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ARE YOU READY FOR A

# CAREER CHANGE?

7 WARNING SIGNS IT MAY BE  
TIME TO MAKE A MOVE

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## 7 SIGNS YOU MAY BE READY FOR A CAREER CHANGE



It often happens in the course of a professional person's career that the demands of the workplace require so much effort and attention that you begin to lose touch with many of the other more important things in life. Sometimes it happens abruptly, but in many instances this kind of scenario can develop so gradually as to be almost imperceptible. Until suddenly one day a person becomes aware of major unhappiness about something, but may not be able to pinpoint the root cause of that unhappiness. Knowing some of the warning signals for career discontent can help a person arrive at the truth more readily, and consider what actions should be taken in consequence.

In no particular order, here are seven of the most common warning signals that you may be ready for a career change.

## SIGN #1: DIMINISHING PASSION FOR THE WORK

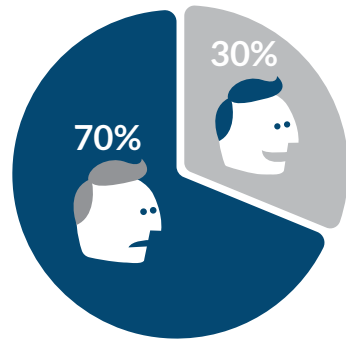
When you first made the choice to pursue your career, it may have been the right choice and there was probably at least one good reason for choosing your job. Perhaps it was anticipated compensation, job market need, opportunity for growth or simply the appeal of the work itself. Whatever the reason, you made the right choice for that time - but somehow things feel different now. The pay does not offset your loss of passion for the job, and you can't continue to plug along just for the money. You may even be among the few where your job security is not in question, but mere job security does not appeal as it once did. Your daily routine has become a repetition of the same tasks in the same way, day after day, and none of it has meaning or purpose. You may be finding the work is no longer challenging, and you feel detached from the career

that once seemed so enjoyable. You are sleep-walking at your job.

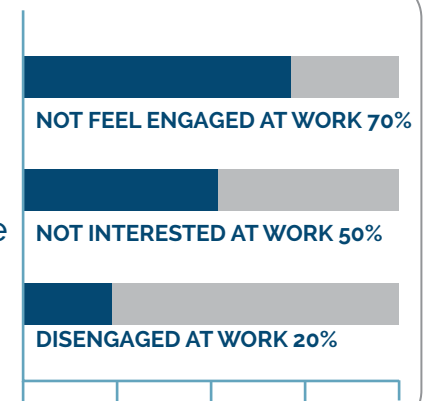
Does any of this sound familiar?



According to the 2013 American Workplace Survey conducted by the Gallup Corporation, only about 30% of workers find themselves actually engaged with their work.



Of the 70% that did not feel engaged at work, roughly 50% felt mere disinterest, while a surprising 20% were 'actively disengaged' from the work, and tended to be agents of discontent in the workplace.



Conducted on a massive sample size of 150,000 American employees, this survey showed that the vast majority did not feel challenged or motivated at their jobs, and were either bored with the work or actively resented it.

The alarming thing about that actively disengaged statistic is that in a follow-up analysis, the Gallup survey suggested that those 20% of unhappy workers might be costing business as much as \$550 billion in lost productivity. Clearly, disengagement is not simply an issue for the individual - there is a significant consequence to employers and to business when workers do not feel challenged and motivated by their jobs.

## SIGN #2: LIFE IS OUT OF BALANCE

There comes a time in the life of many workers when the realization hits that their job is consuming the lion's share of the waking hours in every day, and there are only scraps left for home, family, friends, and other pursuits. While it's certainly true that any 9-to-5 job will dominate the quality hours available in a given day, the kind of imbalance referred to here goes far beyond that.

You may find yourself putting in extra hours during the day, working on weekends, and even bringing work home with you in order to keep up with the latest rush project at work. You might even be sleeping less to accommodate that earlier start time, and when you do go to sleep you don't sleep well because you're still dealing with the pressures of the day. Before you realize it, this pattern has become the norm for

you - there's always a new rush project at work, and the boss always has you scrambling to stay on top of it. When you reach the point where this has become true for you, it's time to think about whether or not you can continue leading a life so out of balance.



