

## Why Consider a Career Change?

*Too often, people consider leaving behind an entire industry before they've fully explored other routes. And it doesn't make sense to throw away years of experience or leave a field you actually love or excel in because of something that's fixable.*

—Wendi Weiner (2016)

WE DO NOT tend to think of things this way, but coming to work each day involves choices. Options always exist, though we rarely take note of them. If we routinely thought about these options, there would be little time for work, but a key event can cause these thoughts to surface. Perhaps the event is a family or other life change. Perhaps it is work related.

We usually suppress this matter of choices until it becomes relevant. We prefer the security of a daily routine and constantly seek places where we feel we belong. But at times we wonder why we continue to pursue a daily routine that is no longer interesting or increasingly leaves us dissatisfied. In that vein, I came across this wise observation by Mark Hyman, MD, of the Institute for Functional Medicine:

---

*If we're stuck in a rut with our foot on the gas, we just keep going on the same path. But life is not static, as humans we need to be able to learn from our experiences, grow, and change. It's completely*

*okay to realize your current path is not making you happy and change directions—give yourself permission! (Hyman 2018)*

---

Suffice it to say that a typical professional will reconsider their current position and/or career at least a few times. This can occur for many reasons, as we will study in more detail. When faced with this concern, we must consider our options and evaluate them compared to the status quo. How do we do that?

## TWO GENERAL APPROACHES

There are two general approaches to career change. The one most people favor when asked is to plan for such a transition, at least to some extent. The other, which is also common and perhaps equally important, is to be opportunistic—either by necessity or by choice.

Changing jobs in healthcare is not rare. A seasoned healthcare executive usually holds a slew of jobs before assuming the role of CEO. Obviously, not every healthcare executive becomes a CEO. And even CEO jobs are less than stable, especially in times of rapid change. According to data tracked by American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE 2021), hospital CEO turnover increased to 20 percent in 2013, before declining to only 16 percent during the pandemic in 2020 (the latest data available from ACHE). In fact, as we came out of the pandemic in 2022, CEOs turned over at the accelerated rate of one every 72 hours in the first quarter (Ellison 2022). However, these job changes do not always occur by choice. Imagine pursuing a career where you run the risk of having to uproot your family the equivalent of every 5.5 years and move them to a new market to be CEO of a different healthcare organization. Not only are these jobs challenging, they are risky as well.

“Good people get fired at least once,” says Christine Mackey-Ross, then a senior vice president with WittKieffer, although she notes that CEOs often use softer words to describe the event, such as saying they decided to pursue other interests (Gamble 2014).

Some experts have even suggested that with all the change occurring in healthcare today, anyone who gets through a healthcare career without being terminated at least once is not doing much.

Being terminated from a position can awaken emotions that are both scary and exhilarating. Not only might you be surprised by your former employer's action ("I didn't see that coming!"), you may be surprised that others around you did see it coming. Like many an executive, I have experienced this personally, and it is quite something to feel the flood of emotions that occurs at such a time. Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief model is invariably invoked as the road map for such occasions, with great variation in individual experience as to how long each stage lasts (anger tended to linger a bit for me). And while you navigate that vulnerable time with help from your family, friends, and professional network, some comments begin to get through the mist of separation. For example, someone may ask, "Have you ever considered consulting?" The question may come as a surprise if you have never given any serious thought to the possibility of pursuing a consulting career.

## ADVICE ABOUNDS

A simple literature search on the topic of career change will turn up a litany of advice intended to help you through your journey. Some is helpful, while some seems a bit puffy. Dorie Clark, of the Fuqua School at Duke University, has written extensively about the topic and has a few gems that I will refer to throughout this book. As quoted in an article by Allison Pohle in the *Wall Street Journal* ("How to Change Careers: Find What to Pursue Next," February 4, 2021), Clark advises, "Your skill set is probably very broad. . . . Other people aren't going to expend the time or the effort to think broadly on your behalf about what you can do." In the same article, Ebony Joyce, a career coach with Next Level Career Services, emphasizes the importance of knowing what you do not want to do, as well as what you do. Pohle also advises readers to think about changing their online presence. Clearly, you do not have to look far for some sound advice.

