

How-To Know It's Time to Make a Career Change



If there's one thing that's constant in this day and age, it's change. And it's something that most people have a hard time with. The crazy thing is that it inevitably happens to all of us, yet we resist it. Our brains are hard-wired to tell us that there is safety found in predictability and routine. The unfortunate part is that if you refuse to change, you end up stagnating, get bored and your [productivity suffers](#). This is especially true in the workplace. The bottom line is, change can be good a thing if you're no longer happy in your current post.

It's Time for a Change if You're Bored to Tears or Overwhelmed

In order to be your most productive at work, you need to be challenged in the best ways possible. When you're bored, you aren't being challenged enough and conversely, if you find yourself overwhelmed, you either have too much on your plate or the job you're expected to do might not be something that fits your skillset. Pay close attention to symptoms of both stress and boredom. If they show themselves on a regular basis, it's probably time to look for something different.

If Your Mind Wonders, It's Time to Move On

Do you ever find yourself sitting at your desk staring off into space and thinking about what it would be like to be anywhere but where you are? This is an obvious sign that you're no longer happy with your current situation. If this goes on long enough, you might even start to complain to family, friends and even colleagues about what's missing. If this is the case, you'd best take decisive action, or someone else might make the choice for you.

No One Wants to Feel Underappreciated

When you started your current job, you were eager to share your thoughts and ideas with your colleagues and superiors. They even asked for your input on important decisions. But now you feel like everything you have to say falls on deaf ears. And what about that overtime you put in to meet a critical deadline? No one acknowledged your efforts or thanked you for all your hard work. It sucks when this happens. Whether you're simply not a good fit for the culture or you actually are being walked on, take it as a sign that there are greener pastures somewhere else.

If You're Constantly Being Told to Work on Your Weaknesses, Adios

Individual reviews are the norm in the workplace these days. We all dread them, but our hope is that they go well. That's not always the case unfortunately. If you're consistently being told that you need to strengthen this, that or other thing, it might not be worth beating yourself up or feeling inadequate just to make other people happy. Of course, constructive criticism can be useful, but if it's to the point where you feel like your efforts aren't good enough or you're just being berated, probably time to head for the door and find a better fit.

You're Unhappy

It's a simple fact that if you don't enjoy what you're doing, you probably don't do your best work. People that love their jobs derive happiness from the process of completing projects and accomplishing goals. Sure, they might be motivated by a promotion or a bonus, but they truly enjoy the journey of getting there. If you find the work you're currently doing to be laborious and dreadful, what the heck are you still doing there? It's time to consider some other options.

Have the Courage to Make a Change

Maybe you can identify with some of the symptoms above and know in your gut that it's time to do something else. That's only the first step though. Having the courage to act decisively and follow through is another story. Because of the way we are wired to think, most people are hesitant to take a drastic step because doing so involves uncertainty and going outside their comfort zone. That's ok, no one ever said change was easy. But you have to ask yourself the question, "can I really expect different results if I keep doing the same thing?"

As much as you might not like it, change is something you're going to have to deal with. Sometimes your hand is forced and you don't have a choice except to change. But what about being your own instigator for change? Scary? Sure. Dealing with unknown? Ditto. Just ask any successful person you know and they will tell you that at some point in their life, they took a risk that allowed them to become who they are today. In fact, they probably failed many times along the way. But in the end, failure isn't the opposite of success, it's part of it. So, if you notice any of the signs discussed above, take a leap and make a change. It doesn't even have to be a big step to start. Just be open to learning of other opportunities to see what your options might be. Things will start coming your way then and you can figure out the next step. Even if it doesn't work out right away, you'll set yourself on a trajectory to achieve the things you really want.

I am a [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter](#) that helps people make career changes in the Bay Area. If you are interested in making a change in the [Life Sciences industries](#), contact me, Jeff King at (541) 639-3501.

How-To Shift Your Mindset to Be Happier at Work



You've most certainly been there at some point. You become so involved in your job that it starts to affect the rest of your life. Before you know it, you look back at the past year and you haven't done anything but work. Your relationships have suffered, you no longer have any hobbies and your definition of happiness is defined by spread sheets and project goals. No one can blame you for being so

dedicated but continuing down this stressful path is a recipe for poor health, failed relationships and unhappiness. It's time to make a change.

This mindset begs the question, what makes you happy? Is it getting a raise or promotion? Is it crushing a project goal and winning that free trip to Hawaii? If your answer is yes to any of these questions, it's a sign that your deriving happiness from external factors instead of from within. If this is the mindset you're in, what happens when you don't get that promotion or you barely miss that goal? Do you become unmotivated and withdrawn? Does your productivity suffer? Does work become the last place you want to be?

