

Where is Everyone Going?

When you observe coworkers voluntarily leaving your organization — especially if it's more of a steady stream than a trickle — you may be starting to wonder if there's something you're missing. Should you consider a move as well? Does the exodus confirm some uneasiness you've had about your organization's health?

It's easy to just react and update the resume. Perhaps it's better to stop and ponder what's really happening.

1. Are people retiring, or are they resigning to assume new positions? A natural and cyclical turnover to a new generation is not a bad thing, but take the time to ask questions of those retiring. Was this when they planned to retire or did something speed up the date? It could be health or family situations that made it time. It could also be something about the organization.
2. Has there been significant tension in the workplace? Sometimes people move on because they want to avoid the unpleasantness of their current situation. If one person leaves for this reason, it could be about them. If it's a steady flow, it's time to investigate.
3. Where are people going? I know someone who was asked by the potential employer to take a good look at the health of their organization relative to the health of the organization that was recruiting them. Asking "where do you think both organizations will be in five years?" deserved careful consideration.
4. Has silence come to dominate key meetings? When leaders stop listening, people stop talking, and this leads to a sense that you're not being valued. It's hard to keep going in that type of environment.
5. Are you sensing that leadership is chasing the next shiny object and getting distracted by the latest desperate move to stay afloat? A constant change of focus can be unnerving, and some people might be leaving to find stability.
6. Are you being micromanaged? It is frustrating when your supervisor decides they can do your job better than you can and, in the process, ignores their key responsibilities. It makes you feel devalued and at the same time frustrated because other important details are falling through the cracks.
7. Do the numbers add up? Do the financial projections match reality? Unrealistic pictures of an organization's financial health will lead to a trust deficit.

If the departures you observe reflect a variety of reasons and no clear pattern emerges, spend some time assessing why you feel uneasy. If clear patterns do exist, it might be time to polish up that resume.

What prompts your concern that an exodus may be underway in your organization?

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