But beware: Thinking about a career change can also be a trap, according to Forbes career coach Wendi Weiner. Writing for career website The Muse, she suggests that three of the most common reasons people consider a change—a bad boss, poor compensation, or boredom—are often misleading, and recommends caution:

---

*While changing careers can feel like a rebirth, jumping ship is not always the right answer. Do your homework, think things through, put together a plan, and consider the reasons why you want to change careers before you take the ultimate plunge headfirst. That way, you can avoid being several months down the road and wishing you'd never made the leap. (Weiner 2016)*

---

We have tried to tailor the advice in this book specifically to those who are experiencing the dramatic changes taking place in healthcare. In some ways, the level and pace of change in healthcare is unique, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some frontline providers were getting burned out from overutilization, other providers were on the sidelines, victims of the “elective procedures” label. By late April in 2020, one in five doctors had been furloughed or taken a pay cut as health systems looked for ways to reduce costs during the first wave of the pandemic (Rapier 2020). The impact has been dramatic, with some providers considering a career change out of medicine altogether.

As burnout has become a more prominent concern, especially for healthcare providers (Harvard School of Public Health 2019), it is worth noting that a career change can be either a serious source of stress or a serious stress reliever. I am reminded of the words of Quint Studer (2021): “Have a job and a place of work that you enjoy. If you are passionate about what you do, you’re less likely to burn out.” Sometimes just changing the place of work is all that is required to restore balance. Other times, you may find that you no longer enjoy the work. Clearly, the latter finding is more serious.

## A CAREER CHANGE IS A LIFE STRESS EVENT

Few things are more stressful than a career change. To create their famous Social Readjustment Rating Scale, Holmes and Rahe (1967) reviewed over 5,000 medical records and developed a stress scale of 43 life events (exhibit 1.1). “Death of a spouse” ranked highest at 100, and other key events were indexed against this. “Dismissal from work” was ranked eighth, with a score of 47 (i.e., less than half as stressful as loss of a spouse). “Retirement” is only two ranks behind this, at number 10, with a score of 45 (tied with “marital reconciliation”). “Change to a different line of work” is ranked eighteenth

**Exhibit 1.1. Partial List of Stress Scores**

Live event	Life change units
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Death of a close family member	63
Imprisonment	63
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Dismissal from work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Change in health of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Business readjustment	39
Gain a new family member	39
Sexual difficulties	39
Change in financial state	38

Source: Adapted from Holmes and Rahe (1967).

with a score of 36. Importantly, these scores are designed to reflect the level of emotional stress induced by these life-changing events; that stress may be positive or negative, depending on circumstances.

Assigning a value to each of these life events individually is only one part of the Holmes and Rahe tool. Because many of these events seem to be a natural part of life at some point or another, I was more interested in the cumulative effect of these stress factors. In other words, what combination of these might cause a tilt in one's psychological makeup? Clearly, one must take care not to let too many stressors affect you at any one time. More on this later.

## **PUSH AND PULL SCENARIOS**

A career change may be motivated by a push or a pull scenario. While both may be present, it is useful to determine which of the two dominates. Under the push scenario, what is the source of dissatisfaction (or failure) with the current situation? If we have been terminated, it is relatively easy to identify this as a push scenario. However, what are the underlying causes of this termination? Under the pull scenario, it is important to understand the attraction to consulting as an option. Reading my previous book, *The Healthcare Consultant's Handbook* (Mason 2021), can help test the attraction to consulting and add substance to your understanding of the experience of consulting. Is the pull based on myth or reality? It is important to get more granular about these scenarios.

