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Part time 3rd shift jobs

DAN MCGINN: Welcome to Dear HBR: from Harvard Business Review. I'm Dan McGinn. ALISON BEARD: And I'm Alison Beard. Work can be frustrating, but it doesn't have to be. We don't need to let the conflicts get us down. DAN MCGINN: That's where Dear HBR: comes in, we take your questions, look at the research, talk to the experts, and help you move forward. ALISON BEARD: Today we're answering the question, should I stay, or should I go, with Hal Gregersen, a senior lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management. His latest book is Questions Are the Answer: A Breakthrough Approach to Your Most Vexing Problems at Work and in Life. Hal, thanks so much for coming on the show. HAL GREGERSEN: Thank you, Alison. Delighted to be here. ALISON BEARD: So, this is the biggest career question of all, right? HAL GREGERSEN: It is. Oddly enough, framing it that way actually keeps us stuck in the dilemma. DAN MCGINN: Because it just feels too high stakes and is paralyzing? HAL GREGERSEN: There are very few things in life that are truly either-or, and when we look at the world through either I stay or I go, I think it's like putting walls up that are simply unnecessary. DAN MCGINN: I feel like the question, should I leave this job, is kind of the subtext of almost every letter we get on the show. Do people have this inclination that quitting should be the last resort, you should really find a way to make this work? HAL GREGERSEN: Should I stay or should I go is premised on really learning curves. And when I'm asking the question, should I go, I'm inviting myself to literally leap off that learning curve of expertise into something that's completely unknown. For many of us, we are uncomfortable with that leap, but in fact, you watch people who have maneuvered through their careers incredibly well, they are on a hunt for the leap. DAN MCGINN: Dear HBR: I'm in my late 20s, and was hired by a large pharmaceutical manufacturing facility about two and a half years ago. Things have gone very well. I've increased my salary by nearly 100% through promotions and raises. I get nearly seven weeks of paid time off. Plus, I have a great manager who is constantly teaching me and fighting for me. Here's the problem, I grew up believing you had to hustle and make horizontal moves in your career because you can make more money by changing companies. So, I'm starting to feel guilty about just staying in this job. Should I always be actively job searching, or is it fine to be okay with the position I'm in? HAL GREGERSEN: I have often found it's super-valuable to take a moment to just generate all the possible questions we can, as quickly as we can, about a challenge that we're stuck in, and this person is obviously stuck in a challenge. So, why don't we just take a moment, and collectively think through what are some of the questions that are in our minds about this person's challenge right now? ALISON BEARD: One thing that struck me is does he realize how lucky he is to have a job that he likes, that he just got a promotion and raise, 100%, seven weeks of paid time off, and a great manager who's constantly teaching him, and fighting for him, does he know how unbelievable that is? DAN MCGINN: I want to know why he believes that you have to make horizontal moves to get ahead and whether he's ever challenged that belief. ALISON BEARD: Does he have any evidence? HAL GREGERSEN: How burnt out might he be with seven weeks of paid time off in two years? ALISON BEARD: Where does this guilt come from? DAN MCGINN: I wonder if he's excessively focused on compensation because he doesn't talk a lot about the substance of the work, he seems very focused on raises, promotions, perks. ALISON BEARD: That's a good one. Dan. HAL GREGERSEN: What really lights his fire? What does he care deeply about? And is it clear to him? DAN MCGINN: Does he care about pharmaceutical manufacturing? Is he even in the right career in the first place? ALISON BEARD: Is he actively job searching now? And if so, has he come across other opportunities that seem better than what he has? DAN MCGINN: Is he factoring in the costs of always being searching for a new job? HAL GREGERSEN: What strategies does he have to actively test the assumptions he carries around in his head? DAN MCGINN: You guys are better at this than I am. ALISON BEARD: You were great. DAN MCGINN: I just want to start answering. [LAUGHTER] ALISON BEARD: Okay, let's stop asking questions, and start giving him some answers. HAL GREGERSEN: I can't not think, what's the long view here for him? It is so easy when we're young to have the short view, and I think when we're young, especially, we have that notion of quarterly reporting. It's almost like it's what he's engaged in with himself versus what's the long view here. DAN MCGINN: In your experience, do most people by the time they're in their late 20s have a view of where they want to be long term? I guess one of the questions I would wonder is whether he's, if he