

Opportunity vs. Security

Point of This Assignment: 1) To understand that to pursue a job for security vs. pursuing a job for potential for opportunity, usually take you in very different directions. 2) To understand that both choices bring positive and negative consequences. 3) To help you decide which option is more important to you. 4) To give suggestions for dealing with the choices you have made.

Imagine: You need to choose between two different career options which will take you in different directions. As you evaluate your two options, you notice that one option provides you with an “**Opportunity**” for things such as pursuing your dream, personal/professional growth, fulfillment, more money, happiness, excitement, novelty, etc., but requires risk and the possibility of failure. Yet the other option offers the benefit of “**Security**” in the way of a stable job and stable income for the foreseeable future, but may lack opportunities.

Question: How do you decide between “Opportunity” and “Security”? How do you decide which option is best?

Characteristics:

<u>Jobs that offer Stability/Security</u>	<u>Jobs that offer Potential for Great Opportunities</u>
Work, hours, pay, and benefits are generally rather stable and predictable, and not likely to change too much from year to year.	The opportunity to pursue advanced positions, new work, and/or new challenges. Allows you to pursue your own goals/dreams/agendas/values, etc.
Most likely working for someone else who is responsible for bringing in the work and the money and keeping you employed.	Likely involves leaving your current employment situation. Likely involves risk, failure, sacrifice and making decisions when you don’t have all the answers yet.
Outlook for the future appears to be fair, but consistent.	Outlook has great potential to offer opportunities that are not currently available to you.
Opportunities for growth and/or pursuing your own dreams/goals are likely going to be limited because you need to focus on meeting your employer’s agenda rather than your own.	Opportunities for potential are great because you are pursuing your own agenda rather than your employer’s agenda.
The future direction of your job and career are determined by your employer – based on their operational needs.	You will have more control over the direction your career takes by making choices based on what happens to you and what you want in the long-run.

How Do You Decide?

What factors should you take into consideration when choosing between an opportunity or security? The following are some factors you should take into consideration:

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- **Labor Market Trends:** LMTs are trends in technology, demographics, and societal values that affect projections for future demand of a product, service and/or occupation. What is the future outlook for the ‘security’ job you are considering? Do the LMTs indicate that these jobs will no longer be in demand in the foreseeable future, or does this job have a bright outlook? Also what is your current employer’s likelihood of surviving in the foreseeable future? If your employer’s business outlook is bleak, then your personal job security is not secure at all. Does the ‘opportunity’ route appears have a bright outlook regarding LMTs? Or is this a dream that is notorious for high likelihood of failure?
- **Your Season of Life:** Your season of life will impact your priorities. For example, a person who is just starting out in their career will likely need to accept whatever opportunities are offered to them due to their lack of work experience. Whereas an experienced, seasoned worker who is more concerned with retirement and/or addressing medical needs may have more options available to them.
- **Goals:** What are your career goals? What are your life goals? What do you want to achieve? Which of these two options are more likely to help you get there? For example, your goal is to become a counselor, but you work in retail. Your current employer wants to promote you to manager, but would require you to give up school. Or you need to work internship hours that are not compatible with that current job, so you would need to quit the current job. In this case, the internship (i.e. opportunity) will take you towards the goal, but the retail job (i.e. security) will distract you from your goal.
- **Personality:** Based on personality alone, some people are wired to want and need stability, security and predictability in their lives. These individuals may be able to adapt as needed, but don’t generally like to live with constant change. Likewise, there are some personality types who would feel extremely confined, restless, and suffocated if their life was too stable or predictable. Some people thrive on change and novelty. Also some people are wired to need to be pursuing new challenges or opportunities continually.
- **Values:** What is important to you? For example, do you care more about lifestyle or helping others? If lifestyle is more important, then you will likely choose security. However, if it is important to have a job where you can impact others, then you may choose the ‘opportunity’ route that allows you to pursue what is important to you.
- **Interests:** What fascinates you? What can grab and hold your attention for hours at a time? What subject matters bore you to tears? As you consider your choices between opportunities vs. security, it is important to consider what draws your attention due to your interests; because if you hate your job, you will have a hard time keeping your attention focused on it. Do either options reflect your interests more than the other?
- **Priorities:** Based on your season of life and other things you have going on in your life, where are your priorities? Are they with professional growth, saving money, taking care of yourself and/or loved ones, etc.?
- **Long-Term Consequences:** As you look at both the security job and the opportunity job, anticipate likely long-term consequences, such as an opportunity to make yourself more marketable, keep up with Labor Market Trends, ability to save for retirement, etc.
- **Your Needs:** What do your current circumstances reveal about your material and financial needs? Many people are inclined to put this consideration above everything else. While it is important to worry about being able to put a roof over your head and food on the table, there are two problems with **only** considering needs: 1) People tend to

