

**Know  
When  
to**

**GO**

**How to tell if it's  
time to look for  
another job**

**by Patricia Majher**

How do you know when “the magic is gone” from your job? For restaurant manager Brad Chartier, the first sign was dreading the 45-minute commute to work. “That drive really started to get to me,” he says.

Then he began to feel fatigued: “I was on my feet and on the go all the time. I was worried that I might be getting too old for the work.”

The kicker, though, was a cold that wouldn't go away. “I'd have one a month during the winter, and that really took its toll,” he admits.

According to career counselor Melanie Fuscaldo, Chartier experienced some of the classic signs of job burnout. “First, there's a lack of joy or delight at the prospect of going to work. People find it difficult to get out of bed, to get themselves going in the morning.” And then, when you do get to work, she notes, your attitude doesn't usually improve: “Feelings of sadness, anxiety or anger can really color your day.

“People in the midst of a job crisis may also begin to develop health problems, such as headaches, stomachaches or sleeplessness,” Fuscaldo continues, adding that your stress levels can make you susceptible to infectious diseases, like Chartier's recurring cold.

If you find yourself experiencing any of these emotional or physical symptoms, what can you do? Your first step should probably be to talk to somebody outside your organization who can give you confidential, impartial advice. One option is an Employee Assistance Program professional, if you have that benefit. Another is a



career counselor like Fuscaldo. “Everybody is different and moves at his or her own pace,” Fuscaldo notes, “but we can usually make a good deal of progress in four to eight sessions.”

A visit to a career counselor should include some assessment of who you are—in terms of interests, skills, and values—and what career fields might match up with your results. “I use the standard tools, such as the government's ‘Occupational Outlook Handbook’ to help people explore career possibilities,” says Fuscaldo, “but



I also try to understand what their passions are.” Counselors may also offer such services as resume and/or portfolio reviews or practice interviewing to help you feel at ease, if job hunting is in your future.

Fuscaldo emphasizes that leaving your job is not the only outcome of career counseling. “Sometimes, my clients come to the realization that they just need to make a shift in their attitudes and the job will become more enjoyable. Or they decide to take on a different set of responsibilities, or even move to a different department.”

Brad Chartier tried the latter option, requesting a transfer to another store in his restaurant’s chain. When that transfer didn’t materialize within a reasonable time, though, he decided it was time to leave the business altogether.

A want ad for a position in banking caught his eye and propelled him into a new career field that he embraces with no regrets. “No more commuting and no more colds,” says Chartier. “It was worth making the change.”

### **Five questions to ask before you make a move**

Bob Roener, author of a book called “Working Wounded” and creator of a Web site of the same name, acknowledges that emotional and physical problems are a sure sign of the need to change jobs. He also suggests you ask yourself the following five questions before you decide to move on:

- 1** Do you have a good boss? Roener says he’s yet to find a job that paid enough to compensate for a lousy manager.
- 2** Is there adequate room for advancement? It may not be reasonable to expect a promotion every six months, but Roener thinks after five years you should be moving on up.
- 3** Are you still learning new things? Do you have opportunities for professional development? If not, it might be time to move on.
- 4** Is there an element of fun in your job? We could all use a laugh sometimes. Or a break. Or, simply, a light-hearted attitude. If the most minor celebrations are discouraged in your workplace, you might want to think twice about staying.
- 5** And, finally, is this the best opportunity for you at this time? Roener’s a big proponent of always being on the lookout for your next job. Keep your resume updated, he advises, and network constantly, because you never know when a better job might come your way.

“As far as the downturn goes—even amidst the layoffs—companies are hiring good people when they’re right for the job,” Roener notes. “So sniff around. Bark loud enough in the right places and you ought to be able to line up a new job before you bite the bullet and quit this one.”