

The toughest career decision of all: get out or get going

By Cathy Goodwin

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Career Freedom: The New Career Strategy <http://www.movinglady.com>

Many of us are influenced by the sports ethic: Never give up! When a basketball team is down by 20 with 30 seconds on the clock, the players never stop working. The spectators might be filing out, and the winning team might bring in the bench players, but the game goes on.

If your game is a business or a job, the whistle won't blow to end the game. If you keep going and win, you may gain a lifelong prize. If you keep throwing good money and energy into a losing cause, the whistle can blow for unemployment or bankruptcy.

"Should I keep going?" is one of the most difficult questions for anyone, including career counselors and coaches. There is no single answer, but here are some ways to focus the question.

1. How did you get into the situation? Were you encouraged by a spouse, parent, friend or coach? You have a better chance of fulfilling your own dream than someone else's.
2. Is there a little voice in your head that whispers, "Maybe you should be doing X instead?" Pay attention, especially if you can put a name on "X", and if you've been playing this game awhile. Most people yearn for what's familiar when they start a new venture, but if the feeling persists, don't ignore it.
3. Does your new venture refuse to go away? If you try to leave your job, do you find yourself getting caught up in a new project or rewarded with a new promotion?
One speaker, accepting a local "Entrepreneur of the Year" award, told the audience, "I hated this business. I tried to sell it but nobody would buy me out. I was forced to fix it up and, in the process, found success."
4. What is the universe telling you?
Are you getting customers?
Is your progress considerably faster or slower than your peers and competitors?
Has anything clicked into place for you, seemingly without effort?
Pay attention to actions and symbols. Ignore direct commentary, especially unsolicited advice.
Consultants and coaches may be influenced by whether they get paid to keep you going.
5. What is your own historical trend?
Do you tend to give up too easily or hang on too long? If you have a life-long trend, get objective advice before you jump either way.

6. Are you still having fun? A loss of enthusiasm can be temporary, especially if you're fatigued or just experienced a setback. Long-term discouragement will create negative energy and ultimately destroy your business.

7. Must your decision be either-or? Can you continue a business part-time with a manager? Can you look for a new job but also start a business? Multi-tasking can fragment energies but also offer unparalleled opportunities.

Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D. author, career coach, speaker

Career Freedom: Career Strategy of the Century

Nine Magic Keys to Career Freedom

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