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Network and Think About What Makes a Good Boss

Kat outlines from her personal experience five key characteristics of good bosses: they listen, ask you how you want to tackle a project before telling you how to do it, expose you to growth opportunities, may let you fail but not let you fall, and keep in touch. Based on her recent experience, she discusses how to approach the decision to change positions.

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Kat's advice is: ***Network at meetings and conferences so that when jobs are available, your name comes up in the conversation. Consider the characteristics of a good boss and how that will impact your career decisions.***



Dear Young Pharmacist,

As you continue to grow through your career, one of your toughest decisions will be leaving one position for another. You may decide that you need to move across the country for career or personal reasons, to work with a different boss or team, to have more opportunities and career growth, or to decrease your responsibilities and focus on other areas of your life. All of these, and other reasons, are valid. If you are continuing to meet expectations in your position, no one but you can decide when it is time to look for a new opportunity.

Let me tell you about how I made that decision the first time. I was about 3½ years into my first position out of residency and was lucky to be hired into a team that worked very well together, allowed me to develop my leadership style with mentoring from my Director, and exposed me to other leaders in pharmacy across the city and state. I was happy, I was learning, and I wasn't sure I was looking for a change.

During my time in that role, my Director exposed me to new experiences and mentored me in preparation for my next position, although I knew she didn't want me to leave. She encouraged me to be involved at the system and hospital level for informatics and operations. I was surprised to find that one of my least exhilarating rotations during residency turned out to be an extremely good fit for me, and informatics has been an area of growth and interest of mine ever since. I was asked to lead projects, which exposed me to nursing and physician colleagues. I was also given opportunities to be involved in state and local organizations, which enhanced my networking, project management, and leadership opportunities and skills. If you are lucky enough to work for someone who is able and willing to provide you with these learning opportunities—take them! Don't forget to ask for feedback along the way. As painful as it is, you are more likely to learn from your failures and missteps than from your successes (although those are fun, too).

Big projects were on the horizon—things I was excited to participate in at my hospital. However, something was missing. I was at a point where I was ready for more responsibility but wasn't ready to be a director. I have to admit, when I was in your shoes, I didn't think I'd ever be ready or interested in being a director. However, as I gained more experience, I decided it was something I would definitely consider. That being said, I wasn't really sure how to go about looking for my next position. But as it turned out, I didn't have to.

This is where all that networking you do at meetings and conferences comes in handy. When jobs open up, your name may be mentioned in conversation. You may have a former colleague, employer, or employee recommend you. I was lucky enough to be in this situation when I received a call about a job similar to mine but in an academic medical center. I had completed my residency in an academic medical center. Although I truly enjoyed my experiences at a community hospital in a large health system, the breadth of experiences at an academic medical center was appealing to me.

It was a hard decision, but I knew that moving into this new role would open more doors for me in the future. More opportunities were available for transitioning into various roles within this same institution. As a result, in my 2 years at that academic medical center, I held three different roles. I gained valuable experi-