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Contemplating a Job Change in a Down Market

In the tough economic climate we're in today, many top performers who are employed and who might ordinarily be open to a job change for the 'right' opportunity are understandably skittish about making a move. The perspective is that it's a very risky time to be changing jobs regardless of how much better another opportunity might appear to be. While this thought is certainly understandable, it's one that will handcuff you from making the best choice for you both personally and professionally.

Reality is that it's just as tough now as it was two years ago for a company to hire top talent. If you are a top 10% performer, you're the one with leverage. You don't need a job - you have one. As a result, you can afford to be selective and ensure that a new employer has the financial stability, growth opportunity, winning culture and interesting projects that will allow you to continue to build your skill set in either an individual performer role or as a leader.

The more difficult work for job candidates is determining what that next step in their career actually is. It all goes back to rule #1 - know thyself. Make sure you know what a next step will indeed mean for you. In a new role, you will be uncomfortable, working longer hours, and may even require travel. In short, you'll be drinking from a fire hose. This is the same whether the stock market is at 7200 or 13800.

So, should you be more cautious in a down market? Absolutely. Do your homework. Ask friends and peers what the word on the street is about a particular firm. Use LinkedIn to contact people that worked for an employer that you're considering and email them to ask what they liked or didn't like about the organization. It's more important now than ever to ensure that if you do make a move, that it's for the right opportunity and it's with an organization that will allow you to grow within their walls.

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