To foster greater insight, it is imperative to understand the central motivation for a career change. Applying a clinical model, this is the diagnostic portion of the process. As any clinician will tell you, if the diagnosis is wrong, it will likely be followed by a bad or ineffective set of treatments. Better to get the diagnosis correct. Staying with the clinical model for the moment, it is also important to understand the underlying disease. All too often in medicine, treatments resolve symptoms but do not affect the cause. Although symptoms are important and may also need to be treated, it is better to address

the underlying illness where possible. In a potential career change, this plays out through correct diagnosis of the problem. The push and pull scenarios are covered in more detail here.

The pull scenario can apply to a deliberate and systematic exploration of the general concept of consulting or to a specific opportunity that requires a quick decision. If circumstances are such that you must make a decision under severe time constraints, there is a greater risk that you will come to a wrong conclusion. But regardless of time constraints, the process should begin with finding the correct answer to the *why* question. If the question is urgent you must complete the process more quickly, but you must still understand the why of the pull scenario, lest you make a bad decision based on a false premise. Reducing the risk of making a bad decision is a key aim of this initial discernment process.

Under a push scenario, dissatisfiers in your current position are frequently the main motivation for a change. Understanding these dissatisfiers in depth can place guardrails on your journey and lead to a higher probability of a successful transition. The danger of the push scenario is the impulse to take a reactionary stance, characterized as, “I’ll show you.” The temptation is great, especially when you have been terminated, to prove that the decision was wrongheaded. Beware the potential of covering up how you might have contributed in some way to what has happened. Were there aspects of the position for which you were ill prepared? Did you make any fatal mistakes that can be avoided in the future? What part, if any, did you play in this outcome? Were there deficiencies that can and should be corrected? Are your current feelings merely a reaction to being hurt by this move, or were there more deep-seated considerations?

I’m not sure I fully appreciated this proverb when I first heard it: “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” It cautions us to avoid the quick emotional or knee-jerk reaction of seeking vengeance, but rather to take time to cool off and be deliberate in “delivering justice.” An emotional reaction can take several forms. One form is to quickly land the same job with another organization and perform admirably, thus raising questions regarding your previous employer’s decision.

A more dramatic approach is to make a career change so you can better showcase your skills from a more relevant platform. Either can be the wrong response, depending on the underlying nature of the event. The key is to correctly identify what caused this termination, and/or your feelings about it. Did you somehow fail to meet the job requirements, or was it a reflection of a poor relationship with your boss (somewhat common, according to the literature)?

A correct diagnosis here should help you determine whether a change of venue is all you require. If you come to a precipitous conclusion, you may fail to address key dissatisfiers. For example, if a key dissatisfier is debilitating bureaucracy, then you are not likely to cure it by taking a line management position in another health-care organization that turns out to be even more bureaucratic. You will have a new employer, but you will not change the fundamental source of your frustration. If you change careers to consulting but end up with a firm that has significant bureaucracy, you may end up dealing with the same dissatisfiers. In either case, you likely have not improved your job satisfaction. Beware the reactive response that ignores the underlying causes.

## CAREER GOALS

Another tool to help you rise above the moment is to consider a broader aim—your career goals. Career goals can be tricky things. They tend to fall into two categories: long term and short term. Generally, you should start with long-term goals and then focus on the short term (Simpson 2019). But career goals also change.

Nothing in healthcare today remains the same; the only constant is change. Healthcare organizations are asked to put the patient in the center of their mission (“patient-centered care”). Some of us argue that even a focus on “patients” is losing potency and that a “customer orientation” must emerge if we are to make the transition from illness care to true *health* care. Just as the organizations that serve people’s healthcare needs are undergoing radical change,



so too are changes required of the executives who lead or consult to such organizations.

Managing change is the alpha and omega of this transition. The integrating theory is that change is all about us. Change requires knowledge and leadership; leadership must be enlightened to lead change well. Outside expertise can be essential to successfully addressing a change agenda within an organization. Ubiquitous change is an enabler for consulting services, which clearly have a strong future in healthcare.

