It’s time to quit your job if you are denied autonomy

If you sadly rate your job autonomy lowly, then you should commence an immediate search for a new one.

By SCOTT BELLOWS

Posted  Wednesday, May 25   2016 at  19:28

In Summary

- No employee desires their manager to hover over them, watching each and every move.

Autonomy stands as the liberty to act autonomously and make decisions with respect to your job.

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In some jobs you have it, in others you do not. Imagine Muriithi’s situation whereby he works as a sales executive.

Every morning he must report to his boss by 8:30am with an account of his step by step actions of the previous day. Then his boss walks around and observes all the employees at least four times each work day.

Before each sales meeting, Muriithi must provide his manager with a write-up of who he is meeting, why they are meeting, and the strategies he intends to utilise during the meeting.

The boss must then approve the strategies beforehand. However, if the meeting goes poorly based on an unsuccessful strategy, Muriithi receives the blame.

Would anyone desire to work in such a scenario where no autonomy exists yet his work is accompanied by the full force of blame for consequences of decisions?

In short, no employee desires their manager to hover over them watching their each and every move.

Business Talk continues its series today on how to know when to quit your current job. Autonomy represents a core need that every employee desires and ultimately needs.

However, each position comes with varying degrees of autonomy granted from management or acted upon by supervisors. An under-organised company would lack the policies, procedures, and frameworks to ensure employee job autonomy becomes codified within the firm.

In as much, each supervisor essentially decides for him or herself the length of a proverbial leash to keep the staff on.

Workers then subside at the mercy of the managerial skill levels of their superiors. The firm could see wide fluctuations between extremely satisfied employees in one department and woefully discouraged staff in others.
Contrast the above under-organised environment with an over-organised firm where far too many policies, procedures, guidelines, and low thresholds charts of authority exist.

Imagine a 500 employee organisation whereby the only staff member possessing sign-off approval authority on any expense greater than Sh200,000 being the CEO herself.

In such a scenario, even department managers and vice presidents hold no decision making authority and lose the feeling of ownership and the ability to act quickly that leads to innovation and creativity.

**Talents and originality**

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Autonomy comprises two components: skill discretion and decision authority. Researchers Karasak and Theorell delineate skill discretion as when one retains the option to utilise their talents and originality while allowed participation in decision making.

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Decision power entails one’s empowerment to choose the way to perform their work responsibilities.

So gauge the level of autonomy at your own workplace. Ask yourself the following two statements that represent different levels of autonomy that you hold at your current workplace in each category.

Take each declaration and judge it in your mind on the following 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 point scale whereby each number represents your opinion of your workplace as: Extremely Dissatisfied (1), Dissatisfied (2), Somewhat Dissatisfied (3), Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (4), Somewhat Satisfied (5), Satisfied (6), Extremely Satisfied (7).

Write your numeric answer for each of the following two proclamations: I have a lot of say in deciding how to do my job. I have a lot of say in deciding what goes on in my work group.

Now add up the numbers for both of your answers. Take your total and divide it by two to give you your average response. If you scored a 5.5 or higher, then you enjoy a good job fit with comfortable levels of job autonomy.

**Personal growth**

If your average result is between a 3.5 and 5.5, start contemplating different options in the medium term.

If you sadly rated your job autonomy on average as below 3.5, then you should commence an immediate
search for a new job for the sake of your personal growth and freedom from the cage your employers currently keep you under.

Sometimes employees stand to blame when their job satisfaction precipitously drops. But many times, the actions of an over-organised firm or an insecure or under-skilled manager make our work life unbearable. Do not suffer alone.

Empower yourself with knowledge about the signs of what to look for and when you rate your situation less than 3.5 on the scales in the Business Talk series, actively search for better more acceptable employment.

The *Business Daily* will next Thursday continues assessing more variables in Business Talk to ascertain whether you should quit or stay with your job by delving into one’s self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Share your own job quitting or staying stories with other readers through #KenyaTurnover on Twitter.

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