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## Career Conundrums Require Self- Examination

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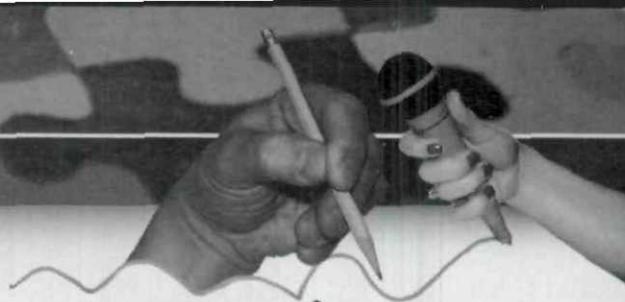
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# Career conundrums require self-examination

By Carla Kimbrough-Robinson

It's Monday morning: How do you feel about going to work today?

Are you excited about the challenges ahead, or are you dreading the next assignment?

Now, imagine you have to remain there for the rest of your career.

Those Monday-morning feelings or the rest-of-your-life musings may give you a hint about whether it's time to make a career move — or not.

Fortunately, we can use logic and feelings to decide whether to stay or go.

We also can be confident that we're not alone. Career moves are something we all consider.

The new year often triggers the desire to evaluate where we are with our lives and our careers.

Sometimes layoffs force us to make a career move. In either realm, we wonder if the grass is greener in the other pasture.

Does the land of more opportunity or more money await us if we just make that next move?

To decide your next move, start by assessing your circumstances.

■ **Examine your responsibilities:**

Are you doing the work you wanted to do in your career? Are you growing professionally, gaining new skills? If you're still getting the plum assignments that challenge you professionally, you will probably lean toward staying in your current position or perhaps moving up in your newsroom. If you're simply sleepwalking to pick up your next paycheck, then the time might be right to seek new opportunities.

■ **Salary is another consideration:**

A belief that you can earn more elsewhere often becomes a strong incentive for packing your bags.

■ **Another important factor in making a**

career move is strictly personal:

If your family loves where you live or if children are at a critical age in school, you will probably be hammered if you even suggest moving. If you're single, you may simply want to improve your social life by moving to a place where your nightlife is not defined by the monologue of Jay Leno or David Letterman.

■ **If you think you want to stay, ask yourself what lies ahead:**

Can you get involved in new initiatives in your newsroom? If so, will those initiatives simply keep you busy or enable you to make significant contributions? Maybe you can launch an initiative of your own. Look for what is not being done in the newsroom and, with the support of the newsroom leadership, do it. Of course, your newsroom leaders may tell you that the initiative is not your job. In that case, you might look for a pattern. If opportunities for improvement

or challenging assignments keep passing you by, that may be a clue to start looking.

Now, if you decide to start looking, the assessment continues. Start by considering how others view you in the newsroom.

Here are a few questions to ponder:

Where would your boss rank you for your position in your newsroom?

If your boss were creating a newsroom staff, considering all those he or she has worked with, would you make the all star team? Would your boss make a counteroffer to keep you?

Do you get to work on the best stories? You should be one of the most valuable players before deciding to leave.

Where do you go and how do you make the next career move?

Deciding whether you want to be a big fish in a small pond or small fish in a big pond will help you plan a job search.

There are advantages to both. If you're a big fish in a small pond, you can be

involved in the most challenging stories and really help shape coverage. If you're a small fish in a big pond, you may get a taste of the action and learn a great deal by observing.

Actually making the move is the hardest part.

It takes planning, patience and perseverance. Choose carefully where to send your resume and work your contacts to see where you might find a good fit.

Patience and perseverance are virtues in this job market.

Landing that ideal position may take longer than you think.

You'll need to dedicate time and follow up on the packages you send.

If moving to another newsroom is not in the cards this year, focus on adding new skills and knowledge that make you more valuable where you work now.

Whether you stay or go, remember: The most valuable players have skills and knowledge that would cost an employer time, money and inconvenience to replace them.

**Carla's Professional Development Picks:**

■ **ACES Conference:** April 21-23, 2005, Hollywood, Calif. Early bird registration cost is \$150 for members and \$325 for nonmembers; Registration deadline, Feb. 1, 2004. Logon to [www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org) for more details.

■ **"What Color Is Your Parachute?"** by Richard Nelson Bolles; 432 pages, 2004; \$17.95.

■ **The Concise Guide to Copy Editing** by Paul LaRocque; 100 pages, \$12.95.

■ **Self assessment:** Ask yourself: "Am I doing my best work where I am? Why or why not? Have I made myself marketable with skills, knowledge and talent?"

*Carla Kimbrough-Robinson, the journalist's coach, has spent nearly 20 years in newsrooms and is a trained life coach with Inspire Higher International LLC, a Denver-based personal development company. Send her questions at [coaching@inspirehigher.net](mailto:coaching@inspirehigher.net).*



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