**Ubiquitous change is an enabler for consulting services, which clearly have a strong future in healthcare.**

As healthcare is changing, your career is clearly subject to change as well. Less clear, perhaps, is the realization that your *career goals* may change too. The story of the boiling frog comes to mind here; the need to change career goals may not be immediately obvious. Like many goal-oriented people, I have found it extremely hard to move away from an established goal. We tend to be fixated on it for so long that it becomes hard to displace. Not recognizing that our goals may have changed can lead to tragic consequences and poor career choices. It can also be unrealistic. “You need to evaluate your current *knowledge, skills, and experience* so that you can compare them with what will be required” (Malvey and Sapp 2020, 8; emphasis added). The authors go on to invoke SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) as a good place to start. But there is more to it than that.

Life brings many changes—some expected, some not. Ideally, goals are refined over time. What tends to remain constant (or should) is *values*. Goals need to be linked to consequences. Often, a career change is prompted by an event such as a job loss or change in family circumstances. It can also be preceded by a loss of interest in your current employment. Sure, some tinkering with the current job might correct the situation (e.g., a reset of responsibilities), but

it may run deeper than that. If you are intensely dissatisfied with your current job, and especially with what is required of you and how it makes you feel, it is natural to re-examine not only your job choice but perhaps your career goals.

What specifically caused you to start looking in the direction of a career change? To understand this thoroughly, it helps to try to remember your career goals when you first started. This requires introspection and can involve many personal considerations—family, friends, a desire to avoid relocating, the need to continuously learn, to be creative, to have some control. You might find yourself revisiting some of the core idealism of your youth before you were hit by the two-by-four of the work world:

- To make a difference
- To have job security
- To be challenged
- To enjoy the journey

Because idealism tends to dissipate with time, let's examine each of these briefly; doing so might put you back in touch with some important *feelings* that were more present at the outset of your career journey. By idealism, I am not necessarily referring to “save the whales” or some starry-eyed vision from our youth, but rather the things that we found motivating at the time. To be fair, this can differ substantially from one generation to another. Accordingly, it is helpful to offer some context as to how each generation may embrace some of these.

## **To Make a Difference**

More than a few studies suggest generational differences regarding this goal (Paychex 2019; Weeks 2017; West Midland Family Center 2019). In other words, you may be influenced by where you stand in the generational calendar. The Greatest Generation is often credited with having achieved this goal. Children of the Depression era, they

grew up watching their parents struggle to make a living, went to school, got jobs, and then fought World War II. Once they survived the travails of the war, raising their family and holding down a job was gravy.<sup>1</sup> They survived the war after all.

Then came the children of the Greatest Generation—the baby boomers. Unlike their parents, who felt blessed to be out of the war successfully and to be left alone to pursue family goals, baby boomers rebelled from day one. Nothing was as it should be. They questioned everything and tried to change all that they touched. Boomers were disruptors before there were disruptors. While their parents were relatively quiet and sought anonymity, boomers were loud and attracted attention. This made for some interesting interactions at the dinner table.

The generations since the boomers seem somewhat more subtle in contrast—until the millennials, that is. But many of the supposed differences captured in internet memes and generational insults may simply come down to the differences in motivation and perspective that come with age. Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) behave more like boomers—questioning everything yet again, but with a bit more attitude about the establishment. Ryan Jenkins (2019) suggests that the reason millennials are different comes down to one word—*access*. “As far back as they can remember, Millennials have had access to the world’s information curated into a blank search box in the palm of their hand.”

Millennials grew up watching their parents suffer through the Great Recession of 2008 and the emerging politics of division. The culture wars were at the center of their universe. And while they did not necessarily have a point of view to start, they were forced to pick sides over time. Generally, they did not like much of what they saw. They were presented with a binary world, and they were either on one side or the other; nothing remained in the middle.

---

1 It is interesting to note the impact of life events such as the Great Depression and World War II. It begs the question of how the coronavirus pandemic will affect the career outlook of future generations, notably the schoolchildren who have been subjected to remote learning.