doesn't have that, and that's kind of why he seems a little bit rudderless about this stay or go question. So, for me, the first question I've got for him is, what is the challenge that you care so deeply about that you can't not do something about it? You have to act on it. My hunch is, this listener doesn't have that sort of grand challenge as Brad Smith who is the chairman of Intuit right now, and used to be the CEO put it, a grand challenge. ALISON BEARD: To Dan's point, I think that's sometimes hard to know in your late 20s. And what I would say to him, someone his age is that what you should focus on at that point is whether you're learning, and getting the skills that will move you in that direction. And the fact that he has this great manager who's constantly teaching him, and fighting for him, that to me is a positive sign. We don't know if he loves pharmaceutical manufacturing, we do know that he cares about money, but what really matters in terms of career development is that piece of it, that learning. HAL GREGERSEN: And when I realized that he'd been in a manufacturing facility for two and a half years, and done actually quite good work, that's incredible. Because either the company's incredibly screwed up, or he's figured out a way to engage well with the world on the factory floor, and that is not trivial. That signals a lot of really interesting skills to be able to pull that off and do that well over the course of time. ALISON BEARD: And he's getting promoted, and he's getting more money. HAL GREGERSEN: And so, I'm going to make a huge leap of faith here that he's, in fact, getting promoted for the right reasons, which is, at least in that factory floor space, he's figuring out real challenges, people that he's working with acknowledge, that's a real challenge, let's do something about it, and collectively they've worked super hard, and taken full advantage of everyone's skillset to make a difference. That's a good thing. DAN MCGINN: Especially when somebody is in their 20s when they're getting promoted, and they're getting big raises. Do you get concerned that those things might lead them to stay in a job and not ask those big questions about meaning, or purpose, or long-term plan? HAL GREGERSEN: If pay and promotions become the endpoint, they are enormous ego drivers in the world of work. I'm not saying they're unimportant, but if they become paramount games over for a leader actually making a difference that matters. ALISON BEARD: It seems like he is willing to take a broader view in that he wants to explore opportunities at other organizations, but we've actually published research by Monika Hamori at IE Business School in Spain saying that job-hopping to the top is one of the biggest career fallacies. She studied 14,000 executives and found that actually staying in an organization was how you got promoted faster and got a higher salary. Now we're encouraging him not to think about those things because we want him to think about learning and development, and what his big challenge is, but at the same time, if that's what he cares about now we should also assure him that it doesn't matter, he can stay within and still get that pay and rise if he wants to if he seizes all these opportunities we're talking about. HAL GREGERSEN: What's really interesting on that, Alison, is the following to me, we to us, one of my sons-in-law, he had a job originally when he got out of his MBA program at a legacy insurance firm. But it was in the marketing area, and the digital marketing area, and he was trying to learn what he could about it. At the same time, he loves sports, so he started the start-up here locally in Boston around the sports love that he had. It didn't thrive and become very big, but he learned a lot of skills about start-ups. And then he got hired by Amazon to work in the live streaming of sports events at Amazon. And so, over the course of six to seven years, he was acquiring all the skills that were like spot-on for that next space, but he was intentional about it. And so, I'm all for the long run within an organization, as long as I answer the following question, if I stay in this organization for the long run, will it build me into the leader I want to be in the long run. DAN MCGINN: Should he feel guilty about staying at this company for more than two and a half years? HAL GREGERSEN: Well, guilt often comes from some expectation inside of us that we're supposed to be X, but we're not, and therefore there's something wrong with us. Now, he may be feeling guilty because of a very inaccurate assumption. If you look at the Bureau of Labor's statistics in the U.S. for the last ten years roughly, people aren't moving any faster than they did ten years ago. So, the perception might be that we've just got to do all these fast moves, but in fact, that's not necessarily true. ALISON BEARD: I think it gets into social comparison and FOMO also, you see on Facebook or Twitter somebody has an amazing new job in a new city, and you think to yourself, am I ambitious enough, am