

The end of the summer often prompts a search for a new job, but if you're fed up at work, finding a new role is not always the answer. **Samantha Lyster** finds out more



TIME TO LOOK AHEAD

The suitcases have been unpacked, holiday gifts unwrapped and the duty-free purchases opened – then thoughts turn to Monday morning and the return to work.

According to University of Manchester professor of organisational psychology Cary Cooper, 76 per cent of employees estimate that their stress levels are back to the pre-holiday levels within a week of returning to work.

Post-holiday blues are inevitable for the majority of workers. However, if the time away highlights an employee's boredom

at work, then it's possible that a fresh start is needed.

Moving on from your present position does not always mean having to leave the company – a promotion within the organisation can help to prolong your interest in the business. However, clinching a promotion requires preparation and breaking out of the comfort zone by asking for help – something that many individuals still find difficult.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) believes the answer could lie with in-house coaching and

mentoring schemes. A survey of its members revealed about 72 per cent of organisations are using mentoring, while 88 per cent expect line managers to deliver coaching as part of their day-to-day work.

CIPD training, learning and development adviser Jessica Jarvis explains that gaining a mentor is an excellent way to progress through a retailer. It also enables a business to retain an employee who may otherwise be looking for a job elsewhere.

"Often, mentors are senior members of the organisation and can help by making

it more clear how that business works and what it is looking for," says Jarvis. "They can also introduce people to a person who they think might be able to help them."

Jarvis adds that while mentoring helps to explain the organisation to an individual, coaching can help them realise what skills they need to progress and how to get them.

CIPD has developed a certificate in coaching and mentoring to help managers develop the skills and knowledge to become highly effective in this area and contribute to both the company and their staff.

"THE ROLE OF THE COACH IS NOT TO GIVE PEOPLE ANSWERS, BUT TO GUIDE THEM TOWARDS REALISING WHAT THEY WANT FROM THEIR FUTURE"

HANNAH NUTLEY
LIFE COACH

Electricals chain Dixons has developed internal mentoring and coaching, with a high percentage of managers training in the career-boosting skills. "It's something we are very proud of," says a spokesman.

Jarvis says that if a retailer prefers to enlist the services of an external coaching service, they should gather references from previous clients. "It is important to gain as much information on their background as possible," she says. "You want to ensure it will bring benefit to the business, so it's a good idea to get references."

Life coach Hannah Nutley agrees that references are important, but says

retailers should also check with the International Coach Federation. She also suggests asking an individual what they want from the coaching before progressing, so everyone is clear of what is on offer.

"The role of the coach is not to give people answers, but to guide them towards realising what they want from their future," she says. "Coaching sessions give space to focus on what a person wants and how they are going to get that. We often get caught up in the day-to-day and this gives people time to break away from that and take control of their lives."

Once someone has achieved their goal of getting put in front of the people who can give them that job or promotion, the advice from Keith Hatter, chief executive officer at management performance specialist K2 Performance Systems, is to embrace the natural feeling of stress that comes with an interview and use it to give a better performance.

"Anxiety levels can be soaring, the cost of failure can be high and the competition intense," he says. "But remember that an interview is a raw performance, so preparation is important."

So if your dissatisfaction at work lasts longer than your suntan, it may be time to consider a change. **RW**

See www.cipd.co.uk for more details and to download a career guide

TOP TIPS FOR CAREER DISCUSSION

- Think about the importance of the setting. Good conversations often take place outside of any management or HR process. Many others take place in semi-formal settings, such as mentoring discussions, regular progress meetings with line managers, appraisal follow-up meetings or a job interview.
- Good conversations are sometimes unplanned. Valuable conversations with friends and work colleagues, for example, often happen spontaneously.
- Conversations usually take time. Allowing between 45 minutes and an hour is probably a good idea, but sometimes a short initial conversation is useful as a prelude to setting up a longer meeting.
- Preparation makes better use of career discussions. If you are going to talk through your career issues with someone else, you should make best use of their time, so collect relevant information in advance and think about the topics you wish to cover.
- Make discussions part of working life. Everyone needs to be aware of how to have effective career dialogue. The skills and attitudes for having these discussions needs to be part of mainstream workplace culture and incorporated into staff training.

Source: CIPD

TOP 10 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

1 Remember that an interview performance has many components – your technical skills are unlikely to be a differentiator. However, an ability to tell stories about your experiences, such as how you have faced and overcome adversity, will be inspiring and say a lot more about you than a CV.

2 Rehearse the interview in your mind several times. Think of it as a TV screen where you see your body double in the picture. Adjust the picture, changing it until the image is just right, then step into the part and see how you feel. Do this little and often and by the time you get into the interview it will feel like you've done this many times before.

3 Think hard about the style of the person or people interviewing you – consider their pace and tone of speech, body language, how they express themselves and match their behaviour to create a rapport. However, be subtle because mimicking them is unlikely to help.

4 Talk to yourself about the interview and remember all those times when you have shown great interview qualities – confidence, calmness, energy and vision – in whatever circumstances. Write them down or recall the time in your mind and go back to them often.

5 Great performers know that before a peak they need to taper. The volume of preparation reduces and the intensity increases. Swotting to 3 am the morning of the interview is not a great idea, so do the preparation well before and focus on relaxing and using your imagery work immediately before the big day.

6 On the technical side, how much do you know about your prospective employer? Taking time out to visit their web site, get their company report and talk to people who work or used to work there will help you get a feel for their style and culture. More and more organisations are seeing cultural fit as a key success factor.

7 Take into account the time of the interview. Is it a time when you are normally at your best, or at a time of day when you're still waking up or feeling sleepy after lunch? If it's at a time when you're not your best, think about things you can do – take lunch a little earlier or later and, better still, ask for an interview time when you know you're at your best.

8 Elite performers know what their ideal performance state is – do you perform at your best when you're relaxed or hyped up? Whichever it is, do those activities that help you get in the zone. Playing the right sort of music can help.

9 Think about your nutrition and hydration. A chocolate bar and fizzy drink will certainly give you an initial rush, though it will soon be followed by a big drop in your blood sugar, with a resulting loss in concentration. Dehydration will also adversely affect your performance. Drink water, little and often, and fuel yourself on foods that release their energy slowly, such as fruit.

10 Finally, whatever the outcome, remember to learn from the result. If you get the job, what did you do well? Knowing this will help you repeat successes again in future. If you didn't get the job, think about the reasons – perhaps it wasn't right for you, in which case it's best for both parties. Find out why and think about how you might do things differently next time. Remember, it's feedback.

Source: K2 Performance Systems