

## 8 Signs It's Time to Look for a New Job Can't find your desk? Look for the door.

By Thomas Hoffman



**Umesh Ramakrishnan**  
Vice Chairman, CTPartners

But some indicators are less obvious, such as subtle shifts in an IT organization's structure that can result in career stagnation. A variety of career experts, headhunters, recruiters, CIOs and IT staffers shared their takes on when it's time to move on.

### 1. Your role has become marginalized.

If you're being bypassed for promotions or interesting assignments or they're consistently being offered instead to IT workers in subordinate positions, "that would be an obvious sign," says Robert Rosen, CIO at the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases in Bethesda, Md., and a past president of Share, an IBM user group in Chicago.

Often the handwriting is on the wall. You just need to stop, step back and read it. "If you feel like you're no longer contributing, there's a good chance you may not be," says Frank Hood, CIO at Quiznos in Denver, Colo.

### 2. You've stopped growing.

"If you're not learning every day, if you're not doing new things, and if you're not improving" it's time to move on says Sara Garrison, senior vice president of product and solutions development at Sabre Holdings Corp. in Southlake, Texas.

Short of being handed your walking papers, there are often telltale signs that it's time to look for a new job. You haven't been promoted since the Clinton administration. The most exciting assignments are routinely handed to your peers or underlings. Your desk keeps moving farther and farther from where the action is.

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Red lights should be flashing if you've effectively been in the same role for two or three years and haven't taken on any significant new challenges during that time, says Umesh Ramakrishnan, vice chairman of CTPartners, an executive recruiting firm in New York.

### 3. You're missing from the big picture.

Most CIOs assemble a road map of where they intend to take their organizations over the next 12 to 60 months, including the top IT/business projects they plan to work on, notes Joe Trentacosta, CIO at the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative in Hughesville, Md. So, if there are a lot of upcoming projects that don't include your area of expertise or in which you figure to play a minor role at best, "that's a warning sign," he says.

Further, if you've been relegated to a commodity-type IT function that offers little value to the organization or can easily be outsourced, "it's time to move on to a new opportunity," says Hans Keller, chief technology officer at the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

### 4. You're being excluded.

If you're a CIO or other senior IT manager, the warning signs can include not being asked to participate in new business decisions or being excluded from formal or informal executive committee meetings, says Craig Urrizola, CIO at Saladino's Inc., a Fresno, Calif.-based food distributor.

The view is equally bleak if you're an IT staffer whose input on new projects is no longer requested or is sought out on just a limited basis.

### 5. Your level of influence is waning.

A CIO certainly has more clout within an organization than a network engineer. But all IT professionals possess some level of influence within their work teams or at least among their own peer group. If you see your powers of persuasion shrinking, it's time to move on, Keller suggests.

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### 6. You no longer enjoy the work.

"Someone once told me that we're not here for a long time, we're here for a good time," says Michael Nieset, managing partner for the technology practice in the Cleveland office of Heidrick & Struggles, a Chicago-based executive search and leadership consulting firm. "Sometimes people stay in suboptimal situations because it's comfortable for them. You have to take control.

"If you're not excited about the projects you're working on, fix it," he says. "If you are wholly engaged, passionate about what you're doing and doing what you're good at, you'll be fulfilled and rewarded accordingly."

### 7. Continuous improvement isn't part of the mantra.

Sometimes there are organizational changes -- or lack thereof -- that you should regard as career alerts. These include stagnation within a corporation or an IT department. If your IT organization has been using the same application development techniques for 15 years and has made no effort to update its approach, "then something's wrong," says David Van De Voort, principal consultant at Mercer LLC in Chicago. If your company is unwilling to invest in continuous improvement processes such as CMMI, ITIL or Six Sigma, it may be time to seek a company that is, he adds.

### 8. Greener pastures truly are greener.

If you've reached a crossroads where you've become disenchanted with your employer for one reason or another (long hours, infrequent promotions, career malaise, etc.) and you've received a job offer from another company, it may be the right time to jump ship. "In situations where things don't fix themselves -- if you hate what you're doing or you're not proud of what you're doing or there's an issue you need to talk to your boss about but you don't because you know it won't do any good -- that's when it's time to look for a new job," says Joel Reiter, an application analyst at U.S. Bancorp in St. Paul, Minn.

In this situation, however, be certain that you're not jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. Make sure you're moving toward a good opportunity and not just moving away from one that's gone bad.

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