Their response, in Jenkins's words, was to use their access to reform the world they were given:

---

*Access is holding every company accountable to be better.*

*Access leads us away from average. If there are better employers, superior services, or improved products out there, they will be found.*

*Access has made it easy for disengaged employees to find a better company culture, move to a different location, and learn the new skill required to start a new job.*

*Access has made it easy for dissatisfied customers to search for an improved solution, watch testimonials, cost compare, and buy it at the lowest price.*

---

While it initially appears that boomers and millennials have little in common, one value that seemed to stick out for both is the desire to make a difference—each in their own way.

Because disruptions have different implications for different generations, I must discuss the impact of COVID-19, albeit preliminarily. According to McKinsey & Company,

---

*For millennials and members of Generation Z—those born between 1980 and 2012—this crisis represents the biggest disruption they have faced. Their attitudes may be changed profoundly and in ways that are hard to predict. The tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors may see their businesses subject to long-term changes in business and individual travel preferences. Concern over the possibility of other “black swan” events could change how consumers approach financial security—saving more and spending less. The list of questions about how consumers will behave after COVID-19 is long, and uncertainty is high. As a result, this is the subject of much research by McKinsey and others. (Sneader and Singhal 2020)*

---

## **To Have Job Security**

The importance of job security can vary by generation as well. It is more important to some than to others, possibly correlated with their risk tolerance. For some, the security of employment (executive) is more important than the relative instability of contracting (consulting). Millennials watched their parents lose their jobs after being with the same firm for decades. They saw the resurgence of patriotism, but with much controversy also in evidence. They saw their parents challenged by new technology that they found intuitive. Many of the key technology disruptions—personal computers, cell phones, sensors, genetic testing—had occurred before they were born. Then the disruptors became more challenging.

They watched as their neighbors were forced to sell their house at a steep discount while the housing market collapsed. They watched older people bagging groceries because they were unable to afford retirement without supplementing their income. They saw their distracted parents consumed with uncertainty, and often working two jobs to try to make ends meet. They experienced the growing anxiety around climate change and the need to shift away from fossil fuels. They experienced the pandemic. This was all alarming; they wanted more predictability in their lives.

Advanced schooling is no longer a guarantee of a fulfilling career. Artificial intelligence is one of the newest threats to job security, as vast segments of the workforce (e.g., truck drivers) may be displaced by new technologies. Legions of displaced workers will have to be absorbed somehow into the new economy (e.g., energy workers from the fossil fuel industry). For millennials, the “gig economy” has begun displacing traditional employment as a career choice, favoring entrepreneurs able to sell their services as independent contractors. While this has afforded millennials greater freedom, it can seem much riskier than the experience of previous generations. Contract work is less steady, requiring constant sales and new client generation. There is also the liability to provide benefits (relatively

easy for corporations) that is now shifted to the gig worker (far more challenging). The trap for executives is the security of a paycheck and benefits to which they have been tethered as employees. It may be hard to break these bonds.

## **To Be Challenged**

It may seem like an oxymoron to be both secure and challenged, yet these are common career goals for many aspiring executives. After a long hiatus, technical schools are expanding dramatically along with the realization that not everyone requires a liberal arts education and some people are surely content to do piecework in the tradition of the trades (e.g., carpenters, plumbers, electricians, mechanics). In fact, the trades are beginning to look attractive again, given the turnover of traditional employment and scarcity of labor to fill these gaps. Have you tried to find a good mechanic lately? Thankfully, trades are becoming a more viable employment avenue than ever.

But for others, the trades represent repetition and are not intellectually challenging. It was not that they necessarily need more, rather they need different. The idea of going to work each day to repeat the experience of previous days is not compelling.<sup>2</sup> Line management has its challenges as well. Personnel issues can become overwhelming, replacing other tasks that were more rewarding. Responsibility is often out of alignment with authority. Frustrations can build over time. Those who succeed in leading teams enjoy some freedom to exercise their values, but not every executive is able to reach this level of self-actualization. Consulting, in contrast, can offer a constant array of new challenges, not least of which is new clients in new settings.

