spend their whole careers in a single organization.

That being said, job hopping, even in today's peripatetic world, is still a negative. But sitting still is not-so-great, either. Switching companies every seven to 10 years is natural and healthy, as long as it is for a good opportunity, with a plan, and there is sense to your moves.

Don't know where to begin with changing the game internally? If you're planning to leave in any case, you have nothing to lose by being vulnerable and asking your boss or mentor how you can take on additional challenges.

Depending on your situation, you may even want to be honest that you are looking externally.

Sometimes, however, the devil you know is indeed the devil. Some companies are downright devils. Staying too long at these organizations will do you more harm than good, especially when it comes to maintaining a solid reputation in your industry. Work on standing out in your current job to build your resume but make sure you have an exit plan. Don't risk being a long-termer in a bad firm.

Oftentimes, your next move may not be for another job, but it is to use your skillset, experiences, and contacts to start your own business. I was actually somewhat of a job hopper until I started my own firm. Being an entrepreneur was not my self image, but I, for one, have never been happier.

That might also be your right path. If so, I do not recommend sharp right hand turns, although many do so in starting their own business. I think that the best business approach fully capitalizes on your current skills and contacts in your current field to start your own thing.

So, the key is to balance the desire to shake things up with the need for some stability. As an entrepreneur, you need to create a culture within your organization that encourages change and also promotes stability. You must also keep this balance in mind when assessing your managers and searching for new leaders to bring into the fold. For those individuals who have not yet made the plunge into

entrepreneurship but have it in mind as a future goal, they need to balance managing their careers at their current organizations with their desire, ultimately, to strike out on their own.