Buyer's remorse strikes the job market, too

by Michael_Kinsman

Why does anyone find it weird that after 10 months in her new job as CBS anchor Katie Couric publicly reveals she's had doubts about taking it?

Most people expected it a lot sooner. Maybe not in a major magazine piece, but certainly we anticipated that she would be expressing those doubts in private to her closest confidants.

That's the way the world works.

People take jobs every day and then regret them the first days or weeks on the job. Sometimes, it's a justified concern, but more often it is just a basic reaction to change.

People simply don't like change. We often want to retreat to something warm and cozy - like that job we just left after eight years.

Outplacement counselor John Challenger estimates that 25 percent of people who take new jobs regret it within the first year.

Does that mean one in four people make bad decisions when they change jobs?

No, it just means that these people are sensitive to their work environments and have asked themselves questions they probably should when assuming a new position.

"It's natural to have second thoughts in the first month or two of any new job," Challenger says. "However, if the feelings of regret persist after six months, it is time to sit down with your supervisor and discuss the situation.

"This would also be a good time to do some in-depth soul-searching about what matters most to you in a job and then list where your current job succeeds and fails at meeting your expectations."

Often, people let the little things in a new job affect them more than usual because they are particularly sensitive to them at that time.

More often, most problems are trivial and workers have made the right decision to move on.

Here are some questions to ponder if you have just changed jobs:

- Is the position different from what you thought?

- Do you get along with your supervisor?

- Do you like the work environment and co-workers?

- Is your new employer happy with you?

If you really think you have a problem with your new position, maybe it's best to leave. But returning to your old job might not be the answer. There is, after all, a reason why you left that job.

For those who truly have made a mistake, the impact can be scary.

Many years ago, a co-worker of mine took a job in another city. He knew within days that he had made a bad decision. By the second week he was in contact with his former employer, negotiating to return to his old job.

He did, and I'm happy to report he still has that job 20 years later.

"I found out immediately that my new boss had not accurately depicted the work environment," he says. "Instead of 40 hours a week, they were expecting at least 60 from me. It just wasn't what I wanted to do and it wasn't right that they hadn't shared that before. That bothered me most."

But just because you feel unsettled in a new job doesn't mean you have to go running from the exit. You probably felt that very same way on the first day of kindergarten or the first week of college. It's the same thing.

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