---

2 Sadly, this accounts somewhat for the relatively high suicide rate among dentists (CBS News/AP 2016).

## To Enjoy the Journey

At first, building a career was stimulating and enjoyable. The joy of being exposed to new things, learning, and succeeding brings back fond memories. Peer recognition and the stimulation of trial and error were once your North Star. Promotions led to greater responsibility. Greater responsibility brings greater income and the ability to enjoy a better lifestyle and nicer vacations.

Yet, the career experience is not always what it is cracked up to be. Virtually any career includes ebbs and flows. The adrenaline rush wears off over time. Some people are content with this and settle into a comfortable routine. For others, new priorities take over, such as family, hobbies, and health. What replaces the excitement that was evident in the beginning when the learning curve was steep? Do they still get the thrill of new pursuits and advancement, or does routine begin to take over stimulating tasks? Perhaps the days become repetitive, at least to some degree. Time to enjoy life begins to take on more importance, and the desk, the job, and the job routine no longer hold the same joy. Trying to stay current, while certainly a challenge, may begin to feel overwhelming, or rank high on the boredom scale, and the executive may begin to look and feel like Bill Murray in the movie *Groundhog Day*. When the heart tilts more in this direction is when the idea of a career change comes into focus as an opportunity to possibly recapture the fun of new experiences.

## MANAGE RISK

To the extent that our current situation falls short regarding career goals, where does consulting fit? I bring up consulting at this point because I have seen the “grass is greener” phenomenon play out many times. When people experience what might be a brief setback, it is natural to migrate to a safe place. Fantasizing that consulting might be a better alternative can bring temporary relief,

but it is a mirage, at least at this stage. It is imperative that we not fall into this trap. Therefore, I emphasize up front the need to define the current situation more precisely, as well as to have an accurate picture of other opportunities that might exist and what the related risks are.

**To the extent that our current situation falls short regarding career goals, where does consulting fit?**

To move from employment to consulting you will have to overcome many barriers. The odds are stacked against you in a number of ways. I have witnessed this difficult transition and its effects on others who found that consulting was not their path to success. The purpose of this book is to improve your odds of success in such a move. Understanding some of these barriers becomes even more important because this career move is increasingly popular. But it has been hard for people who harbor such thoughts to gain insights into what is required to be successful with such a radical change. I hope to provide a foundation based on experience, including the experiences of others who are familiar with this transition. Doing so at this critical time in the transformation of healthcare will surely help consulting continue to play an important role in improving the performance of healthcare organizations to better meet the growing needs of a fickle and demanding consumer.

Perfection is the enemy of good, they say. Rather than allow consulting to be raised on a pedestal, let us consider the realities. The risks inherent to consulting cannot be ignored. Of course, risk is not exclusive to consulting. Traditional employment also holds the risk of losing a good job or landing in a bad one. Everything involves some element of risk.

The risks inherent in consulting occupy significant space in my previous book, a snippet of which is repeated here:



---

*That consulting comes with its fair share of risk should surprise no one. In my experience, however, many new or prospective consultants fail to fully appreciate the risk that are taking. If you are in consulting long enough, you are sure to experience disappointment or even outright failure sooner or later. Is that something you can bounce back from, or will it haunt you going forward? Dealing with disappointment and loss is never easy. But it comes with the territory. (Mason 2021, 17)*

---

A career change always involves some risk. We may not always be aware of it, but the status quo involves risk as well. Sometimes, that risk is unclear until a key event occurs, such as being terminated because of a merger. As boxer Mike Tyson famously pointed out, everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face. An unplanned career change can feel like a punch in the face. I hope that this book can ease the pain and help you deal with the risk.

An important consideration in managing the risk of a career change is to recognize your options. The more informed you are, the better you are positioned. The risk you face can never be fully extinguished, but it can be minimized. The following five steps can help:

1. *Manage your expectations.* Depending on what you are leaving, this may be a big change or a small one. The key is to set your expectations realistically. Do not underestimate the learning curve. Different triggers and levers are involved in being a consultant. These may come naturally to some people, but not everyone.
2. *Have a clear understanding of the status quo.* Often, a key to making such a decision is the recognition that the status quo represents the higher risk. If things were working out, you might not be considering this option. A clear understanding of the risk of *not* making a change is important.

