

Be careful who you consult about your career

There are a number of obvious options when it comes to choosing who to consult about potential career changes and job moves, but these people can actually undermine your success. Career coach Leslie Alderman explains why.

Alderman, an executive consultant at Chandler Macleod, says not enough people seek professional assistance in getting clarity around their career - many people fall into their careers through having no strategy or plan in place, or because of the expectations of others.

She says the people you might traditionally consult about career issues - partners, colleagues, managers and friends - all have agendas, some of which are hidden while others are more obvious.

Partners are often likely to suggest you do "whatever makes you happy", Alderman says, which, while it comes with the best intentions, is "useless" advice. Others can be jealous of your success.

Partners and families are less likely to be supportive of a major career change or risk when it might involve a reduction in remuneration (for example, if you cut back on work to study), because that can affect their lifestyle and future plans.

Managers also aren't the best people to consult about your career if you happen to be great at your job, Alderman says.

"Managers can be a very good sounding board, but some just want to hold on to their top performers rather than saying 'let's take a look at your career'. Also, most managers don't know how to career coach. They know what's required; they know what the bottom line is and what the deadlines are; and they know what gets the job done. But they're not career coaches, and most don't want to be - it's another thing they'd have to do."

Alderman adds that **work colleagues** can be cynical of your plans to get ahead, while **friends** can resent you for having the guts to make a change. "They say, 'hang on a second... we were miserable together!' Sometimes it's easier to sit and whinge and whine and complain about the fact you're not happy than to pull your finger out and do something about it."

Alderman says independent advice from a professional career coach is the easiest and most cost effective way to provide structure to your career and work out "what are your drivers; what are your motivators; what are your strengths and your weak areas that need development".

"[Recruiters] put every candidate through them, but have they done them? Maybe, maybe not. If they did, it wasn't for career assistance, it was to 'get the job', and they may not have received the feedback."

Alderman also recommends career guides such as [*What color is your parachute?*](#) (by US author Richard Bolles) and free advice on career websites as good starting points.

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