



Weighing the Pros and Cons Before Saying Yes

By Barbara Poole

Don't jump blindly into any old job or company without first asking questions and getting the kind of information that will help you make a better decision.



When Celeste lost her job of seven years due to a lay off, she was panic-stricken. The thought of looking for a new company, new position, and new team was overwhelming and as a single mother of two, the fear of being without a regular source of income created unbearable stress.

Because of her situation Celeste felt pressure to accept the first job offer that came along even though the salary was less than she had been earning for the same level of responsibility. Although she was not completely dissatisfied, she questioned her decision and wondered if she should have taken more time.

There are a lot of factors that you should take into consideration before deciding about a company and position. It is perfectly acceptable to ask for time – anywhere from a day to a week – to think the offer over, discuss it with loved ones, and make sure it is the right move.

Here are the five areas that you need to consider before accepting a new position.

The Company

Find out more about the organization that you are considering working for by asking direct questions of the recruiter. Requesting an annual report or other company literature is a good place to start along with visiting their website.

For publicly traded organizations check out Hoovers Online the Fortune 500, or just Google the company name to find out what's in the news.

Remember to also investigate the work environment. Come early and talk to the receptionist. Sit in the waiting area and note those that come and go. What are they wearing? How do

they interact with each other? Find out if you can get a tour and observe the actual working conditions and meet others you will be working with. Check out the décor. Are there family pictures and personal items?

The Position

No matter how much money they offer or how great they make the company sound, at the end of the day the most important thing is to enjoy what you are doing.

Titles mean nothing if the work is not to your liking. Get a written job description and ask specific questions about the responsibilities and the company's and supervisor's expectations of you.

Be sure to find out why the person before you left. Did they quit and why? Were they fired? Is this a newly created position? This information will tell you a lot about what you might expect.

The Team

It is important to know who you are going to work along side. Coworkers and supervisors are a big part of the environment and can make a lousy work day better or vice versa.

Find out the size of the team and who your regular internal customers will be. See if there is an opportunity to meet some of the other team players or interview with members of other departments.

The Compensation Package

While money can't buy happiness, it can pay the bills. It is important to not short-change yourself by underestimating your worth or accept a position based on salary alone. There are several factors to consider when negotiating compensation.



HR Career Feature

First, do research so that you know the going rate for your position and industry. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics offers an Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>) as well as salary data (<http://www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm>) based on area and occupation.

Next, compare what you were earning with what this new position offers. Understand that the salary levels may or may not be comparable based on a variety of things including company size, industry and job responsibilities (see *Understanding the Process of How Companies Establish Salary Levels* for more information).

Finally, consider the benefits package, which will vary greatly from company to company. If there is no room to negotiate on salary, possibly due to budget and internal equity constraints, then negotiate for other perks such as a signing bonus, additional vacation time, or even stock options.

The Future

Considering the future relates not only to learning new things and acquiring new skills that ultimately lead to promotion, but has to do with the future of the company. Where is it going? Joining a start-up on an upward growth cycle can be exciting, but it can also be risky.

Remember as much as you would like to feel that you are making the right choice, analysis can only get you so far. Some of the decision is just going to have to be instinct and what your gut tells you.

About the Author

Barbara created Employaid after 25 years of working with major corporations to improve company and individual performance. She started her career as a human resources director in a national specialty store chain and continued up through the ranks in senior human resources positions for Fortune 1000 retail companies. A career move to management and training consulting followed, spanning Senior Consultant, and Director of Business Development for MOHR Development, an international training consultancy, and finally, National Practice Director, Revenue Improvement at Arthur Andersen Business Consulting. These experiences tied to the work of Barbara's own Firm, Poole Resources Inc., dedicated to providing sales, marketing and organizational solutions for growing top line revenue in Fortune 1000 companies. Clients included May Department Stores, LensCrafters, Walt Disney Attractions Merchandising, American Tourister, The Estee Lauder Companies, Warnaco, Compaq (HP), Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins Barbara has presented at trade group conferences including the National Retail Federation, American Society for Training and Development, and the International Council of Shopping Centers. She has developed a number of management tools for corporations including VirtualCoach™, and RPM™ a process for building market share through a focus on the demand chain. After completing a major in Sociology at Hofstra University, Barbara graduated from, and was an Adjunct Instructor in the Hofstra-Cornell NYS School of Industrial and Relations Labor-Management Studies program. She has been quoted in national and trade publications. Barbara is a member of the National Association of Women Business Owners, the Institute of Management Consultants and the Habitat for Humanity Partners Council.

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