3. *Do your homework.* Learn everything you can about your potential new surroundings. Some things cannot be learned ahead of time, but much can. Do not be afraid to ask questions, especially of people with whom you will be working.
4. *Recognize there will be surprises.* You cannot anticipate everything. With help, I hope you will not miss much, but you will miss some things. May they be little things. To find out more about the rigors of consulting, please refer to chapter 10, which includes a checklist of common mistakes—avoiding these will help you minimize risk.
5. *Consider the timing.* Timing will be discussed in more detail in chapters 11 and 12, but you should understand that it is natural to become impatient to move, especially if a specific opportunity awaits you or you are made to feel like a lame duck in your current position. Best not to rush into something if you can avoid it. (Obviously, this cannot always be avoided.) Avoiding a rushed decision minimizes the possibility that your doubts will morph into a feeling that you acted precipitously.

Timing is one of the most important factors to consider here. With any entrepreneurial activity, the most common failure is not giving it enough time to be successful. If you follow a clear path faithfully and diligently, you should not feel you have rushed into something. Then you must be prepared to give this new path a chance to succeed. There will be discomfort; anything new tends to bring some discomfort. Comparisons to your previous situation are natural; that is why it is so important to have a clear understanding of the discomfort that exists in the status quo.

Clearly, some life situations are better for this type of decision than others. Before you enter into this process, have you cleared the deck of other stress-inducing events? Ideally, you will not pile a career change on top of expecting a new child, going through a divorce, or some other major life event.

Have you decided a minimum amount of time that you will give this new job before you sit back and evaluate the situation? Do you have at least six months of salary set aside to fall back on in the event this does not work out? (Some experts suggest a year.) These considerations are discussed in more detail in chapters 11 and 12, but it is worth raising these questions early.

Finally, do you have a clear definition of success? Feeling good about things is a clear indicator, but it may not be the most important one in the long run. Short run considerations are also important. What makes you happy? What are you not happy about? What three things do you most want to happen in the first 90 days? The first six months? Later, you can ask, Did these three things happen? Why? Why not? How do you feel about things overall? Are you able to manage this situation so that more happy things happen, and you can neutralize the unhappy? You get the idea.

These five questions can give you comfort from a timing perspective:

1. Have you carefully explored your other options?
2. Are you clear that you have negotiated the best deal you can for this change?
3. Have you identified and answered all important questions?
4. Do you have a client lined up for your first assignment, and are you comfortable with it?
5. Is there anything else you can or should do before you jump ship?

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Understand, in specific terms, your motivation for change. Is it a push scenario or a pull scenario?

2. Do not underestimate the stresses that occur in life's journey, and recognize that a career change adds substantially to this stress, even under the best of circumstances.
3. Take the time to reconnect with past career goals and determine if they have changed.
4. If your career goals have not changed but other things have changed (e.g., dissatisfiers), determine whether these other things can be fixed.
5. Determining that change is required is not the final answer; understanding what kind of change you need (e.g., do more of and do less of) and when (e.g., soon or after more reflection) is equally important.

## REFERENCES

- American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). 2021. "Hospital CEO Turnover Rate Shows Small Decrease." Published June 28. [www.ache.org/about-ache/news-and-awards/news-releases/hospital-ceo-turnover-2021](http://www.ache.org/about-ache/news-and-awards/news-releases/hospital-ceo-turnover-2021).
- CBS News/AP. 2016. "These Jobs Have the Highest Rate of Suicide." Published June 30. [www.cbsnews.com/news/these-jobs-have-the-highest-rate-of-suicide/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/these-jobs-have-the-highest-rate-of-suicide/).
- Ellison, A. 2022. "Hospital CEO Exits Nearly Double This Year." *Becker's Hospital Review*, April 28. [www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/hospital-ceo-exits-nearly-double-this-year.html](http://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/hospital-ceo-exits-nearly-double-this-year.html).
- Gamble, M. 2014. "The CEO's Guide to Getting Fired." *Becker's Hospital Review*, May 9. [www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/the-ceo-s-guide-to-getting-fired.html](http://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/the-ceo-s-guide-to-getting-fired.html).