In a culture that is so results oriented, it's easy to see how people can fall into the trap of deriving happiness from achievements and material things. Think about your neighbor with the Rolex watch, brand new sports car and membership at the fancy country club. Sure, there's nothing wrong with liking nice things, but are they truly what make someone happy?

If you find yourself in the mindset of measuring your worth and enjoyment in life from what you accomplish, you may want to consider making a change. It's pretty simple. Instead of focusing on the outcome, immerse yourself in the process of doing your job well.

A good place to start is with four simple questions.

Are you enjoying the problems you're solving at work?

What kinds of problem solving challenges you in a positive way?

How many goals have you achieved?

Did achieving goals feel make you more excited than the work it took to get the job done?

When you answer these questions honestly, you should gain a keen sense of whether you're actually enjoying the work you're doing or not. If such is not the case, it's a good idea to look at what is causing you to be disheartened. Is it the physical space in which you work? Is it an over-bearing boss that is quick to hand out criticism yet hardly ever praises a job well done? Do you feel stuck by the proverbial glass ceiling? Or is the work itself just something you simply don't enjoy?

Once you've identified some factors that are keeping you from being your most

productive and squelching your happiness, it's time to formulate a plan to improve the situation. The solution might be as simple as getting a standing desk, finding an office with more natural light or making time on your lunch hour to get some fresh air and light exercise.

If making some small environmental changes doesn't seem to be enough, you might want to consider some more significant changes like a different employer or maybe even a different career altogether. If you get to this point, the first thing you should do is identify what types of work will allow you to enjoy the process. Are you a people person that likes a lot of face time? Or are you sick of people and prefer to be left alone to do your job? Is working from home something you've always wanted to do but never had the chance? Or do you thrive in a fast-paced collaborative environment? Whatever you decide, make sure you do plenty of research and ask questions. After all, the reason you're leaving your current job is to be happier somewhere else.

It's a shame that so many people in the modern workforce trade days for dollars in jobs they don't particularly care for. They toil away for years on end always focused on the results of their work without enjoying the process of getting there. If you find yourself in this position, take a step back and look at the situation as objectively as you can. If you come to the conclusion that your happiness is derived solely from the results of your work, it might be time to make some changes, big or small, to increase your productivity, happiness and health.

Why You Should Hire People that Are Smarter than You



At some point in your career you've probably worked for a boss that wasn't your favorite person in the world. Whoever it was, they probably had an ego, talked down to employees and thought they were the smartest person in the room. Praise for a job well done was hard to come by but criticism was around every corner. Going to work every day was anything but enjoyable. Everyone complained about this person and staff morale suffered.

Since then, maybe you've moved up and now you're in a position where you not only manage people, but are in charge of hiring and firing as well. You've probably become skillful at hiring quality folks and your employees probably look up to you as a manager. But maybe you're still a little reluctant to hire people that are smarter or more adept at a certain part of the job than you. Whatever the reason might be, most hiring managers shy away from hiring these types of individuals and they shouldn't be. Below we discuss why hiring people that are smarter than you can be beneficial for your team and the entire company.

Check Your Ego at the Door

If you're going to find the best people for the job, you have no choice but to check your ego at the door. While it's understandable that you might be intimidated by candidates whose qualifications or experience exceed your own, you should only be concerned about finding the candidates that allow your company to grow. In all reality, the likelihood of someone you hire taking your job is pretty insignificant. Much to the contrary, you'll likely be lauded for making such a great hire.

You Get to Learn

Most [hiring managers](#) do a great job finding the candidates with the most experience and best qualifications, but few take the extra step and ask what they might be able to learn from a potential hire. When you find someone that has the capacity to contribute fresh ideas and new ways of thinking, they are certainly worth considering. Not only can these candidates be a great asset for your organization, they can be a tremendous resource for you to learn and grow as well.

Diversity Is Essential

While logic might dictate that hiring a team of people that perfectly execute their respective job descriptions is ideal, such thinking is limiting. Sure, all of your employees need to be able to fulfill their minimum responsibilities, but finding people that can go above and beyond is key. As an example, some individuals might crush it on the technical side, but they might lack the skills necessary to clearly write a procedure to keep systems running at their best. When you hire people with diversified skillsets, you allow them to stay in their lane and maximize their capabilities. Instead of having a group of individuals who perform a number of functions adequately, your goal should be to create a team of rock stars that all contribute to your company's success in their own way.

