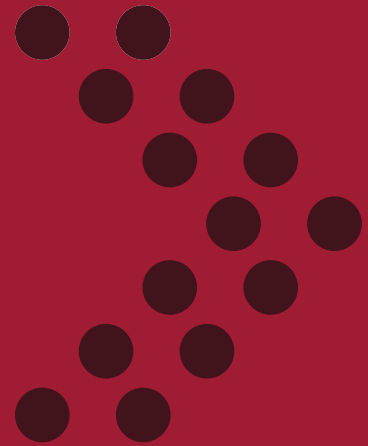


MAKING THE NEXT BIG MOVE



**ASSESSING AND PREPARING FOR
YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE**

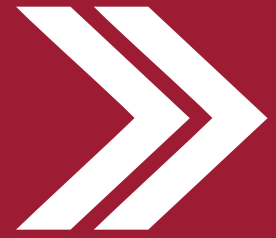


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Authored by The Plank Center's Emerging Leaders Committee

MAKING THE NEXT BIG MOVE



No matter where you are in life, a career “move” in the quickly evolving communications industry can feel intimidating. Whether you’re accepting a new job, physically moving to a different city, getting an advanced degree or making another bold change, most moves require a degree of risk-taking — which, if we’re honest, can be uncomfortable. However, these moves don’t have to be overwhelming — when strategic and well thought out.

If you’re a communications practitioner or educator considering making a big move now or mapping out your next five-year plan, this guide is for you. It will help you assess why you want to make a transition, determine the best timing for one and explore different types of moves. Get ready, buckle up and put yourself in the driver’s seat of your career.

ASSESSING THE MOVE

Identify the right time and embrace change:

A variety of reasons can impact your desire to make a career change. You may be looking for more responsibility, believe you deserve a promotion, want to dive deeper into a certain area of PR, want to get more from and give more to your current place of work, are unhappy in your role, want to get out of your comfort zone or are looking to move to a new city. Especially in today's environment, an endless number of reasons could influence a potential move. But no matter the reason, it's important to remember that the communications field is dynamic and competitive, so agility is key.

Assess your readiness — potential questions to ask yourself include:

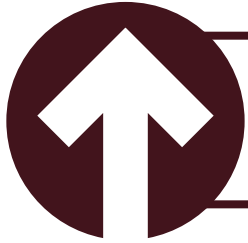
- What is motivating me to make this change?
- Will this next move help me reach my long-term goals?
- Am I challenged in my current role? Remember **Betsy Plank's advice** to "Leave a job when it doesn't challenge you"?
- Are my passions, ideas and abilities being respected and valued at my current role?
- What people or things might hold me back from making a move?
- Does this change allow me to blend my career and personal priorities?
- What is my five-year plan and is my career path going to help me get there?
- Are there other ways I can try to achieve growth? Have you considered involvement in extracurricular activities or building skills through offerings such as LinkedIn Learning, professional certificate programs or accreditation in communications?

Ask for feedback:

Go to your personal "Board of Directors" and have honest conversations about the options you're considering. Your trusted group of advisors can include (but isn't limited to) mentors, former colleagues and organizational leaders, industry peers and friends. This group can serve as a great sounding board for your decision making and may ask you questions or propose ideas you hadn't previously considered. The Plank Center surveyed 420 millennial communications professionals (ages 21-36) and **found** that mentors are important to sharing knowledge and providing career guidance. If you don't have a small group of individuals you can bounce ideas off of, we recommend creating one ASAP! Consider connecting with people who have a similar role to the one you're considering to learn more about their experience. These informal, exploratory conversations can help build and strengthen your network, even before you've decided whether you'll make the move.



TYPES OF MOVES

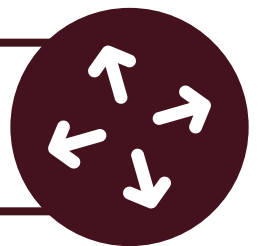


The Big Promotion: Taking on more responsibility

Have you been consistently performing at a high level and ready for more responsibility? If so, a promotion may be in your near future! Promotions can often be the most exciting moves, as they validate our hard work and allow us to continue to grow within an organization (the additional compensation isn't too bad either). Despite many people's desire to get promoted quickly, timing is important as premature advancement can potentially lead to someone being ineffective in their new role. This can be especially detrimental to an organization when the individual has the potential to be a people leader, but doesn't yet have the skills or behaviors necessary to manage others.