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confuse “wants” (i.e. paying for my expensive car) with “needs” (i.e. having transportation to get from ‘Point A’ to ‘Point B’.) 2) If that ‘security’ job does NOT provide for your basic needs (food, shelter, medical, etc.), then it is NOT a security job. Just because you have a job, doesn’t mean it is a security job as is defined here.

Which of these considerations is more important to you when choosing between opportunity and security? Why? (Explain your response.)

Learn More:

Go to the last page of this document and find at least one article of interest to read. Identify 2 – 5 key points of interest this article offers:

Which article? _____

Key or interesting points:

Personal Experience:

Identify at least four (two each) people you personally know who have chosen jobs based on potential for opportunity and based on potential security:

Opportunity
Name & Position

Security
Name & Position

_____	_____
_____	_____

Identify at least three **advantages** about those people’s jobs that sound appealing to you. Identify whether they reflect opportunity or a security.

Identify at least three **disadvantages** about those people’s jobs that sound unappealing to you. Identify whether those disadvantages are for the opportunities position or security position.

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Reflect back on your answers to the questions in this section. Identify whether you see yourself more attracted to roles that offer opportunity or security? Why? (Explain your response.)

Suggestions for Living with Each Option:

Once you make a decision, it is important to learn to live with the consequences of the choice you made. Otherwise you could find yourself feeling regret and/or discontentment with your circumstances. Not accepting those consequences could cause you to want to change your mind again.

Opportunity:

1. Spend time assessing your personality, interests, values, goals and priorities and what you are willing to sacrifice so you can pursue the opportunity you want. If you are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices, then this is not a good opportunity – it is a recipe for failure.
2. Live within your financial means so that your desire to pursue more is based on realistic things. If basic needs are not being met, financial gain is an appropriate motivator. However, oftentimes a desire for a better lifestyle is what drives many people to want to pursue better jobs. However if you hate your job, a more expensive lifestyle will only make you a slave to that bad job.
3. Be prepared to meet your medical insurance, retirement, and other benefit needs through some source other than your job. Changing jobs or leaving steady employment will likely also mean losing the benefits that came from that job. Consider your options for meeting the needs that the benefits now provide. (*See “Managing Financial Responsibilities” for help with this.*)
4. If your ‘Opportunity’ involves self-employment, consider getting a part-time job working for someone else while you work on building your dream. It usually takes several years to become a self-sufficient entrepreneur. Having part-time work during that period can serve several purposes: It supplements your income, provides opportunities to network, and if you are working with your desired skill set, it can also give you additional work experience and professional reputation.
5. Seek expert advice: Depending on what that opportunity entails, seek help from career counselors, education counselors, small business consultants, financial advisors, etc. as appropriate to help you make wise decisions.
6. Identify your primary support system (who will be there to support you as you make choices). Discuss your dreams/desires, reasons for doing this, and the risks involved, with them. Since pursuing opportunities will likely involve risks, this can be potentially stressful for most people. Sometimes these people can help you ‘process’ your options and/or offer you support and/or a reality check as needed.
7. Consider who will be affected by your decisions (i.e. spouse, children, loved ones, etc.) Take into consideration how your decisions will impact them and their lives. Not taking their needs, fears, and sacrifices into consideration will put a strain on your relationships. If appropriate, encourage them to read this document to help them