Reorganization Isn't Always a Bad Thing

The term reorganization is often dreaded in the workplace. We are all familiar with reorganizations that happen when companies are sold or merged and there's no doubting that cleaning house is something that happens on a regular basis. Reorganization within a company isn't always a bad thing though. When you come across a candidate that possesses the skills to make a real impact, it can often be beneficial and cost-efficient to create a position just for them. Doing so might mean that other members of your team have to take on new roles or be reassigned to other departments entirely. As long as it's properly communicated to everyone involved that they aren't being demoted and are still a valuable part of the team, most employees understand that sometimes change is necessary and can be a good thing.

There's no questioning the fact that depth of talent in the workforce today is unlike anything we've ever seen. Industries across the board are more competitive than they've ever been and if your company isn't constantly seeking ways to improve, they are falling behind. For these reasons, attracting and hiring the best talent available is paramount. Even though it can be difficult to hire people that are smarter than you, doing so can not only increase your bottom line, but give you a chance to learn and grow as well.

If you need help hiring a top employee in the [life sciences industry](#), contact me, Jeff King. I help business owner and employees in the [Bay Area](#).

Words to Include in Your Resume



We've all been there. Whether you're still employed and looking for another opportunity or switching careers entirely, updating and customizing your resume is the first step when beginning the [job hunt](#). You've probably downloaded a template from the Internet and filled it out in chronological order with places of employment, title, lists of your duties and a section at the end that highlights your skills and other interests. Maybe you've even spent hours going over it with a fine-tooth comb to sure it's squeaky clean. This is all good and well, but have you thought carefully about the words you choose? Sadly, the resumes most people submit to prospective employers use language that is either too basic and antiquated or too sophisticated and over the top. To help you out next time someone asks for resume, we've come up with a list of the most impactful words to include.

Numbers

No, we don't mean the actual word "numbers." We're talking about metrics like revenue you generated, money or time you saved, people you managed, etc. It doesn't mean much when you say that "you reduce the time required to X." Your employer is going to want to know by how much. A better way to put it would be "reduced processing time by 40%.", or "cleared out a backlog in 7 months" Bottom line, if there is anything you did in a previous job that can be expressed in numbers, it better be on your resume.

Modernized

Maybe a responsibility you had in your last job was to improve existing systems or come up with new ways of doing things entirely. While you might be tempted to write "updated policies and procedures manual" on your resume, simply exchanging the word "modernized" for "updated" is like a switch to the hiring manager. In their eyes, anyone can update a simple document, but to modernize or streamline it? That's powerful stuff.

Value

When companies are looking to hire someone for a position, they want a person who will add value to the organization. If you make it known on your resume that you're hard-working, that only goes so far. Sure, hard work is commendable, but it doesn't always achieve results. By using the words value or valuable, you make it known that you think about the work you do in terms of how it will improve the company at large.

Action Verbs

Action verbs are words like supervised, authorized, guided, managed, unified, initiated and designed, to name a few. These words show your ability to succeed. Moreover, they tell a hiring manager that you have been trusted with significant responsibility in the past. When choosing which action verbs to use, it might be a good idea to create an extensive list and carefully choose the ones that best communicate the message you're trying to get across.

Orchestrated

Anyone can say that they've led a team or organized a charity event. Sure, those are qualities that are favorable to an employer but if you use the word orchestrated instead, you communicate that you were the one in charge.

Spearheaded

The last place you want to appear modest is on your resume. Much like the word orchestrated, spearheaded emphasizes your level of involvement. For example, instead of saying you "created a new submission procedure," telling the employer that you "spearheaded the modernization of the submission process" is much more specific and conveys confidence in your abilities.

Committed

Simply put, employers want to see that you're committed to your work and to your employer from the beginning to the end. While it's great if you can use this word specifically, using any type of language that evokes loyalty and dedication places you ahead those that don't.

Results

While stating what you do and what you are responsible for is good, listing what you accomplished while in your role paints a much clearer picture of what you can do for your employer and the impact you can have.

Skimmable

Again, we aren't talking about using this word specifically. Your resume needs to be skimmable when someone reads it. Interviewers are going to look over anywhere from dozens to hundreds of resumes so you want yours to not only stand out from the rest, but be easy to read as well. Avoid excessively long sentences and exclude any information that isn't relevant. Remember, your resume is your personal highlight reel and nothing more.

Edit

We can't emphasize this enough. Your resume is your first impression so you need to make it count. If you have any grammar or spelling mistakes, you might as well kiss the job goodbye. Even though it might be tedious, take the time to edit your resume so it's perfect. When you think you're done, give it to a trusted friend to review.

