

Do I stay, or do I go? – JLynn “Jen” Smith, MSL, RHIA, RMA (AMT)

No matter where you are in your education or career, you will probably come to a crossroads in the future on whether to decide to stay where you are at, or move forward to a different position. Having faced these challenges several times in the past, I thought I would share my checklist of questions that I ask myself when determining which direction I will go. Once you receive an offer, you should have some additional information available to you to help in your final decision.

1. Money – This is not the only deciding factor in your decision, however, let’s face it, it speaks volumes.
  - a. How does the compensation rank in comparison to the other issues that you will be factoring in?
  - b. Do you feel like you can pass on the offer based on pay?
  - c. Will you be expected to work overtime?
  - d. Will you have a set schedule or have a varying schedule from week to week?
  - e. If you are required to travel between sites, if so, is this on company time? Are you compensated for using your personal vehicle, or does the company provide one for you?
2. The Job – Review the job description available and determine the value to you.
  - a. Do you get excited even thinking about the work you will do?
  - b. Does the position allow you to use the skills you most enjoy, and if so, how often?
  - c. Do you believe in the company and its products/services?
  - d. What role do you foresee that you will play in the organization, and are you passionate about making a contribution to them?
  - e. How much interaction will you have with your co-workers?
  - f. Is there any quality of life considerations, such as high anticipation for stress?
  - g. Is it important for you to have visibility, leadership, or an impressive title, and to what extent does the position offer these?
3. Management – The best of employees can fail at their job under poor management, so consider who you will be working under.
  - a. Is the direct manager someone you feel you can work with?
  - b. Does s/he show respect to team members?
  - c. Does s/he have a good reputation in the industry?
  - d. What is his/her management style and how does it fit your preference?
  - e. Do his/her expectations seem reasonable?
  - f. What is your level of autonomy, including where is the manager in relation to the area you work?
4. Culture/Atmosphere – Most people outside of your organization will pick up on the culture of the company as soon as they stroll through the front doors and greet people.
  - a. Are the company’s values in keeping with yours?
  - b. Does the organizational leadership prioritize issues you deem important?
  - c. Does the company emphasize training, mobility, and promotion within?
  - d. What kind of personalities seem to thrive in this atmosphere?
  - e. After visiting the office, can you see yourself working in that environment without unnecessary distractions (such as the constant online shoppers, YouTube watchers, Facebook checkers, etc.)? Employees getting paid for a job, but spending their time on social media has a negative impact on morale.
  - f. Will you have adequate privacy while performing your duties?

5. Future Prospects – Not knowing what the future holds, consider how this position may be the stepping stone to the next.
  - a. Will this job keep your skills sharp?
  - b. Does this position come with increased responsibility?
  - c. Will working at this company give your resume added credibility?
  - d. Does the job give you a “foot in the door” to make a desired career change?
  - e. Will you have access to useful training and networking opportunities?
  - f. Will you have added value to your experience portfolio?
6. Stability – With the ebb and flow of employment rates and the desires of employers to have economic positions verses highly skilled ones, one should consider the potential longevity of the position and how well the organization is established.
  - a. What is the economic climate compared with your current position?
  - b. Has this company had any past financial hardships, or are they currently in financial recovery?
  - c. What is the structure for evaluations and raises?
7. Location – Make sure that you consider the benefits or drawbacks that relocation could have.
  - a. Are you willing to commute, and if so, what does that look like on the daily, and how what is the impact on the salary offered?
  - b. What is the cost of living if you are moving to a new area? There are cost of living indexes available free online to help estimate the salary you will need to maintain your current living wage.
  - c. What additional costs would you incur that need budgeted before you accept a position that requires you to move?
  - d. What is the housing availability in the area that you would be moving to? Be sure to check multiple resources available including online and local resources such as newspapers.
  - e. Will being away from your current friends and/or family be detrimental to you or your family? Something to consider is that if your overall wellbeing in an area means living six hours away from family, will the salary increase or paid time off benefits actually allow you visit frequently.
8. Perks/Benefits – Many job benefits equate to well-being or savings in other areas you have not yet considered.
  - a. What are free (or discounted) perks offered by the organization? This may include gym memberships, free entertainment to sponsored events, discounted meals, group savings on cell phone plans, etc.
  - b. Are flexible scheduling and/or hours working from home an option?
  - c. What benefits are paid by the company? This can vary widely but often health insurance, vacation time and sick leave are strong considerations.
  - d. What optional benefits are available for purchase? This may include tax deferred dependent benefits, life insurance, disability insurance, retirement, etc.

While this is not a full list of everything that you might be considering when making the move to a new position, it should give you a good start on weighing the risks and benefits. You might find it helpful to start with a list of columns for pros and cons with each position. Although you may not know all of the details associated with your prospective position, your list will definitely give you an idea of where you stand with your satisfaction in your current position. If you find strong cons in 7 out of 8 categories, that new position may be the opportunity you need to achieve 7 out of 8 in the pros. However, don't forget to listen to your “gut instinct” as well! If you just have that overwhelming feeling that something doesn't feel

right, especially if the money is “too good to be true,” then be cautious of just accepting the offer on money alone. No position is perfect, but with an educated approach to weighing your options, you may find your career moving in ways you hadn’t dreamed of.