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- understand the challenge and decisions you are facing. Involve them in your decision making since what you do will impact them as well.
8. Research your options and what is involved (good and bad) in that choice (education / licensing required, cost, risks, commitment, physical demands, potential for income, etc.)
 9. Develop a plan by setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based) goals. If your dream includes becoming self-employed, write a business plan.
 10. It is important to have a realistic plan, but it is also important to remember that finding and achieving the dream is usually a journey – not a destination. Be persistent, but also flexible enough to be able to respond to the unexpected as needed.
 11. Remember that even if you do everything right, there is still a possibility of things not working out. However, failure does not need to be the end of the world. Failure allows opportunities to learn important life lessons, and can lead to new opportunities later.
 12. Respect the fact that other people may not share your values or priorities and therefore make choices you would not make for yourself.

Security:

1. Understand that it is possible to have a job that you enjoy but still offers a sense of security. However those jobs don't happen by accident, or by avoiding risk. It happens by taking into consideration who you are (personality, interests, values, skills) and what you want, then finding a position within an organization that will meet most of your needs. Then prioritize those things you want from a position, and then be willing to accept that no job is perfect.
2. Take time to assess your values to remind yourself why you chose this route.
3. Take time to assess your priorities so that you appreciate the life you chose rather than desire something that is not compatible with your choices.
4. Accept the decision you made and the consequences that come with it.
5. Focus on the positives of the choice you made rather than the negatives.
6. Live within your financial means. Doing so will make it easier to accept the choice you make, and not feel a need to pursue more. Oftentimes a desire for a better lifestyle is what drives many people to want to pursue other jobs. However if you hate your job, a more expensive lifestyle will only make you a slave to that bad job.
7. If maintaining job security is what is important, then focus your attention on what your employer needs from you. Adapt to their expectations as needed.
8. If you are unable to cooperate with what your employer expects of you because you have philosophical or moral disagreements with what they are doing or why, then spend time evaluating your priorities to determine what is more important – security or your values being compromised. Consider seeking the help of a career counselor and/or mental health counselor to help you work through this conflict.
9. Accept the fact that your employer may make decisions you don't like or agree with.
10. Be prepared for the possibility that 'the unexpected' could negatively impact your job security. The world is changing very fast and is affecting every area of modern life. Even if you want and prefer stability, there may be times when you will need to 'go with the flow', even if that involves being forced to move from your comfort zone.

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11. If you find it difficult to accept the negative consequences of your choice, then seek the help of a career counselor and/or mental health counselor to identify and address what is causing your discontentment.
12. Respect the fact that other people may not share your values or priorities and therefore make choices you would not make for yourself.

Application:

After reviewing the information provided, which route do you believe is more appropriate for you? Why (explain your response)

Go back to the section titled, “Suggestions for Living with Each Option” and list two or three things you can do to help you deal with your decision:

With this in mind, what does this information reveal to you about how you should be preparing for your future career goals? Identify some goals you should set for yourself. Why? (Explain your response.)

Additional Resources:

To learn more about issues related to Opportunity vs Security, download any of the following handouts from: <http://www.dreams-goals.com/IndividualLessons.html>

- So How Do You Find and Get Your Dream Job?
- Success
- Values Survey
- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
- Hertzberg’s Theory of Motivation
- Reaching Career Goals
- Difficult Decisions
- Workshops:
 - Managing Conflicting Priorities
 - Managing Financial Responsibilities
 - Planning for an Unpredictable Future
- Overcoming Indecision
- TimeLine
- Setting Effective Goals
- Happenstance
- Rapidly-Changing World
- Unemployed Resources

Test your understanding:

What is the main point of this assignment?

Why were you expected to do this exercise?

What type of person would need to do this exercise?

How well do you fit the profile of the person for whom this assignment was created?