Ask any interviewer and they will tell you that the number of bad resumes they receive is astounding. While some are just flat out awful because they're riddled with bad spelling and grammar, others just don't seem that exciting because the language is simple, vague and boring. Even if someone else is more qualified than you, the words you use in your resume can paint you in a favorable light and put you ahead of the competition. Next time you have to go polish it up, try using some of the words above to emphasize your accomplishments and abilities. Doing so just might be what it takes to get you the job.

As a [Regulatory and Quality Assurance Recruiter](#), I can help you refine your resume. I help employees find jobs that fit in the [pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries](#).

Communication Skills in the Modern Workplace



In a day and age where our communications include everything from Zooming, to texting, to talking on speaker phone while driving down the road, there is no doubting that communicating in the workplace and in our homes has become a lost skill. Less and less our communication involves sitting across from someone, making eye contact and having a human conversation. As a result, studies have shown that information quickly gets lost or is forgotten due to our lack of engagement in how we communicate with each other. This can prove disastrous in the workplace as missing even the smallest detail can end up derailing an entire project or task. For this reason, it's important to realize what [effective communication](#) in the information age looks like and some steps you can take to become more effective.

Active Listening

Even though much of our communication is electronic, you're still going to have to engage directly with your colleagues and employees from time to time. Think about the feeling you have when someone continuously interrupts you, has their nose in their phone, or doesn't seem at all interested in what you have to say. Active listeners avoid all these pitfalls and make it a point to let you know their listening through non-verbal behavior like nodding their head and making eye contact. They also reiterate key points using phrases and questions like "Just so I understand..." or "To make sure we are on the same page..."

Positive Body Language

Something that is easy to overlook but makes a huge difference when you're talking with someone is your body language. When you're talking with someone, do you tend to slouch back in your seat, cross your arms and avoid eye contact? This type of body language subconsciously tells the other person that you aren't interested in what they have to say. On the other hand, if you sit tall, open your body toward the person you're engaging and make regular eye contact, you come across as welcoming, non-threatening, and you let the other person know that you value what they are saying.

Show Respect

Although this one seems obvious, it's remarkable how many people don't convey respect when communicating with others. This is true for both live conversation and electronic communication. If you avoid talking down to others, take time to acknowledge their perspective and ask questions, you show them that they are worth your time and you genuinely want to hear what they have to say.

Email Etiquette

The vast majority of our communication today is via email or some other electronic platform. While it might seem less personal than talking face-to-face, email is designed for information to be exchanged concisely and quickly. Therefore, you should master the skill of breaking up your emails into bullet points or short paragraphs that are easy to read and understand. If you send long-winded messages that are full of unnecessary filler language and unneeded details, people are not only less likely to read your note, they may find themselves confused with so much information.

Your emails need to also convey respect and the utmost professionalism including a short subject line, the proper salutation and goodbye.

Be Open-Minded

This is especially true if you're new to a company. If you're going to be successful, this is the time to listen, learn, ask questions, and be open to new ways of doing things. You're going to make mistakes. The key is to be open to constructive feedback and learn from the process. If your employer sees that you're open-minded and willing to learn, you'll quickly be seen in a favorable light and your chances of moving up quickly become much greater.

Be Willing to Give Feedback

Even if you're the type of person that prefers to put your head down and go, you're going to be asked to give feedback at some point during your career. Whether it's regarding an upcoming project or re-writing the entire policies and

procedures manual, being able to give valuable feedback is something many people struggle with. If you're able to provide constructive feedback in a professional manner, you will likely play an integral role in improving your team or organization.

Communication is vital to the success of any organization. Without it, teams fail to work cohesively, production suffers and ideas aren't shared. In short, you have a bunch of individuals doing their own job under the same roof. The way we communicate has changed in the modern workplace. Gone are the days of three martini lunches and sales meetings where everyone meets under one roof. With that being said, it's still important to remember that how you listen, respond and talk with others can be a make or break difference in your success as an individual and for the company.

If you make it a habit to implement some of the practices above, you'll quickly become a more effective and respected member of your organization and the your workplace will be much happier as a result.

If you need more information, contact me, Jeff King. I am a [Life Sciences recruiter](#), working with the [pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries](#).

How-To Tell When an Employee Is About to Leave



Employees at every level are the backbone of any successful company or organization. Without quality people on your team productivity suffers, profits go down and the morale of everyone involved can sink to dangerously low levels. In a day and age where everyone is always on the lookout for a better opportunity and loyalty isn't what it used to be, employee turnover is a real concern. Not only are your best employees a tremendous asset, losing them and onboarding someone new can be prohibitively expensive. That's why now more than ever it's important to recognize the signs when a valuable employee is about leave.

