

# A Message from the CEO:

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## Looking for a New Job? Ask Your Boss

The other day I was interviewing a candidate who was hoping to head up the Retail Leasing Division at our firm. I asked her if she had discussed her job search with her current boss. She said, "Absolutely not" and then added that if she told him (or he found out) he would fire her and have security escort her from the building. Sadly, this is an all too common reaction. Imagine how productive it would be, for all concerned, if each time an employee were at a significant career inflection point, they could go to their direct supervisor or a high level manager at their own firm to get advice. After all, who would have better perspective or could be a better advocate?

Bo Schembechler, the famed University of Michigan football coach, wrote in his book, "Bo's Lasting Lessons," about how he always made great efforts to help anyone who was ready to take the next step in their career. In some cases, he got them a promotion within his own organization; if that wasn't possible, he placed them at another school. Over time, athletic departments all around the country were seeded with alumni of Bo's program. You know that the wave of goodwill toward Bo and U Michigan frequently found its way back to help everyone in Ann Arbor in a multitude of ways.

Both employees and managers benefit from consistent dialogue about growth, opportunity, and inflection points. These career discussions can also bring out a lot of good day-to-day coaching. In prior writings I have advocated for "full search" when recruiting. I'll add to that by saying that, for the same reasons, it is equally important when looking for a job. It is really hard to do a full search when you are skulking around your boss's back trying to keep it a secret.

Alas, even folks at MK haven't always had the confidence to come talk to us about a career move. Boy does that hurt! What's the message you are sending to your supervisor when you leave without warning or discussion? Nothing good. First, your boss has lost the opportunity for succession planning. Additionally, your boss or manager

might feel a loss of trust with you. Both of these outcomes violate one of the most important lessons in life: never burn a bridge.

We use the large "retained search" firm Korn Ferry to assist us in filling our top spots at Massey Knakal. We use them because they are the best. Most of the candidates they send us already have very good jobs where they are respected, successful, and well-liked. When one of these top performers starts to think about making a move we hope to attract them to Massey Knakal by getting them excited about our platform and vision.

If I really like a candidate who hasn't talked to their boss about leaving I push them to do so before making them an offer. A number of positive outcomes can result. First, to be really fair to a candidate, they should be sure the perfect spot for them doesn't exist at their own shop. Second, we only want people who are sure MK is right for them (after having seen all other options). Third, if they're open about their search, we can check a valuable reference. Lastly, by doing it this way, they will bring a good relationship with them when they come (you can never have too many friends in this business, or in any other).

My advice to all you managers and employees out there is to take the initiative. For managers, open dialogue will increase your firm's retention rates, enable effective succession planning and potentially fill the industry with grateful alumni of your company. For employees, it could open up a new opportunity without even changing companies and gain a credible advocate when searching elsewhere. One way or the other, open dialogue benefits everyone, and it's worth making the effort to initiate it.

**Warm Regards,**

**Paul J. Massey, Jr.**