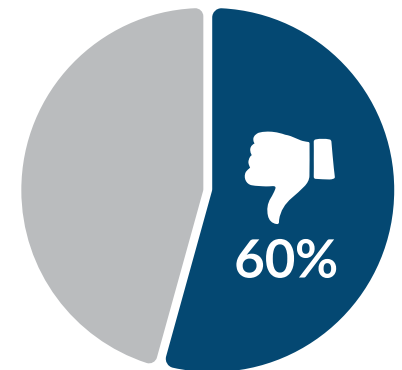
## SIGN #3: UNAPPRECIATED AT WORK

When an employee feels unappreciated at work, it is often due to the fact that management, or at least a direct supervisor, views employees as being more or



less the same; parts of the same great machine that are all interchangeable and therefore easy to replace. It is one of the most basic human needs to be recognized as an individual, to be praised for our efforts and achievements, and to simply feel needed and wanted, and because this is such a basic need, it extends beyond personal relationships and into the workplace.

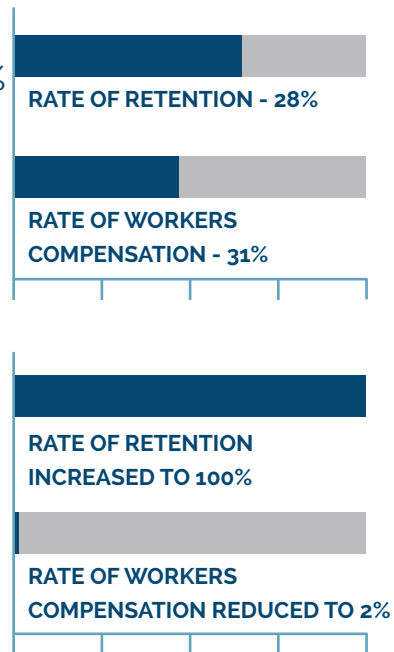
From an analysis of recent surveys on unhappiness in the workplace, including the Gallup survey, it is estimated that at least 60% of all workers fall into the category of feeling unappreciated at work.



Ironically, this is one of the easier problems to fix. In Michael Abrashoff's book, "It's Your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy", the author describes how he inherited a naval vessel with dramatic employee issues.

Upon taking the helm he had a crew with a mere 28% rate of retention and a shocking 31% rate of workers' compensation claims.

In a single year he converted those numbers into 100% retention and workers compensation was almost non-existent at a rate of 2%.

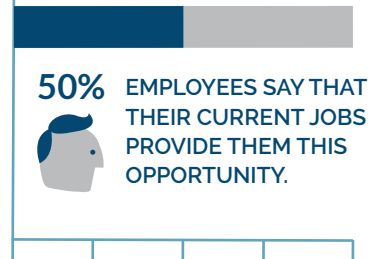


How did he do it? By getting to know each and every member of the crew personally, and letting them know that their contribution was valued. This is the kind of recognition all employees seek, and the kind of recognition all managers should practice in an ideal world.

Granted, this was a shipboard situation and may not be the most accurate reflection of workplaces all around the world, but this single case can still serve as a sobering example of steps that management might easily take to show appreciation of employees. Unfortunately in many companies the management is out of sync with the needs of their workforce leaving an increasing number feeling unappreciated. If you find yourself in this scenario it may be time to look elsewhere where your talents will be appreciated.

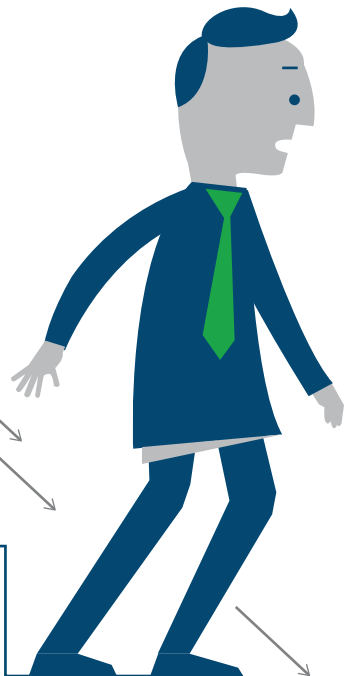
## SIGN #4: NO UPWARD MOBILITY

Surveys on job satisfaction point out the fact that while more than 85% of all employees cite career growth as one of the most important benefits of any job, less than 50% say that their current jobs provide them this opportunity.



Career growth is closely associated with personal growth in the minds of most employees, and when there is no real opportunity to develop professional skills and climb up the ladder, what's left is stagnation. The important aspects of upward mobility - increased pay, greater responsibility, more self-respect, and sense of achievement - are all nullified when the workplace offers no hope of advancement.

Because these aspects of self-improvement are so closely tied to personal development and the sense of self, an employee ends up with lower feelings of self-worth, and that unhappiness pervades all aspects of his/her life. In small companies, there are likely to be fewer opportunities at all levels, but if growth opportunities are lacking in larger companies it will almost certainly lead to a predominantly unhappy workforce. Most employees need to feel that they are growing as individuals in order to be content with themselves and happy with their jobs.