Less Active in Meetings

Employees that are engaged are quick to share ideas and ask questions. If you notice that someone continuously shows up to meetings just to go through the mandatory motions, it might be a sign that they are less engaged and on their way out. Even if there is just something going on at home or with a family member, you should take note of this withdrawn behavior and at the very least ask if there is anything you can do to help.

Increased Absences

When a particular employee first started maybe they never called in sick or took extra time off. Now, all of sudden they either consistently show up late and leave early or simply don't show up at all. This is a red flag that you need to address right away as it's a clear sign that something is going on you aren't aware of.

No Longer Willing to Commit to Long-Term Projects

If you notice an employee is no longer willing to commit to long-term goals or assignments, it's likely a sign that they want to finish what work they have left and jump ship. It might even be the case that these types of assignments interfere with the start date of a new job. In this case, there might not be much you can do.

Starts Taking More Personal Calls

If you notice someone frequently excusing themselves from meetings or stepping into the hall to take personal calls something is definitely off. They could be dealing with a family emergency or talking with a prospective employer. While you can't make any assumptions, it's a good idea to check in with this person to make sure everything is alright.

Didn't Receive the Raise or Promotion They Were Expecting

When someone expects to move up in a company and it doesn't happen, it's only natural for them to become less enthused with the work they do day in and day out. At this point, there's a high likelihood that they might begin looking for employment elsewhere. If you value this employee enough to keep them around, you'll probably have to provide some incentive for them to stay.

Major Life Event

Major life events like getting married, a sick family member, giving birth or a spouse finding a new job can change someone's reality in a heartbeat. When these sorts of events happen, they may change how an individual feels about their current employment situation. In some cases, there might be not much you can do but if the person is a critical asset you might want to make them an offer they can't refuse. It's up to you to make that call.

Friends Are Leaving

If someone has been at a company for any length of time, they have likely bonded with their colleagues and become friends. Not only do these people enjoy working together, they might even share hobbies outside of the office. If someone experiences a mass exodus of their friends leaving, they might be more inclined to leave too. In some cases, if an employee leaves, they may even recruit their colleagues to follow suit.

Difficult Relationships With Other Employees

Numerous studies have proven that happiness is more important in the workplace than salary. A major key to happiness is an individual's relationship with others. If friction exists between even just two employees, especially employees that work closely together, it may prove too much for them to take and they might quit. In order to prevent this from happening it's a good idea to regularly check in with everyone on your team to make sure everything is on the up-and-up.

You Just Know

As someone in a position of [leadership](#), you've had to develop the skills of reading people and trusting your intuition. From time to time you might get the sneaking suspicion that all is not well with a certain employee. The majority of the time you're probably right. When this happens, you're best to address the situation up front instead of waiting and continuing to wonder. By being proactive you place yourself in a position to address whatever the problem may be and your chances of retaining the employee are much greater.

It's unfortunate that days of loyal relationships between employees and the organizations they work for have largely diminished, but such is the reality in which we live. While this is a two-way street, employees are always going to look out for themselves first and foremost. If you want to lessen the amount of turnover you experience and save yourself the headache and cost of constantly having to hire new people, take note of some of the signs above. By doing so, you'll quickly find that your employees see you in a favorable light and will have much less of an incentive to look for work elsewhere.

If you are at the point of needing to hire a new employee or looking for a new job, contact me, Jeff King, for [recruiting in the Bay Area](#). I work with the [pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries](#).

Traits of Indispensable Employees



If you've ever managed a team or overseen a department you've surely noticed people in your organization that stand out. Sometimes it's for the wrong reasons but other times it's because these individuals set themselves apart in ways that others don't. These people go above and beyond the call of duty, move up faster than their colleagues, have the best interests of the company in mind and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of the organization and everyone around them. In short, you would do anything keep these people around.

So what traits do these folks have that sets them apart?

Want for Continuous Improvement

One trait that all great employees have in common is a will to get better at what they do. While most employees are satisfied to remain in their roles and simply do what they are asked, the superstars are always finding ways to improve their performance. What these people understand that others don't is that in order to stay on top, they constantly have to keep learning and getting better. Whether that means continuing education or an insatiable desire to move up quickly, these people are any organization's most valuable asset.

Personal Growth

Not only do [exceptional employees](#) do a great job in the workplace, it's evident that they're obsessed with personal growth. These individuals have curious minds. In the evenings and on the weekends, you'll find them reading books about business, science, history or philosophy. They're always seeking new ideas and

perspectives that shape who they are as people. In the workplace, you'll often hear them sharing fresh ideas or new perspectives with those around them. Simply put, these people have a zest for life and new experiences and that translates to workplace as well.

