

Career Path: Share Your Secret Plans

Career Development



Has this ever happened to you? You wrestle in silence with the thought of seeking a promotion, moving house, or changing a relationship. When you finally get to the point of airing and sharing your thoughts with a friend, you find out they have been grappling with many of the same questions.

My wife and I have concluded everyone is entertaining what we call “secret plans,” *all the time*. Maybe it’s a form of escapism, maybe it’s just daydreaming. We have found it does not matter how grounded or stable or established someone is, chances are, they are secretly planning something.

The green grass over there

Let’s face it. We all know the grass is greener over there, so why shouldn’t we be thinking about moseying on over? Progress requires change, and because we all want to progress, doesn’t that mean we have to contemplate change?

There is nothing particularly profound about this. I think the point is that **we should not think we are alone in our worries, our wants, and our cares**. Everyone is trying to figure out the right thing to do, and no one is certain they have figured it out.

One great way to make your plans come true is by sharing them with someone who cares for you. Discuss your desires, evaluate alternatives. Just by saying out loud what you want, you acknowledge your wishes to yourself. By speaking your thoughts to another, you help yourself figure out more clearly what it is you are after.

If you can describe something so that someone else understands it, you improve your own understanding of it. Finally, the chances are good your friend will be a better sounding board to you than you can be to yourself, at least on some points.

This approach can work well in your career development. We have so many thoughts and ideas and sometimes conflicting emotions. Find a few trusted confidants you can talk to about what's on your mind. You may get good input. You will certainly think more deeply on what it is you are trying to achieve in the process of describing it to someone else.

Tell your boss — Yes, really

I will go farther and say that **you should discuss your ambitions with your boss** and with management. Do you think you are the only employee who has grappled with career decisions? Almost certainly your boss has, and almost certainly, several of your colleagues are thinking about similar topics right now.

Don't you think your boss would prefer to know what's on your mind? Even if, no, *especially if* one of the things you are contemplating is leaving for another job?

"Well, yes," you may be thinking. "I am sure my boss *would* like to know what's on my mind. But if I tell her I'm thinking about jumping ship, that will ruin our working relationship in the event I don't leave." I understand you, and I agree some bosses behave badly in these situations.

But a good boss will welcome the chance to discuss this with you.

You may find that boss already knows (or suspects) you are looking. You may find your boss has some alternatives to offer you for consideration. You may also find your relationship with your boss is ultimately improved by virtue of the trust you showed in sharing your thoughts.

I know you will be hesitant to talk to your boss about your secret plans. I urge you to consider whether this is because you believe you have a bad boss who will punish you (in which case you have other, fruitful boss-management topics to pursue), or because you are afraid of what might happen.

In the meantime, perhaps you can first find a friend or colleague with whom you can confidentially discuss your thoughts.

Either way, you may find you can move your secret plans closer to reality by sharing the secret.

Be well.

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