



ADVICE COLUMN

Dear Stepping Stone

Welcome to our new Advice Column! To prime the pump, in this issue we've reprinted with permission from John Hadley a question posed by an actuary to his Career Tips newsletter. (See www.JHACareers.com/Newsletter.htm for more information or to subscribe.)

Question:

I'm currently in a job I absolutely hate, but I already spent the signing bonus. I'm tempted to just walk away and pay back the bonus, but the "professional" part of me keeps telling myself that I can stick this out for a year. My old firm will take me back no problem, but I know I'd feel like a quitter if I left so soon. I've already spoken to HR and my boss's boss who has made some drastic changes, but I still really and truly hate this job! I am someone who is used to loving my job, and being in this situation just really kills me. Got any advice?

Advice:

This situation is very involved, and we can only touch on the surface based on what I know so far. First you need to reflect on the situation. Consider carefully questions like these:

- What were you looking for that caused you to change jobs? What was it that was missing before, or that you were hoping to find?
 - If you didn't find that in the new company, what went wrong in your evaluation process? You will have to figure this out before making any quick decisions that might lead to another unhappy situation.
 - If you did find it, why didn't that lead to a situation you like? Did you not really want it after all, or is there something else that is wrong with the new situation?
 - Why exactly do you hate the new job?
- Is what you hate changeable (say, job responsibilities)? Or not (say, the company culture)?
 - If it is changeable, what prevents you from laying that out on the table?
 - What are your values regarding commitment? Would it violate your personal integrity to quit, especially after they've tried to work with you to improve the situation?

If you decide to leave, I would think long and hard about going back to the job you came from. There was a reason you left, and going back to a prior situation is usually a bad idea. This is a chance to really think hard about what you want from your career, and to instead find a third place that gets you what you were looking for from this move.

And if in the end you decide to stay, remember that emotions are often driven by actions, instead of the other way around. If you tell yourself you hate your job, you will. If you instead focus on what you can find to like about the job and your situation, you will hate it less.

If you then work on what you can do to create more of what you like, maybe you can actually change your situation to something you can begin to enjoy!

Submit your questions and challenges, and your own comments on any of the articles we publish to SteppingStone@JHACareers.com. We will give you expert advice in subsequent issues. □

