

When does it pay to get demoted?



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We usually think of career progression like climbing a ladder, where the obvious goal is to ascend higher and higher. But sometimes, it can actually pay off long-term to go against traditional thought and consider climbing down a rung or two.

“There just isn’t the same permanence in any job anymore and careers don’t necessarily go consistently just up the ladder,” said Lee Weisser, senior career counsellor and life coach at [Careers by Design](#).

“The reality is, people are making moves up, down and laterally all the time.”

Not convinced? Here are some situations where it might pay

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Once you've been at an organization for a certain amount of time, it can feel like your responsibilities just keep accumulating and your personal time is dwindling.

Maybe a change in your personal life – say, having a child or taking care of an ailing loved one – has you re-evaluating your priorities, or maybe you value your time more than money and a less demanding role would better suit your lifestyle.

"We've heard people who just feel they don't have the work-life balance when they're in that role, they're travelling all the time, they're away from family and kids. Maybe they want to step back to spend more time at home," said Cissy Pau, principal consultant at [Clear HR Consulting](#).

In over your head

Let's face it: very few of us turn down promotions. Even if we're insecure about our qualifications, the allure of pay raises, bigger offices and other perks tend to outweigh nagging worries about whether the job will be the right fit.

But sometimes, the demands of a new job really are too much. Rather than spend every day anxious over your inadequacy, it might be better to acknowledge that the bigger cheque and office aren't worth the bigger headaches.

"If you're a manager and you feel like, 'look, I'm totally overwhelmed, I don't want to do this job anymore,' then moving back can be a big blessing," Pau said. "Maybe you're in over your head, overwhelmed and don't want to be in that state of constant stress and anxiety."





maybe you've been itching for a change of course, career-wise? Taking on a more junior position either in a different department of the same organization or a different company entirely could give you more room to learn, grow and, eventually push your career past where it is now.

You might view this as a temporary step back before your big leap forward.

"Let's say you want to take on a sales role and you're a technical person," said Wendy Giuffre, president of [Wendy Ellen Inc.](#)

"There's no way you could begin in a more senior role, so you take a bit of a demotion, a pay cut, because you see the potential to gain skillsets for future growth."

When you're fatigued by your team

A bad manager or toxic teammate can cast a gloomy shadow over your day-to-day life at the office.

Though it's drastic, sometimes taking on a less prestigious role in order to avoid office acrimony can make your life a lot easier.

But experts stress that this route is only advisable if the situation is truly intolerable, and you might want to have an eye on other opportunities in the meantime.

"You might be able to move to a more positive work environment within your organization and plan your next move to leave the organization," Weisser said. "It just might be a more comfortable place for you to be if you find that your current working environment is very negative and



in the first place

Sometimes, a skyward career trajectory can launch us so far outside our comfort zones that we forget our original destinations. Someone who becomes a mechanic out of love for cars, for instance, could eventually find herself unwittingly trading oil for ink and becoming buried in paper work and managerial duties.

Pau can relate. She originally pursued HR because she loved working collaboratively to create policies and processes, but as she moved up the ranks, she found herself doing less of the work she was passionate about.

“Instead, you’re managing the people who are doing that,” she said. “That was a big part of the reason I left the corporate world, because I don’t feel the need to be director or vice-president of HR. I’d rather do the work with employers at a foundational level. Moving up a lot of times means you move outside of your comfort zone. You might not necessarily be using the skills of the trade, but instead managing people, and it’s a completely different skill set to be a manager.”

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