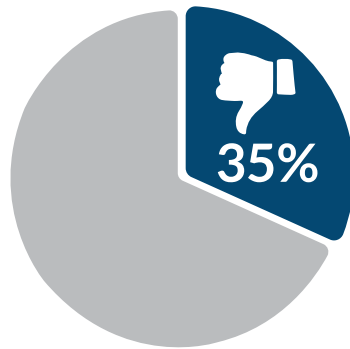




## SIGN #5: YOU DISLIKE THE ATMOSPHERE

While this sign of career unhappiness can be caused by many factors, the workplace environment can play a key role in an employee's satisfaction.

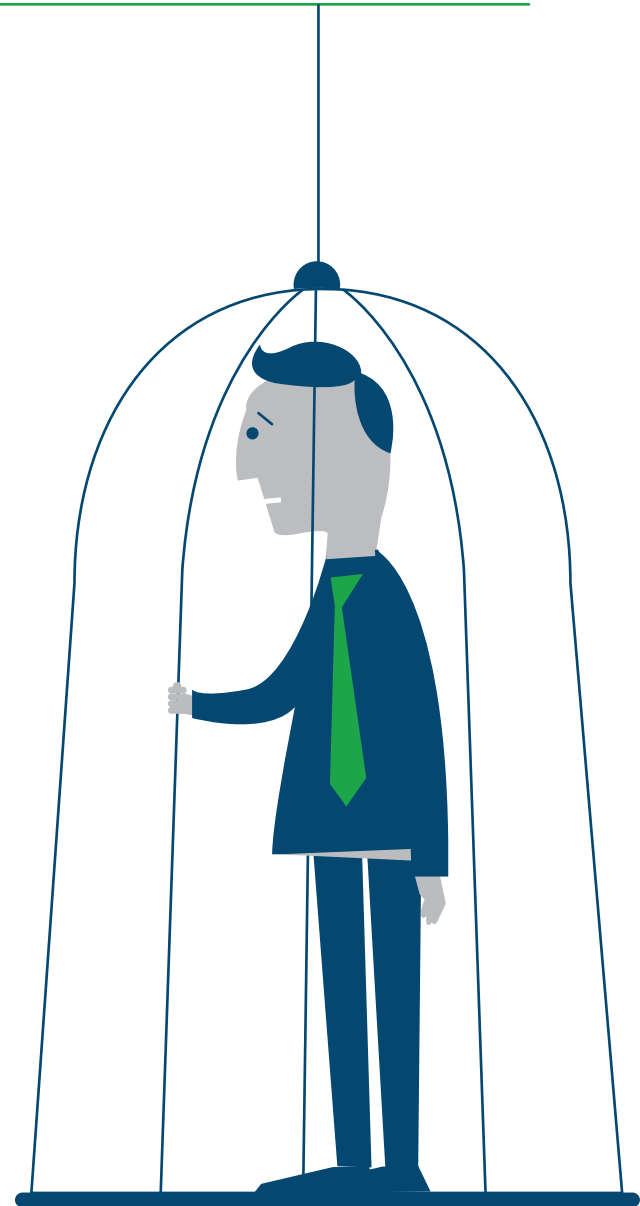
According to employment statistics, roughly 35% of employees quit a job within the first six months after being hired. Which means that more than one-third of all employees spend less than a year on the job before realizing it did not meet their expectations and there are things about the job they dislike.



Some of the most common reasons cited by employees for disliking their workplace atmosphere include:

- Poor relationship with manager, with no coaching or teaching provided, as well as no feedback on performance
- Dislike of the workforce politics
- No sense of teamwork, the attitude that "we're all in this together"
- No sense of trust or confidence that management is taking the company in the right direction
- A subtle form of bullying being practiced by  
Whether your dissatisfaction happens early in your job or the environment changes over time, it is important to recognize where your feelings of discomfort are stemming from.

For many workers they may find that mergers or change in management can bring about new environments that may not be enjoyable to work in any more. If your workplace atmosphere has become toxic it may be time for a change.