I doing the right thing by staying in this job. But I would tell this letter writer, if you are happy, and learning, and have a great manager, and they're promoting you, yes, stay. I feel very firmly that that's my answer. DAN MCGINN: That was a full-throated endorsement. ALISON BEARD: I know. HAL GREGERSEN: On the one hand, Alison, I agree with you, but on the other hand there's a strong argument to jump from industry, and from city to city. And here's the argument, from data that we've collected from over 20,000 leaders during the past 15 years, what we know from that data is, someone who's worked in two industries, or in two countries or more, doubles the probability that they'll be able to generate valuable new ideas, new products, new services, new press, new businesses. ALISON BEARD: Yes, but I don't think you have to do it in two and a half years. I think he could stay five until he gets to the end of that learning curve, and is fully ready to jump off. HAL GREGERSEN: Totally. Okay, I'm with you. DAN MCGINN: I'm struck that he mentions in passing, I have a great manager who's constantly teaching me and fighting for me. As if that's just kind of a natural everyday experience. That's really rare, and I wonder if he's undervaluing that attribute of what he has right now. ALISON BEARD: Yeah, and I think he can also think about what he's learning from that boss that excites him, which will go to what Hal is suggesting about what's this grand plan for my career. And also, how is he fighting for me, and if that's development opportunities in addition to the pay and the time off, that's a really good sign. So, Dan, what are we telling him to do? DAN MCGINN: First, we are concerned that he might be a little bit too focused on pay, and promotion, and benefits. We'd love to know more about what he cares about, what his long-term plan and purpose are, what kind of problems he thinks matter, and whether he can get into a job where he feels like he's solving those. He may feel some of these things around this job, it's just not obvious from the letter, and he seems a little bit too focused on ego-driven pieces of the professional life. As to his core question, does he need to move horizontally to get ahead, should he always be looking for a job? We don't necessarily think so. We think he needs to focus a lot more on the learning curve that he faces in this job. We think if the learning curve is steep, if he's acquiring new skills, and if those skills are ones that he thinks over the long-term he'll need in the kind of leadership role that he wants, there's a good case to be made for staying. But it's not about the promotions, it's not about the pay, it's not how many weeks of paid time off, he should focus on the development opportunities, what his manager's teaching him, and keeping that learning curve steep. ALISON BEARD: Dear HBR: I currently work at a healthcare start-up where I'm an associate director of product management. I'm pretty much the only employee handling that function. I enjoy many aspects of my current job, my expertise is valued, I'm having a big impact, and I'm close to the heart of the business. It's been eye-opening for me. I have a career path, potential for growth, and stock options here. The issue is that there's too much work, working weekends, and night is the norm. I've been with this company for only about seven months, and I'm already feeling burnt out. I've talked to my manager about getting help. First, she said we didn't have the money. Then she said we didn't have time to look for and interview people, and we're only going to get busier. I'm not able to keep up with all my manager's demands. I can sense that she's increasingly unhappy with me. The workload and the strained relationship with my boss make me quite stressed out. I'm not sure how long I can keep going. I interviewed for a product manager position at a big bank and got an offer. But I would be starting pretty much at entry-level of this function within the company because my years of healthcare experience and my master's degree in healthcare policy and management isn't of much value to them. It's a more bureaucratic place, and the pay is about 10 to 15% lower than what I now make. But it would give me better work/life balance, and they offer 16 weeks of maternity leave, double what the start-up would give me. I have one kid and plan to have another. So, should I stay at my current company? Or should I accept the offer? Okay, speed round, questions at the top of our head, go. HAL GREGERSEN: Does she really want autonomy or consistency? ALISON BEARD: Is she suited for start-up life, especially as a working mom who wants to have another child? DAN MCGINN: Is there anything that's going to solve this work/life balance at the start-up? ALISON BEARD: Does she see a light at the end of the tunnel in terms of getting more help? HAL GREGERSEN: What would light look like at the end of the tunnel? DAN MCGINN: Since it seems like there's a family consideration here with one child, a potential second child, and