Discipline

It's no secret that discipline leads to success. That doesn't pertain to only the workplace though. Employees that stand out have their lives in order. You won't find them out partying on weeknights, eating unhealthy foods or wiling away in the EZ Boy for hours on end when the day is done. It's evident that the best and brightest see their work as part of a larger picture that is their life and they have the discipline to maintain a healthy balance in everything they do. They know what's best for them, their co-workers and the organization and would never do anything to compromise what's important.

Self-Deprivation

No one enjoys doing things they don't want to do. Indispensable employees however, understand that doing things they don't enjoy is a fact of life and necessary at times. They are tough and courageous. In the workplace, they aren't afraid to have difficult conversations if it means bettering the organization or those around them. They're also the ones willing to take on tasks that no one else wants to perform because they know the job has to be done.

Away from work these people are experts at saying no. When everyone else chooses to stay out late or blow off steam, you'll find these people doing things that relax them and help them get recharged because they know they have to be at their best the next day.

Emotional Stability

Everyone has ups and downs both at and away from the workplace. How individuals handle the constant ebb of highs and lows says a lot about who they are as employees and people. When most employees can't help but bicker, gossip and backstab, the best of the best know that this behavior is poisonous. These people celebrate successes and acknowledge low points but remain even keel and

are low-maintenance. They know they have a job to do and aren't going to let anything distract them from achieving the results they want.

Make Others Better

While your best employees are very much focused on their own development and improvement, they recognize the value in making those around them better as well. If they learn a new skill or come up with a more efficient way of getting things done, they readily and enthusiastically share it with everyone involved. The best employees have a fundamental understanding that if individuals in the organization improve, the entire organization becomes better as a result.

Indispensable employees are few and far between. Sometimes they're hard to notice because they aren't the attention-grabbing power-hungry type. Often times they fly under the radar because they are so laser-focused on improving themselves and those around them. It's important to recognize these folks though because they are your greatest asset. Failing to do so could result in a catastrophic loss for your team, department or company.

If you are struggling to put together a strong team, contact me, Jeff King. I am a [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter in the Bay Area](#). I provide [hiring services for biotech, pharmaceutical, and medical device industries](#).

Questions to Ask Candidate's References



Never before has hiring the right person for your organization been so important. With such an emphasis on specialized skill sets and company culture, finding the perfect candidate is vital to the success of the entire company. While knowing what questions to ask and how to gauge responses during an interview is a necessary skill, there are other things you need to take into consideration as well. One facet that often goes overlooked is thoroughly vetting a candidate through their references. Sure, a person's references are most likely going to speak highly of them but if you ask the right questions, you'll glean some useful insight that you might have otherwise missed.

What is Your Relationship to the Candidate?

If you ask this question at the outset of the conversation with a reference you gain context to process the information that is shared. Did the reference oversee the candidate in their previous job? If so, their insight might be especially valuable. Is the reference a co-worker that shared the same responsibilities? In this case, the information you get might be a little biased one way or another.

Can You Verify A Candidate's Job Title and Dates of Employment?

While this question seems like a no-brainer, it's amazing how many hiring managers fail to ask it. Even this rudimentary information can tell you a lot about a candidate. Were they in the same position with a company for a long time or do they show a history of never being in one spot for very long? Based on their job title, what were their responsibilities? Do these responsibilities align with what they would be doing in their new role with you?

Can You Tell Me About their Job Performance?

It's easy for anyone applying for a job to beef up their resume with items like inflated sales numbers or claiming responsibility for managing a huge budget and large number of people. The only way to make sure the information on someone's

resume is accurate is to ask. If a reference is able to verify the information, great! On the other hand, if there are gaps in the information, it's a sure sign you need to ask some tougher questions to get clarification.

What Are the Candidate's Strengths and Weaknesses?

This question is worth its weight in gold. When you're considering hiring someone, you're going to want to know how they'll fit in culturally and if they have the skills needed to excel. Equally important however, is having an idea of what their weaknesses are. Weaknesses aren't a bad thing, everyone has them, but knowing what someone's shortcomings are will allow you to further deduce if they are a good fit. There's no more reliable source for this information than a previous employer who knows the candidate well, so make sure you don't let this question fall through the cracks.

What Was it Like to Work With the Candidate?

When you ask a reference what it was like to spend a day working with the candidate you'll gain some critical insight into who they are as a person. Were they jovial and fun-loving? Or were they task-oriented preferring to keep to themselves? Did they get along well with others and demonstrate a willingness to work as a team? Or were they primarily concerned with fulfilling their own duties? How well did this person take direction? Were they open to new ideas and ways of doing things?

Why Did the Candidate Leave Their Previous Job?

