



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Should You Get Out of the IT Field?

Given the current job market, it's very likely that many IT managers are considering moving out of the field. The question is: How do you know when it is time to get out of the IT management field altogether?

Sometimes events force your hand

While IT managers may not like their bosses or the work they are doing today, they generally like the IT field. Some may toy with the idea of getting out, but will still see much promise in their management careers. Also, it is easier to make decisions like this when you aren't facing big decisions that are out of your control, such as a layoff situation. This is how many managers make career changes.

Career questions to answer

If you are thinking of leaving the IT field, you need to analyze and answer several questions before making a final decision:

- **Are you tired of the IT profession?**

Look back at how you got into IT. Many people get in and don't like it from the start but stay for financial reasons. Others enjoyed the IT field at one time, but are victims of long-term burnout. This is more than just the result of having a bad day. If you dread going to work, you need to make a change.

Think about the things that you like and dislike about your job. If you dislike your manager or your short-term career prospects, you may just need to look for another career opportunity within your company. Or perhaps you may need to look at another company, if your company is also on your list of dislikes. On the other hand, if you do not like working with technology or if you do not have the desire to learn about the changes that are happening in the industry, you may need to look at alternative careers. Likewise, if you're a manager who no longer cares to manage people or if you are a project manager who no longer cares to manage projects, you might be wise to look into careers that are much different than the one you have now.

- **Is there another skill/profession you can do?**

Typically, people who are unhappy with a career specialty can think of another one they'd rather be doing. This might be a side business that you want to devote more time to. Perhaps it is a hobby that you think can be developed into a business.

There are also many people who have experience in multiple disciplines. For instance, there are some people who work in the IT finance area, but are also Certified Public Accountants. If they ever get tired of IT, they could still use their CPA skills to gain employment in the accounting profession.

- **How much money do you need to make?**



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This is, obviously, a key point for anyone - especially for managers who believe they wouldn't be able to grab the same salary at another professional role. But do you need to make as much as you're making, or can you adjust your lifestyle to take on a job that pays less?

Many people, for instance, might want to go into teaching, or landscaping, or work more with their church, but they find that the financial change isn't feasible. In many other cases, however, people will actually take less money to do something they really love—and they will change their lifestyles in order to make such a career change.

- **Can you make it as an entrepreneur?**

Let's say you believe you have an opportunity or a talent that you can leverage to start your own business. The question is, do you think you have what it takes to make it in business for yourself?

You need a product or service. You need a place to sell it. You need to find customers. Starting your own business is a huge professional step - whether you stay in IT or not - and it requires a great deal of investigation, not to mention discussion with others who've done it, with family that will be impacted, and with those you'll likely lean on for support in the early going.

Start with a list

If you are thinking of getting out of the IT field, you should make an initial list that will help you determine whether you need to change jobs or change professional fields. Write down what you like and dislike about your job. This exercise will help you determine if you really want to get out of IT management or just out of your current job situation.

Then, if the results indicate that you do want to move out of IT, make a list of what other jobs and professions interest you and how your current skills match up. Then consider the various questions that were posed above.

The bottom line is that if you are sure you are ready to get out of the IT field, go ahead and get out. But think through the consequences and make sure you have good alternatives in place.