

Is This The Right Job For Me?

Sadly, the scenario is all too common: You thought you had finally landed the perfect new job. It was a step up with a great title and good pay and benefits. The commute wasn't bad, and everyone seemed friendly. But in just a few months, it was clear that the "perfect fit" was really no fit at all. Maybe your boss was a control freak or your co-workers were slackers. Maybe the work wasn't what you expected or you didn't have enough support.

It's an all-too-familiar occurrence for many in new jobs, but if it's happened to you, now is the time to make sure you've learned from that experience. Put some time into working out what went wrong and how you might avoid the pitfalls next time.

So, as you look for that new job, how can you avoid becoming a casualty of the bad-fit syndrome? Start by thinking about all the reasons for your last bad fit, develop a better sense for exactly what you want next time and learn enough about your next employer to make sure it doesn't happen again, career experts say.

Whatever you do, don't underestimate the importance of a good job fit—no matter how enticed you are to overlook it in favour of pay, benefits or some other attractive incentive.

Jack Welch (Of GE fame) and his wife Suzy have provided a series of 5 questions to ask yourself when weighing up competing opportunities. This is an edited version of that advice

Will the new job be filled with co-workers who share my sensibilities, or will I have to zone out or fake it to get along?

The key word here is "sensibilities," those values, behaviours, and personality traits that make you feel, well, like you're among kindred spirits. If you share sensibilities with your co-workers, you tend to work at the same pace, for instance, confront each other and tough issues with the same level of intensity (or lack thereof), and laugh the same amount at meetings, often at the same jokes. We're not saying people with shared sensibilities are all alike, but they pretty much all like one another.

Will the new job stretch my mind and build my skills, and otherwise take me out of my comfort zone, or am I entering at the top of my game?

Sure, it's appealing to join a company where you're the smartest person in the room—for a while. In time, though, most people start to feel the downside of being the resident expert, namely boredom and career stall. There is risk, of course, in taking a job where you can blow it. But beware of any job that promises to be easy. It will, ultimately, make you want to lie down—never a good career move!

Will the new job open or close doors for me should I ever leave?

Some companies are so respected for their training programs or hiring standards that they bestow a kind of golden halo on their employees—consulting firm McKinsey is a good example; others are Microsoft and Johnson & Johnson. Other jobs will keep your options open because they happen to be in thriving industries with promising economics. Just think twice about taking a job where the day after tomorrow seems tenuous.

Will the new job turn my crank, touch my soul, and give me meaning?

You should never take a job based just on where it might take you, unless it's a place you really want to go. We're talking about job content, what you do all day. If that actual work—be it selling a house, designing a medical device, creating an advertising campaign, or whatever—doesn't seem exciting and important to you, it doesn't make any difference if the company or industry is on fire. You won't be, ever. That's no life.

Who am I making happy by taking this job, and am I OK with that bargain?

This final question concerns an emotional dynamic we call ownership. Very few of us have the freedom to make decisions without considering the needs of other "constituents." We all know people who have passed up great jobs because of the impact on their families and people who have taken less-than-great jobs for the same reason. Such choices are part of life. But in making yours, we'd advise you to be clear on why you are taking any given job. And make peace with the trade-offs involved.