

# Chicago Tribune



The best Chicago jobs from the Chicago Tribune, plus job listings from career sites nationwide.

- [E-mail this story](#)
- [Printable format](#)
- [Search archives](#)

Please [register](#) or [log in](#) | Subscribers: [Get the Advantage](#)

Search:

[How to advertise](#)

#### Most e-mailed (last 24 hours)

- [McDonald's coffee tops Starbucks in taste test](#)
- [Coyote snatches dog from backyard](#)
- [Kerry turning into the ugly American](#)
- [Dominick's to close 14 area stores by April](#)
- [Dominick's to close 14 area stores by April](#)

#### [More from today](#)

#### [Past week](#)

#### Top stories

- [Michigan court bars benefits for gay partners](#)
- [Airbus workers protest cuts](#)

#### SPECIAL SECTION: EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK 2007

## Stuck in a rut? Here's how to climb out

**By Barbara Rose**

Tribune staff reporter

*Published January 7, 2007*

When pollsters from Harris Interactive asked more than 1,000 working adults in a recent survey whether they were actively looking for new jobs, one in five said yes.

An additional 54 percent said they were "passively" looking, which suggests that nearly three in four workers are ready to move on.

Workplaces are filled with employees who feel overworked, underappreciated, unchallenged or all three. Knowing when it's time to make a move requires taking careful stock of what you stand to gain and what you would be leaving behind.

The best course may be mounting a campaign to get more of what you want where you are, experts say.

"The grass isn't always greener," said Sharon Noha, senior vice president at Robertson Lowstuter Inc., an executive development firm in north suburban Bannockburn.

"Get objective, peel it back, ask what's really happening and whether it's fixable or not," she said. "What are the great things about this company and what are the issues? What are my opportunities if I do stay? What might my marketability be? What's the going rate for people with my experience level?"

[Libby: Don't release grand jury tapes](#)

[Bank of America cuts 49 Chicago tech jobs](#)

[Ex-secretary found guilty of conspiracy](#)

Too often employees focus solely on the financial stakes without considering the equity they've accumulated in other important areas, said Beverly Kaye, co-author of "Love it, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work."

Changing jobs means rebuilding social equity--the friends, lunch partners and allies who make working enjoyable, says Kaye, a Los Angeles-based consultant on employee engagement and retention.

There's also influence equity, which is your knowledge of the informal networks that make organizational wheels turn and help you get things done. Finally, there's skill equity.

"Your skills will be deployed in a whole new milieu even if your new job looks like it requires the exact same skill set," Kaye added.

What are some clear signs it's time to move on?

When your values are out of sync with those of your employer, it's time to leave, Noha says. "If it's a problem of integrity, there's no question. A boss who's not going to change, that's pretty significant too."

If you're passed over for a promotion, ask for a meeting to find out why. But don't automatically assume your only option is finding another employer.

Trisha Svehla, a Downers Grove-based human resources consultant and co-author of "Managing the Mosaic: Addressing Workforce Diversity and Managing Institutional Change in Health Care," recalls a corporate staff professional who was frustrated because he had been unable to move into an operations role.

"They had not helped him figure what it was he needed to do to move to the next level," she said.

Together they developed a plan, revamped his resume to emphasize his team-building skills rather than technical abilities, and practiced his interviewing techniques.

He landed the job he wanted without having to change companies.

"It wasn't a question of skills," she said. "It was the skill of selling himself internally. You should always be out there networking for a possible next job, internally and externally."

Said Noha, "If you've kept your head down and the only people who really know you are your team and your boss, you're not in a good position."

Working on raising your internal visibility starts on day one, she added.

Take the example of a tax department manager for a large company with five business units.

Within six months of being hired, he had met with the heads of each business to learn about their

plans, Noha said. He followed those meetings with sessions in which he and his team discussed the tax implications.

"Identify the decision-makers, the real players, and then meet with them, help them understand what you do and learn from them about how the business works," Noha advised. "Even if you're down a couple of layers, people are flattered by the fact you're interested in what they're doing."

What if you feel stuck?

Approach your internal campaign as aggressively as you would an external search.

"Get crystal clear on what you want," Kaye said. "You have to be able to say more than, 'I want more challenge.' What kind and where? Name it. The more specific you can be the better chance you have of getting it.

"Then consider, whom do I ask, when and where? Who is the person who can help me get more of what I want, and what's in it for them?"

Svehla advises volunteering to take on additional responsibilities, even without an immediate increase in pay.

"I always took the approach, give me the opportunity, let me learn the skills, give me three months and we can talk then about what this job is worth," she said, adding she never ran into a situation where her approach didn't pay off in career advancement and more pay.

Noha cautions that strategy can be risky.

"I've seen a person working like crazy with the promise of additional money by the end of the year" but ending up disappointed, she said. "Sometimes there just isn't the money to pay for it. They think you're great. Meanwhile, you're working 12- and 14-hour days, your title hasn't changed, your money hasn't changed."

Now there's a sign it's time to move on.

- - -

Poised for change

A recent national survey of adults working full time revealed:

23 percent plan to leave their current employer as the economy continues to improve.

Another 35 percent said "maybe" they would leave.

20 percent are actively looking for a new job.

Another 54 percent are passively looking for a new job.

41 percent have looked for a new job while at work.

Source: "Working in America: What Employees Want" survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Kronos Inc. Survey polled 1,051 workers. Results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

 [E-mail this story](#)

Copyright © 2007, [Chicago Tribune](#)

[Home](#) | [Copyright and terms of service](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Site tour](#)