Reflection: *(Write down your response after completing this assignment.)*

Additional Readings:

- **Security vs. Opportunity: The Career Dilemma We Must Address**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140827151652-7668018-security-vs-opportunity-career-dilemma-all-must-now-address>
- **Finding Your Dream Job: Insights from People Who Have One**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140828140617-48342529-finding-your-dream-job-insights-from-people-who-have-one>
- **3 Questions To Ask Yourself Before Taking A New Assignment**
<http://www.careerealism.com/new-assignment-questions/#sGhjASRXsWx2qYPp.99>
- **View of risk can impact careers**
<https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/view-of-risk-can-impact-careers-20180705-p4zpn7.html>
- **Are You Ready To Become Obsolete? What I've Learned About Continuous Reinvention.**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140913163925-131079-are-you-ready-to-become-obsolete-what-i-ve-learned-about-continuous-reinvention?trk=object-title>
- **The Successful Independent Contractor: A Workforce Trend for the Future**
http://careeradvisoryboard.org/public/uploads/2014/06/Career-Advisory-Board-MBO-Executive-Summary_FINAL.pdf
- **Study: 1 In 2 Professionals Will Be Independent Contractors By 2020**
<http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2014/07/24/study-more-workers-freelancing/>

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- **How to Create a Career without a Full-Time Job**
<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2011/08/19/how-to-create-a-career-without-a-full-time-job>
- **Leaving a Secure Job When the Risk Feels Scary**
<http://tinybuddha.com/blog/leaving-a-secure-job-when-the-risk-feels-scary/>
- **Job “security” versus the risk of entrepreneurship: important factors to consider**
<https://www.my-coach-online.com/business/strategy/19-business-coaching/148-job-security-versus-the-risk-of-entrepreneurship-important-factors-to-consider>
- **Job Security or Self-Security? What Real Risk Looks Like These Days**
<http://christinekane.com/job-security-or-self-security-what-real-risk-looks-like-these-days/#sthash.v7bR3J3r.dpuf>
- **How Do I Decide to Leave My Secure But Bad Job for a Riskier Better Job?**
<http://moneyfor20s.about.com/od/jobhunt/tp/How-Do-I-Decide-To-Leave-My-Secure-But-Bad-Job-For-A-Riskier-Better-Job.htm>
- **Is A Contract Position Worth The Risk?**
<http://www.askamanager.org/2010/02/is-contract-position-worth-risk.html>
- **The Pros And Cons Of Job Hopping**
http://www.careerealism.com/tip-acing-interview-mirroring/?utm_source=linkedin-company&utm_medium=guest-post
- **How to Keep Going When You're Demotivated at Work**
http://www.content-loop.com/keep-going-youre-demotivated-work/?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_medium=status_update&utm_campaign=Capgemini_Ye arlong_HMI_INT_2013
- **10 Little-Known Facts About Quitting Your Corporate Job**
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140918135658-28553584-10-little-known-facts-about-quitting-your-corporate-job?trk=tod-home-art-list-small_1
- **When is it time to move on to greener pastures?**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140926181634-42460467-when-is-it-time-to-move-on-to-greener-pastures?trk=nus-cha-roll-art-title>
- **My Declaration Of Professional Independence**
<http://www.careerealism.com/declaration-professional-independence/>
- **What You Need To Know Before Freelancing**
<http://www.careerealism.com/freelancing-need-know/>
- **11 Assets Every Business-Of-One Needs To Survive**
<http://www.careerealism.com/business-of-one-assets/>

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- **5 Traits You Need To Be A Successful Freelancer**
<http://www.careerealism.com/successful-freelancer-traits/>
- **Too Legit To Quit: 9 Reasons To Stay At Your Job**
<http://www.careerealism.com/reasons-stay-job-legit-quit/>
- **Entrepreneurs Never Fail. They Experiment.**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141124105410-7668018-entrepreneurs-never-fail-they-experiment?>
- **Is 'Follow Your Passion' A Good Idea Or Dumb Advice?**
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2014/12/22/follow-your-passion-good-idea-or-dumb-advice/2/>