If you are ready for a promotion, don't shy away from initiating promotion conversations with your leaders. While strong organizations are transparent about advancement timelines, it's perfectly acceptable to initiate the conversation about your career trajectory. If you do this, be sure to find the right timing and present facts and data about why you believe you should be considered for a promotion.

The Expansion: Growing within your current role



Expanding within your current role is often less formal than a promotion but isn't less important. Work with your manager to identify opportunities to increase your scope of work or create stretch assignments. Doing so is often beneficial for you and your organization. It will also create ways for you to demonstrate the skills and behaviors needed for advancement.

TYPES OF MOVES



The Lateral Move: Taking a new opportunity at the same job grade

Career moves don't always have to be a vertical jump. That's okay — and common! Lateral moves (both internal and external) can be exciting and beneficial long term by providing meaningful opportunities to learn or get exposure to new areas in communications, with the potential to skyrocket your career in the long run. Consider a lateral opportunity to diversify your skill set, take on a new challenge and broaden your network and relationships. Look at the specializations at your company and consider if you'd be a better fit in a lateral role. Sometimes you can still take on more responsibility even when the job title stays the same. One benefit of this move, if done internally, is that you may be able to shadow a colleague or department ahead of making the decision.

The External Move: Deciding it's time to leave an organization



External moves can often be the most difficult decisions to make. And while professionals may leave organizations for negative reasons (such as a lack of career advancement, poor culture, lack of diversity, etc.), that isn't always the case. You may be considering getting an advanced degree, joining a new company to tackle an exciting business problem or taking time off to determine what you want to do next. If you are unable to gain rigorous experience at your current organization, have a desire to explore a different type of PR or are in a toxic environment, these may be signs you're ready to look externally. Tap into resources like The Plank Center's webinar "[**Getting a Job in Communications**](#)" and presentation "[**Deciding Between a PR Job and an Advanced Degree: Making the Right Decision**](#)" to help guide your process.

TYPES OF MOVES



The Geographic Move: When it's time to relocate

This move often feels the most substantial because it drastically impacts the way you live. You may consider relocating because you crave adventure, want to live in a market with more opportunity, desire to live somewhere with a lower cost of living, want to follow your partner or be closer to family. Whatever your reasons, research multiple options and talk to family, friends and colleagues before making any decisions. Remember that you may not have to look externally to relocate. Countless agencies, firms and corporations have domestic and international offices. If you're happy where you are, but would like to move to a different city, consider discussing potential opportunities with your manager and Human Resources business partner. Invite them into your career aspirations.

SO, YOU'RE READY?

Weigh your options:

Now that you're ready for a change, it's time to assess which move is most beneficial. Before making a decision, take a holistic look at your career, goals, family and life. Embrace **Betsy Plank's commandment** to "factor personal values into every season." Don't be afraid to consider multiple options simultaneously — we encourage you to!

For example, you may have a new opportunity pending at work but are also being recruited by an external organization. Keep your options open until you've made a final decision.



Prepare now:

The best way to position yourself for a move is to make sure you're ready to tackle it when the time comes. Career changes often require additional skills and it's important to be prepared. Make sure you have the skills needed to succeed, and if you don't, go get them. If you're making a geographic move, spend time researching your new city and the cost of living. Begin thinking about how long you may want to live there and whether you have the resources to live your desired lifestyle.



Leverage your network:

No matter the move you're making, your network can play an invaluable role in your transition. Assess your options, by reaching out to your network to provide advice about a new city or even identify an opening at your dream company. Tap into resources like the [Public Relations Society of America \(PRSA\)](#), LinkedIn and your alma mater's alumni base. All are great places to initiate career conversations.



Never be afraid of change:

Start first by just asking. No one will ever fault you for being inquisitive. Invite those you trust the most to support you in your future moves. Even if it feels out of reach, it's not. We often tend to fear the unknown, but the second you jump in, your comfort zone widens. The world is much smaller than we think!



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