

Explore the TechTarget Network at SearchTechTarget.com.

[Activate your FREE membership today](#) | [Log-in](#)



Search this site and the Web

Powered by

[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [TOPICS](#) [ASK THE EXPERTS](#) [TIPS](#) [DISCUSSIONS](#) [WEBCASTS](#) [SITE MAP](#)



Need Windows management tools? [Download NetIQ & Microsoft's FREE Manageability eBook!](#)

[Home](#) > [Tips](#) > [IT Career Expert](#) > Making due with...

[EMAIL THIS PAGE TO A FRIEND](#)

Windows Manageability Tips & Newsletters:

[TIPS & NEWSLETTERS](#) [TOPICS](#) [SUBMIT A TIP](#) [HALL OF FAME](#)

Search for: in Full TargetSearch with Google

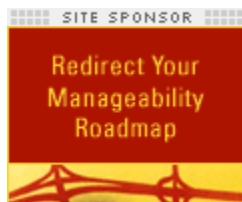
IT CAREER EXPERT

Making due with your less-than-perfect job

Eric Berkman

23 Apr 2003

Rating: --- (out of 5)



Gone are the days when one could react to a less-than-ideal work environment by quoting David Allen Coe's lyrics: "Take this job and shove it. I ain't working here no more." Seems like the new motto should be taken from a greeting card instead: If life gives you lemons, make lemonade. If your job situation isn't what you'd hoped it would be, you're responsible for changing it into something better for yourself.

With the slow economy, the high unemployment rate and an overall tough job market, the best way to deal with an undesirable job is to make the best of what you've got. Could it be as simple as a change of attitude? Yes and no.

Growing pains

If you're not feeling challenged at work, or if the intellectual rewards don't outweigh the stress, you've very likely outgrown your employer. In good times, you might up and leave, and maybe even take some time off before looking for a new job. That won't work in this economy. "These days, there's no such thing as 'outgrowing your employer,'" says Ben Hochberg, an IT recruiter with Softworld Inc., in Waltham, Mass. "If you've got a job, be thankful. And if work really stinks, you might start looking for something else,

EXPLORE THIS AREA: RICH-MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT



but keep your job because there aren't really a lot of other jobs out there."

That said, there are still ways to tell whether you're in the wrong place. And there are small things you can do to make your current situation more tolerable while positioning yourself for better opportunities.

Look for growth

Telltale signs that your job may no longer be a place of growth include the loss of training opportunities, an inability to secure new equipment and a tendency on the part of your company to replace employees with contractors, says Arnie Walkin, president of the New England Computer Consulting Group in Arlington, Mass., and a former network manager for AstraZeneca in Waltham, Mass. "If things like this are happening, it's not a healthy environment," he says, "because there are things you want to do to grow as a network manager and to help grow your company."

Unfortunately, you don't have a ton of options in this climate, but there are some steps you can take that may help you snap out of your funk. You can talk to your manager to try to find out more about what's going on in the company and how those factors may be affecting your job. It's then possible you can work together to improve the situation, Walkin says. "Or you can consider seeking other employment." But, again, do not consider leaving with nothing else lined up. And be careful, because the grass is not always greener on the other side. "At least you know the history of where you are," Walkin says. "And no matter how unhappy you may be right now, at least you're working."

Manage your time

In addition to feeling a sense of stunted growth, many IT workers these days feel like they're doing the jobs of several people just to stay employed. "Today, we're looking for one person to do the equivalent of four jobs," says Hochberg of the positions he's trying to fill these days. So when is enough enough?

According to Walkin, if your health is suffering -- that is, if you're experiencing insomnia, stress-related migraines or heart palpitations -- it's pretty likely you've reached your limit. "It's really not worth getting sick over a job," he says. Do everything you can to manage your time. Perhaps actually take a lunch hour. Or close your office door for a while. Or just go somewhere for a half-hour to recharge your batteries, Walkin says.

Make yourself indispensable

Meanwhile, a big part of job-related stress these days is the feeling of job insecurity. You can help alleviate that by making yourself indispensable. A good strategy here is to build a reputation as a problem solver. You can also become more valuable by broadening your skill set via additional training and certification. You'll be more versatile to your current employer and have a wider range of options if you get laid off in the end. But be forewarned: If your company is cutting jobs right now, they're probably not investing money in training. So you'll probably have to expand your skills on your own dime.

If you do become the latest Department of Labor statistic, get your name out on the street ASAP, Walkin says. He suggests sending a mass e-mail to all your personal contacts, letting them know your situation and that you're open to any and all leads in your field. If you're willing to change fields, let them know that, too.

Be prepared

If you're still feeling restless or insecure, make sure you're prepared to pounce on any opportunity at a moment's notice, Walkin says. This means having your resume up to date, recommendations on file, and your business cards with you at all times. More important, Walkin says, perfect your "two-minute drill." "If you're looking for a new job and you see someone on the street, make sure you can sell yourself in less than two minutes," he says. "Be ready to let anyone you meet know what you know, where you're from and your experience."

Follow this checklist

If you think you might forget any of these points, refer to this summary.

How can I tell whether I've outgrown my job?

- You're watching the clock.
- You have Sunday-night blues.
- You're taking a lot of sick days.
- Your company isn't offer training opportunities anymore.
- Equipment requests go ignored.
- Fellow employees, or your subordinates, are replaced by contractors.

What can I do about it?

- Suck it up (you're lucky to have a job in this climate).
- Discreetly seek out new opportunities.
- Stay put until the right opportunity arrives.

How can I minimize my stress level while I'm still there?

- Work more efficiently (for example, set aside time to return phone messages and e-mails).
- Take lunch breaks or half-hour decompression breaks.

How do I make myself essential?

- Identify problems in your company and solve them.
- Solve even those problems that are outside your job description.

How do I position myself to jump on a new opportunity immediately?

- Keep your resume updated.
- Keep a file of recommendations from former employers.
- Carry your business cards everywhere.
- Perfect your "two-minute drill."

MORE INFORMATION:

>> [Security career resources links](#)

>> [Networking career and salary information links](#)

>> [Mobile computing careers and development links](#)

DISCLAIMER: Our tips exchange is a forum for you to share technical advice and expertise with your peers and to learn from other IT professionals. Techtarget provides the infrastructure to facilitate this sharing of information. However, we can't guarantee the accuracy and validity of the material submitted. You agree that your use of the ask the expert services and your reliance on any questions, answers, information or other materials received through the web site will be at your own risk.