## SIGN #6: THOUGHTS OF WRONG PROFESSION

It is estimated that as many as 60% or more of all employees are actually hired into a position that is a poor fit for their talents. While this might sound baffling, it's not so hard to fathom when one considers some of the following points:

- Employees are often hired too quickly to fill positions of need
- Managers often feel that anyone can do a certain job well enough
- Managers sometimes think that anyone can be trained to do the job

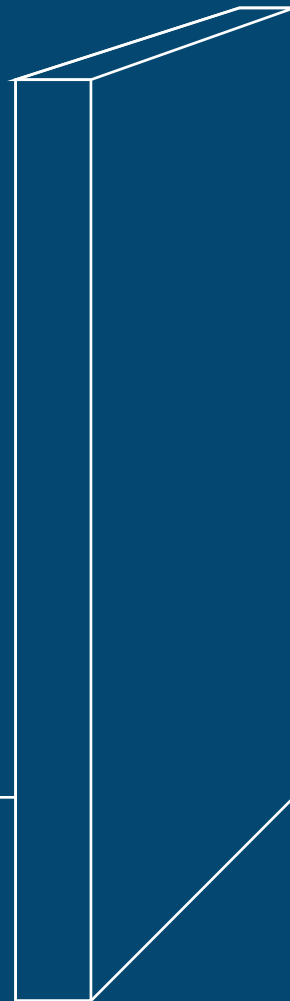
And perhaps most importantly:

- Management can have the mistaken notion that specific skillsets which qualify a person for a job are more important than the talents a person might have.

An employee can come to this realization when he/she begins to feel that talents are not being put to best use and never will be in this career and this job. Perhaps promises of opportunity to use talents in the future have never really materialized on the job, and the talents a person might be most proud of are not being used at all. There could be promised training for this profession that have never materialized and the employee feels trapped in a job that will never become more interesting than it is now.



If self-actualization cannot happen on this job, it's time to start considering a change of profession or at the very least a change of jobs.



## SIGN #7: YOU ARE SIMPLY BURNT OUT

This is probably the most compelling sign of all that a job change or career change should be considered. When the stresses or the sheer weight of hours and responsibilities begin to take a physical toll on an individual, every day on the job will seem like a mild form of torture. Far from being interested in the work, an employee might find it extremely difficult to even get up in the morning, prepare for work, and sleep-walk through another day.

The physical symptoms of burnout may include all of the following and more:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Teeth grinding
- Loss of interest in sex
- Dizziness

Each of these taken alone can be alarming enough to a person, but when several of these are manifested together, it can be a powerful indicator to a person that he/she is in the wrong profession, and that it is expressing itself in physical terms.



There are many other indicators of job burnout beside the physical ones, and in a survey conducted by CNN, employees cited some of these additional signs as warning signals that helped them come to the realization they were close to the breaking point at work:

- The friendship and camaraderie with workers that once existed has disappeared, and in some cases been replaced by a form of hostility
- Enthusiasm for work has been replaced by apathy or revulsion
- A strong desire to report later for work and leave earlier, coupled with lack of desire to work any extra hours or weekend days
- Co-workers give you a wide berth, and avoid you altogether in some cases, so as not to provoke an episode of irritability

The prevalence of burnout has increased in recent years, because fewer employees in the workplace

have been asked to do more, which means that additional workload has been placed on them, along with additional stresses. By the same token, fewer available jobs makes it more likely that employees experiencing one or more of the above symptoms will tolerate them indefinitely simply because they are afraid that once they leave the current job they will be unable to find another one.



## DEALING WITH THE WARNING SIGNS

Any of the warning signs discussed here may present themselves at any time in your working life (although statistically their appearance is much less likely in the early weeks and months of a new job). By the time you notice any of these attitudes or behaviors, chances are your work has already been suffering because of them, and you have not been as engaged at work as you once were. You are not alone - the most comprehensive, world-wide survey conducted annually shows clearly that the percentage of disengaged workers grows every year.

For employers this is very bad news, because it has also been demonstrated that this kind of disenchantment costs them billions of dollars in lost productivity. As a result, some of the more enlightened employers have sought to remedy the situation by training managers to relate more to employees, to provide opportunities for growth and engagement, and to make people feel like their contributions are vital to the success of the company.

Of course not all employees have the good fortune to be working in situations where enlightenment has dawned. The good news is that there is an increasing number of options available for the discontented employee. Many people have turned away from traditional employment in favor of other options more suitable to their life goals. Options such as job sharing, flex time, contract work and for many, even self-employment or business ownership is a much better fit.

If you find yourself plagued by any of these 7 warning signs we've discussed, it's probably time for you to sit down and go through a serious self-assessment. Maybe the pay is just too good to walk away from, or maybe there are no other jobs available in your area and you feel compelled to stay where you are. An honest assessment should tell you that there are reasons you simply cannot quit, in which case as painful as it might be, a re-commitment to the job is probably necessary. But if your warning signs have developed into full-blown fire alarms that trump the reasons for staying, it's time to consider career alternatives.

## ABOUT WSI

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