While this question can reveal red flags like someone being let go from a previous job, it also gives you an idea of how long they might stay with your company should you end up hiring them. Does this person have a tendency to jump ship thinking the grass is always greener? Or have they demonstrated loyalty in their previous posts?

Would You Hire This Candidate Again, and Why or Why Not?

If you only have time to ask one question, this should be it. A reference's response to this single question can sum up everything that might be revealed in a lengthier conversation. If the reference says they would hire the individual back in a heartbeat, you've probably got a quality candidate. However, if they say no or seem unsure, you might want to do a little digging.

Hiring the wrong person for the job can be costly. A 2017 survey conducted by Career Builder found that companies lost an average of \$14,900 for each bad hire they made. While there is no way to tell for certain how a candidate will perform until they're hired, consistently hiring the wrong people can be devastating for the bottom line. If you think it's difficult to manage with the position open, just imagine how difficult it will be to manage a bad hire.

If you ask the right questions in the interview and take the extra step to ask references some poignant questions, you'll arm yourself with all the information necessary to choose the right person for the job.

As a [Regulatory and Quality recruiter](#), I can help create a list of essential questions to send to candidate's references. I help life sciences employers in the [biotech, medical, and pharmaceutical industries in the Bay Area](#). Contact me, Jeff King, at jking@rqfocus.com or (541) 639-3501.

How to Deal with Difficult Employees



If you're in a position where you manage an entire department or even just a small team you've certainly had to deal with a bad egg or two. Whether the individual wasn't a good fit with the company culture, chronically showed up late or had problems with authority, you had to deal with them somehow. Though it's never a fun experience, it's a reality that every manager is going to have to deal with at some point.

Sadly, many managers let these people hold them captive because they are afraid to take action of any kind to either correct a behavior or dismiss the employee if that is what is necessary. This hesitation can have negative consequences for both you and the people you manage. In order to keep that from happening we've laid out the best ways to deal with difficult employees below.

Effective Feedback

Quality feedback, even if it is critical, is essential for handling employees that aren't performing up to standard. Where most managers spend weeks, months and even years complaining about employees and nothing else, good managers are willing to have difficult conversations and provide honest feedback if there are issues that need to be addressed.

How you go about providing this feedback is what makes all the difference though. Screaming, yelling and personal attacks only serve to add fuel to the fire and usually put the subject employee on the defensive. If you find yourself in a position where you're left with no choice but to have a difficult conversation with an employee, make sure you do so in a way that doesn't put them on the defensive and gives specific information on how they can improve.

Document Everything

If you're faced with having to reprimand an employee or even let them go, you're going to need documentation of behavior that provides grounds for disciplinary action. In addition to writing down detailed accounts of incidents that happened, you'll need specific dates, times and names of people that were witness to the behavior as well. While you might feel like you're being too negative about an employee by writing everything down, you have to realize it's the prudent thing to do.

Listen

If you're frustrated with someone you manage it's easy to lose sight of what's really going on. You might find yourself blinded by irritation, the seemingly hopeless state of the situation and the thoughts you already have in your head about the person.

When the time comes to sit down with this employee it's vitally important to be in a space where you're able to see things through their eyes. The reality is that your only chance of finding a solution is having a clear understanding of situation in its totality; that includes the perspective of the employee.

When you actively listen to someone, you'll often be surprised about what you can learn. Maybe the employee is having problems outside the office and you can recommend a place to go get help. Maybe you were unaware of some legitimate concerns they have that need to be addressed. Perhaps all this employee needed was just a chance to be heard and voice their opinion.

Be Clear and Consistent

You should create a plan of action for the employee to correct their issues and also ask for their input on what they are willing to do to fix it. This will get better cooperation from the employee if they have a say in the plan. When you set expectations make sure they are ones you can stick to as well. If you expect someone to perform a certain task by a certain time you have to hold them to it. If you hold employees to expectations sometimes and other times you let things slide, you send mixed signals and the results can be devastating for your team or

organization.

Don't Be Afraid to Set Consequences

If you've worked through the proper channels of trying to be proactive and nothing seems to have changed, it might be time to make some consequences known. The conversation might be something like the following.

Manager: "We identified (issue) a while back and but we haven't seen much improvement. I still believe you can turn this around, but we are at a point that if things aren't better by (specific date) than we won't have a choice but to (write you up, cut your hours, let you go, etc.)."

When people are faced with tangible consequences that could affect them negatively it's often the motivation they need to change. If not, as a manager you can rest assured you gave this person a fair chance.