maternity leave, is there a partner in her life, and what does the partner think about all of this? ALISON BEARD: Has she done her due diligence on the bank, and what her work life would be there? DAN MCGINN: Can she use the bank's offer to get a counteroffer that focuses not on money, but on time, and nights and weekends more free than she has then now? ALISON BEARD: Hal, what is your reaction to this person feeling so burnt out after only seven months? HAL GREGERSEN: When we're in this deep burnout mode, it is so easy to forget context. And context number one is, she's at a start-up. She's probably going to be working quite long hours, long hours, long weeks, it's just how it's going to be. The second part is, my hunch is the prior job she had was longer than seven months, which is how long she's been in this one. And so, whatever she does, I would say, give yourself a little more space. Seven months is not enough to come to a legitimate conclusion should I stay or should I go. ALISON BEARD: But she does seem at the breaking point, and doesn't seem to be getting any help from her manager. There's no light at the end of the tunnel. HAL GREGERSEN: My sense though is, and this is where my question in my head was, what approaches to leading and working and managing will she carry with her whether she stays or goes? And one of the implicit approaches here, at least as we heard from her letter, is that she's been a little hesitant to talk to her own manager about the difficult things. Part of getting out of that tunnel is, I think, engaging in the tough, likely difficult conversation about what's really going on here. DAN MCGINN: When she has that conversation, should she be transparent, and tell the boss that she has an offer and is contemplating leaving? Or is that just throwing gasoline on a bad situation? HAL GREGERSEN: At some point that might be relevant, but it wouldn't be my jumping out of the gate approach to this situation. To me, if she is this burned out, there's a decent probability she's not alone. And if that's the case, then I would make the issue bigger than me, if I were her, which is here are some situations going on. I would actually get out of my world, and into the world, and collect a little bit of data, if I could, about it's just not me, but here's what's going on. And given that situation, at an underlying system level, what might we do differently to address this issue. Because none of my colleagues, my peers, we can't persist this way. ALISON BEARD: Yeah, she makes the point that initially the boss said we can't get you help because we don't have the money, now it seems they do have the money, they just don't have the time. And this seems like something they should devote the time to, make the time for, because it will save everyone's time in the future. So, to make that case alone, you want me to work weekends? Okay, the next weekend I work I'm going to look at resumes, and I'm going to interview people, and we are going to get some more people in here to help. HAL GREGERSEN: I was thinking the exact same thing, Alison, which is this instead of going down some dark, desolate tunnel, it's like here's this opportunity of light, which is why don't I take the initiative to help solve this system problem. Which means I might spend a little bit of extra energy going through those resumes and pulling some people into the system. If I step back enough to think what are the system issues that we have created that have caused this problem, and not only hire someone, but help solve a couple of the system issues, I've just made my life better, but I've also become a better leader. ALISON BEARD: Don't just hire someone, establish a protocol for hiring someone. HAL GREGERSEN: It could be that, exactly. DAN MCGINN: Do people view moves across industries with this idea that there's this huge cost, and that I've put all this time in it, and it will all be for naught and is that realistic? HAL GREGERSEN: Moving from one industry to another can be at least as difficult as moving to a different country. It's huge. Now, the advantage of making that move is that I learn a different way of looking at the world. And that's something that if I were in her situation, I would seriously think about. DAN MCGINN: As a positive. HAL GREGERSEN: As a positive. It's like, I'm leaping into the banking world, I'm clueless about this. I'm going to put on my growth mindset, and learning mindset, and like what could I gain here that I didn't know from the healthcare. And this is where if she had that attitude, it could not only make it a learning experience as she drops into it, but she then can transform what sort of feels like a negative healthcare experience into a positive. ALISON BEARD: For me, the dilemma is that she's at this weird place in her life where she can't be all in on work, she can't keep up with that really dynamic environment possibly because she's a mom, and she plans to have more kids. And so, I would encourage her to take a step back, and just think to herself, is this the right