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LOOKING FOR THAT NEXT JOB

When the job hunt is on, discretion is the key.

By Libby Gill

I receive a lot of e-mails from folks looking for help to manage their careers more successfully. Often, the subtext beneath the question is, "Is it worth taking the risk?"

Here's an example:

Dear Libby,

My supervisor recently left the company for another job. He was my biggest champion and while I have been working to make a favorable impression on the new department head, I've been advised by some outside the company to network a bit to see what other opportunities are out there.

How do I do this without others finding out and the gossip mill reaching my department head? Most of my work contacts have a very close relationship with her.

FM

Great question, FM. Many people are concerned about corporate repercussions if they're discovered job hunting. But you've got to risk putting the word out if you want to

find a new job, even if you're afraid that word might come back and bite you.

Even if you had no concerns about your new supervisor, it's always a good idea to keep an eye out for advancement opportunities by continually increasing your professional network. But it's also smart to consider some anticipatory damage control, just in case your boss catches wind of your search.

So, FM, assuming you're not under contract to your employer, let's look at ways you can test the workplace waters without unduly rocking the boat:

- **Cultivate a relationship with your new boss.** Ask her to lunch, or whatever works for your workplace, and let her know you'd like to understand her expectations so you can exceed departmental goals. Even if you're job surfing, this needs to be genuine. After all, you should be meeting your department's goals as long as you're there, and you don't know how long that will be.
- **Talk to your former boss and get his read on the situation.** He may be able to offer you inside info about where your company or team is headed. And, of course, ask him for a recommendation and referrals.
- **Make yourself visible to your peers.** Circulate among your teammates and build support. Keep your ear to the office grapevine so if change is afoot, you'll hear about it.
- **Meet with colleagues outside the company, but be cautious.** Avoid people who are close to your boss and opt for those you know you can trust. Even then, be careful taking them into confidence about your job search. Find out what they

know about your shop and the industry. If it feels appropriate, let them know you might be considering a job change at some point and ask for their thoughts.

- **If word gets back to the boss, be honest.** Let her know you believe in knowing what's happening in your field as well as planning for the future. You don't have to specify if that means three months or three years from now.

Don't be afraid to ask for feedback. Open up a discussion with your supervisor and see where you stand. Even if your organization doesn't have a formal review process, request one. Your boss will respect you for it.

Excuse the pun, FM, but it sounds to me like you're on the right frequency. The rewards definitely justify the risks. Happy hunting!

*Libby Gill is an executive coach, leadership expert, and international speaker. She is the former head of communications and PR for Sony, Universal, and Turner Broadcasting. Author of award-winning **You Unstuck: Mastering the New Rules of Risk-taking in Work and Life**. Her new book, **Hope IS a Strategy: Leading Through Change, Challenge, and Chaos** will be published in Spring 2018. You can learn more about Libby's work at www.LibbyGill.com or take her career assessment at <http://www.YourCareerQuiz.com>.*

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