Stay Professional

When you're frustrated with an employee it's human nature to think negatively of them. You're going to be tempted to gossip or vent to your colleagues but that's the worst thing you can do. When you disrespect people behind their back you foster an environment of distrust and pollute other peoples' perception of the troubling employee. Simply put, avoid this type of behavior at all costs.

Be Courageous

As a manager, you've assumed the responsibility of making tough decisions. There's nothing fun about having to fire someone but sometimes you're left with no other option. When you get to this point, don't put it off, don't make someone else do it and make sure you do it as professionally you can. Even though you're sure to feel bad, you have to remember you're doing the right thing and your team or organization will be better off.

No one is going to deny that dealing with difficult employees isn't any fun. As a manager though, this is part of your job. How you handle these tough situations is what makes all the difference. If you do nothing and continue let problems

persist, you'll be causing yourself undue stress and you risk sabotaging your teams' morale and productivity too. You may even lose your best employees if the problem is allowed to persist. Instead, if you employ some of the strategies listed above, you'll set yourself up to handle these situations proactively and professionally in a way that is best for everyone involved.

Why You Need to Think Outside the Box



Maybe you've been in your current job for a number of years, or you've been on a long-term project. That flare and excitement you had when you started has slowly dissipated. You're still engaged and the work you do has value, but for some reason you've lost the motivation to go the extra mile and you don't feel challenged. Maybe the days, weeks and months all seem to run together and you feel like a hamster on a wheel. No one can fault you for your seeming indifferent in the workplace.

If this sounds familiar the simple question you have to ask yourself is what can do differently to get yourself out of the rut?

Even though the answer might not be obvious, a good place to start is by thinking outside the box. Clearly repeating the same habits and routines isn't working so it's time to do something different. So what exactly does thinking outside the box mean? Quite simply that you're open to some alternative solutions to reach a

desired outcome. Below we discuss some different ways to gain fresh insight and why doing so can be beneficial to your career.

Don't Be Afraid to Go Against the Grain

If humans always stuck to the regimen of how things are “supposed” to be done, the word innovation wouldn't exist. History has proven time and again that our greatest breakthroughs in technology, thought and social change were sparked from people who questioned the status quo. Even more, some of the influential business people of our time are individuals that everyone thought was crazy.

If you find yourself feeling stuck, don't be afraid to take a leap of faith and do something completely different. If that means going back to school and starting an entirely different career, then great. If it means taking a few months off entirely, then go for it. Only you can truly decide what course of action is best for you. The important thing to remember is that while whatever you decide to do might seem scary, you'll be stronger and better off for it in the end.

Broader Perspective

It's easy to exist in a bubble. It's safe there and where you feel most comfortable. The problem with staying in a bubble however, is that you lose out on different perspectives and fresh ideas. If you're willing to expose yourself to alternative ideas and ways of thinking, you gain tremendous insight and just might find a solution to whatever the problem is from a place you least expected.

When you make a conscious effort to welcome new ideas and consider different possibilities, you'll likely be pleasantly surprised by how quickly your situation improves.

Environment is Everything

Take a moment and think about the environment you work in. Are you stuck in a cubicle cut off from the world? Or does your space encourage creativity and collaboration? When you're at work are you able to focus on the task at hand yet still have the freedom to share your ideas and explore new ways of doing things?

These are all important questions to ask when considering how the physical space around you affects your productivity. If you take the time to honestly evaluate where you work, you might just find that a simple change of scenery is all you need to get back on track.

Be Willing to Adapt

The saying that the only constant in the world is change is especially true when it comes to your career. As technology advances, training becomes better and new ideas emerge that you're going to have to adapt to. Even when you don't agree with the direction something is headed, your ability to embrace change and learn makes a huge difference in determining your success. Even though it might be easy to just keep going about your business as you always have, if you're willing to learn and ask questions you'll set yourself apart from the competition.

You're Going to Stand Out

Anybody can be just another face in the crowd that follows directions. Again, there is virtually no risk involved here and it's a comfortable place to be. However, if you're willing to ask difficult questions, share your ideas and aren't afraid of failure, you position yourself as someone that is capable of finding solutions to complex problems and that alone is invaluable.

Thinking outside the box can mean different things to different people. While it's important to make sure your decisions are grounded in an element of reason and logic, being afraid of what might happen if you take a chance is a crippling thought that is only going to hold you back. If you feel like you're not where you want to be or the current way of doing things isn't working, make an effort to look at your situation through a different lens. If you keep an open mind, welcome new ideas and are willing to adapt, you're well on your way becoming happier and [more productive](#).

Contact Jeff King, [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter](#), for more information work happiness. He can find qualified individuals jobs in [pharmaceuticals, biotech, or the medical device industry](#).