

Why do people stay in JOBS they hate?

WEEKLY LEARNINGS 2023

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I did a session last week where I urged the participants to change, speak truth to power. One lady said, "I cannot go around with my resignation letter in my pocket even though I don't like my job and I don't like what I am doing". That got me thinking. In my experience people stay in a job they don't like for a few reasons:

1. They have no choice in the matter. IAS officers who are shunted from one role to another are good examples. One bureaucrat has been transferred 55 times in 30 years and he recently said, I am being paid to do 8 minutes of work per day and I want a role change!
2. They are at the end of their careers and are happy to let the time end. They have their identity locked up with a big title mostly. I have seen many people with VP, Vice Chairman, Chairman titles overstay even when they were not valued, or they had little to do in the organization. This brought down their own brand value in the eyes of employees.
3. Their career is on auto pilot to nowhere, why disturb the flow, let's see where this takes us. They feel they have gone through a lot in the current company, and hence know how to deal with it. This happens in legacy companies. This happens when there are other dependencies – a spouse's job or kids' school or location advantage. There is always a powerful reason to counterbalance the unhappiness. This happens more to women vs men.
4. The risk associated with looking outside, seeking a new role. What will that entail and what adjustments do I need to make? In a sense, let me stay with the known devil even though I hate my role. If you are confident of your own abilities, then you should try and make a change. In many cases, the big adjustment people must make is a lower salary. So, they are afraid to test the waters to check their true worth in the market. In their own minds they have convinced themselves that it's better to be here with no challenge vs going somewhere else and be challenged on capabilities.
5. Many people have a false sense of security of where they are, thinking that the situation outside might be worse. They don't make any attempt to find out what's outside. In a sense they have lost their curiosity. They think that their image will suffer if they make a change. They repeatedly project more of their job than it is to convince themselves that they are fine.

6. They blame the system and the boss, and they are hoping that things will change when a new boss comes on the scene. They explain it away by saying that the company is good, but it's the boss who has made it bad. This logic is the right one in companies where the boss changes every two to three years, in most other companies, you are wishing for change when you stick around and that might not happen.

I have seen that young people rarely stay in jobs they hate. They move out fast and cut their losses. People with a single skill tend to stay, if that single skill is in demand, then they tend to look out. Women tend to stay even though they are unhappy in a role. They tend to bear the burden more in such situations.

I would say that no job is worth staying and losing your personal credibility and respect. There are enough opportunities for multi skilled people, and you must try to be relevantly skilled. Managing your development is your personal responsibility tomorrow.

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13 February 2023