time in my life for me to be throwing myself into a start-up, and getting that kind of experience, or is it a better time for her to be at a slower moving workplace. But we really want her to think carefully about what she values most, stability or autonomy, and let that drive her in this decision. DAN MCGINN: Dear HBR: I've worked at the same nonprofit for 11 years, first as an individual contributor, then moving my way up to a program manager. I developed a strong interest in non-profit management and leadership. I did additional coursework to improve my skills and knowledge. However, whenever my organization is short-staffed due to turnover, I'm expected to make sure that the revenue-generating work is getting done. That often means doing it myself while still taking care of manager duties. This means I spend a lot of time doing work I already know how to do, and not enough time developing my leadership skills, which is what I really want to do. I have a wonderful boss, and I've talked to her about these concerns, but she says that taking over peoples' duties is, unfortunately, part of my job. The next level up for me in this organization is an executive role. I want to get there eventually. How will I move up if I don't have the chance to develop and prepare? Should I look into growth opportunities, and leadership roles, at other non-profits? Or should I stay where I am because that's how things go in the non-profit sector? Let's brainstorm. HAL GREGERSEN: What equips a person to lead a non-profit? ALISON BEARD: Is it unrealistic to expect that you don't have to dig in and do the work, even when you're a manager? DAN MCGINN: Is there anything he can do to reduce turnover so that this happens less frequently? ALISON BEARD: So practical, Dan. HAL GREGERSEN: Does he love to get things done through other people? Or does he actually like doing the individual contributor work? DAN MCGINN: There's really really be different at another non-profit? ALISON BEARD: Why doesn't he think he's ready for the next level yet? HAL GREGERSEN: What is that next level in his mind? ALISON BEARD: What makes her a wonderful boss if she's not helping you? DAN MCGINN: Hal, what's your initial reaction? HAL GREGERSEN: It's a classic, but very prolonged dilemma of moving from individual contributor to leading other people. And 11 years in any organization is a long time, and it sounds like it's really moving from individual contributor to that management role has been the single major transition. I'm not honestly sure that he wants to give up the individual contributor work. DAN MCGINN: You sound like he's protesting too much here. That he's really good at individual contributor work, he's becomes who is she really at the core. I think honestly the could-I-stay-or-could-I-go question is really a moment of ambivalence for any of us. We're not quite sure that's the question. And when we're in that uncertain moment, that's the time in which it's crucial, it's so crucial to take enough of a step back and take that careful look, be it career anchors, what's my purpose, what's my point to be able to make a decision? Because I think on the one hand she wants stability and security, and on the other hand, she wants autonomy and independence, and the excitement of a small organization. And so, those are deeply conflictual elements that she's not going to solve intellectually, it's going to be solved within soul around who am I, and which pattern is most me. DAN MCGINN: I think if she's going to try and stay at this job, I think she should try to draw some clearer boundaries around what kind of work habits and [work] life she's willing to take, and what she's not. Maybe there are certain nights of the week when she won't work. See if she can sort of draw some boundaries, and if she can't, I think she has her answer. ALISON BEARD: Yeah, my question was going to be, does that fly at a start-up? And I'm not sure it does. DAN MCGINN: I think if it doesn't, I think, she's got her answer, she's going to go work at the bank. ALISON BEARD: Right. DAN MCGINN: Alison, what's our summary? ALISON BEARD: First, we want to assure her that there is an adjustment curve to any new environment, so she should give herself some time to figure out how to operate in a start-up. We want her to make the conversation about more than just her own problems, but about how this is affecting the entire organization, and how it might be fixed. She could offer to do the hiring, again with the commitment to solving more than the immediate challenge, but figuring out a better way to bring people in. We think she might also want to draw some clear boundaries about what she's willing and able to do. If that's not possible it might be a sign that she should go to the bank. When evaluating this bank job, we want her to understand that it can be very valuable to switch industries, even when her expertise is in something else, and it might actually be the time of life for her to be at a slower moving workplace. 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