- Harvard School of Public Health. 2019. "Leading Health Care Organizations Declare Physician Burnout as 'Public Health Crisis'" (news release). Published January 17. [www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/leading-health-care-organizations-declare-physician-burnout-as-public-health-crisis/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/leading-health-care-organizations-declare-physician-burnout-as-public-health-crisis/).
- Holmes T. H., and R. H. Rahe. 1967. "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale." *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 11 (2): 213–18. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999\(67\)90010-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999(67)90010-4).
- Hyman, M. 2018. "Tips to Nourish Your Spirit." Dr. Hyman (blog). Published April 12. <https://drhyman.com/blog/2018/04/12/tips-to-nourish-your-spirit/>.
- Jenkins, R. 2019. "This Is What Caused Millennials to Be So Different." Technology (blog), *Inc.* Published January 23. [www.inc.com/ryan-jenkins/this-is-what-caused-millennials-to-be-so-different.html](http://www.inc.com/ryan-jenkins/this-is-what-caused-millennials-to-be-so-different.html).
- Malvey, D., and J. L. Sapp. 2020. *Your Healthcare Job Hunt: How Your Digital Presence Can Make or Break Your Career*. Chicago: Health Administration Press.
- Mason, S. A. 2021. *The Healthcare Consultant's Handbook: Career Opportunities and Best Practices*. Chicago: Health Administration Press.
- Paychex. 2019. "How to Manage the 5 Generations in the Workplace." Paychex Worx. Last updated July 26. [www.paychex.com/articles/human-resources/how-to-manage-multiple-generations-in-the-workplace](http://www.paychex.com/articles/human-resources/how-to-manage-multiple-generations-in-the-workplace).
- Rapier, G. 2020. "1 in 5 Doctors Has Been Furloughed or Taken a Pay Cut as the Coronavirus Pandemic Hits Hospitals. Some Say They're Considering New Jobs." *Business Insider*, April 25. [www.businessinsider.com/doctors-see-furloughs-pay-cuts-coronavirus-hospitals-survey-2020-4](http://www.businessinsider.com/doctors-see-furloughs-pay-cuts-coronavirus-hospitals-survey-2020-4).

- Simpson, M. 2019. "What Are Your Career Goals? (+ Answers)." TheInterviewGuys.com (blog). Published February 26. <https://theinterviewguys.com/what-are-your-career-goals/>.
- Sneader, K., and S. Singhal. 2020. "The Future Is Not What It Used to Be: Thoughts on the Shape of the Next Normal." *McKinsey & Company* digital article. Published April 14. [www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/the-future-is-not-what-it-used-to-be-thoughts-on-the-shape-of-the-next-normal](http://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/the-future-is-not-what-it-used-to-be-thoughts-on-the-shape-of-the-next-normal).
- Studer, Q. 2021. "Healing Leader Burnout." The Busy Leader's Handbook (website). Published January 18. <https://thebusyleadershandbook.com/healing-leader-burnout-a-few-quick-tips/>.
- Weeks, K. P. 2017. "Every Generation Wants Meaningful Work—But Thinks Other Age Groups Are in It for the Money." *Harvard Business Review* digital article. Published July 31. <https://hbr.org/2017/07/every-generation-wants-meaningful-work-but-thinks-other-age-groups-are-in-it-for-the-money>.
- West Midland Family Center. 2019. Generational Differences Chart. [www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChartUpdated2019.pdf](http://www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChartUpdated2019.pdf).
- Weiner, W. 2016. "Three Common Reasons People Change Careers (That They Later Regret)." Advice (blog), The Muse. Published September 1. [www.themuse.com/advice/3-common-reasons-people-change-careers-that-they-later-regret](http://www.themuse.com/advice/3-common-reasons-people-change-careers-that-they-later-regret).