



“Prioritizing What You Want in a Position” – BLOG POST

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— in the nicespeechlady.com “SLP Job-Seeking-Land” Series.

It is time for a new position. For a variety of factors, you have decided it is time to move on. Perhaps you problem-solved all you could, and it is clear that it is time for a fresh start. You could already have offers coming your way, and it is time to decide/prioritize on what you want — moving forward. This blog post’s purpose is to outline factors to consider when prioritizing what you desire in a new SLP position.

— Setting Change

Perhaps the current setting you are working in has lost its luster, perhaps it is time for a change in population altogether. It is possible that the setting did not turn out to be what you had hoped. Perhaps there have been changes in the industry and these changes have lead you to question remaining in your current setting. Or, changes coming down the pike are undesirable. For a nicespeechlady.com listing of desirable vs. undesirable factors to consider, setting by setting, click [here](#).

A complete change in setting is a bold move, and it is important to consider your history with this setting. It just might be the change you need at this point in your career. You may want to seek out a mentor if your exposure to the target setting is limited. Or, at least a peer that is willing to assist you with your questions as you make the transition. Even if you are an experienced SLP in the field that you are considering returning to, there may have been changes to get brushed-up upon. Consider taking continuing education courses, or listening to new podcasts may be indicated in the interim. An additional factor to also consider is the desired change to a new setting may not also develop into what you desire, and have a contingency plan to return to your current setting/consider your options in your area to remain in the same setting (but possibly with a different employer). It is important to leave your setting on a good note, and not burn any bridges — as you may never know what the future may hold.

— Employer Change, but Same Setting

The change that is needed may not be with the setting itself, but the issues that need to be resolved may lie in your current employer. You may decide that another company — but the same role — may be just what you



need. You may feel that your current setting is a perfect fit for you; however, how your company manages aspects of the job that you care about is just not your “cup of tea.” You may have been offered a position from a former employer, and they may be pursuing that you cross over to a new company. In considering this change, learning an entirely new documentation system may be a challenge, and you need to be prepared for that. Also, the new company may manage aspects of the job in a different way and it will be important, if possible, to have a curiosity about how the company does things. It would be ineffective to assume the new company makes decisions and manages factors of the job as the previous employer. Nothing sours a manager-employee relationship faster than communicating: “well, my last company did it this way” Keeping an open mind about all changes that will come your way will serve you well. This transition may be just what the doctor ordered.

— Lateral Move, Same Company

Remaining with your current employer but switching locations or satellite offices — which may or may not come with a new supervisor — may be your ticket. Your employer may have opportunities in different locations that might be a great change for you. One positive of this choice is that there would not be an interruption in your health insurance and other benefits — there would not need to be a starting of payment on a new policy’s deductible or out-of-pocket medical expenses. Sometimes, companies grow and letting your current employer know you are open to lateral moves might open the door to the change you have been desiring. Another advantage to this option may be that your years with the company would continue on your resume, rather than starting over. As well, you already have a knowledge of the EMR system and a general idea of how the company operates – so changes would just be specific to the new location.

— Work-Life Balance Factors

The phrase “work-life balance” involves buzz words we hear often these days. How to maximize factors that lead to being unbalanced in the workplace is a priority to many. To hear a podcast by the nicespeechlady.com owner on just this subject, with the goal of reducing or not exacerbating mental health or stress conditions, in the “Tips and Truth” podcast, click [here](#).

Specific Work-Life Balance Factors to Consider include:

- Laid Back vs. Intense Environments

Some settings and employers are more laid-back in atmosphere, and other may be more intense.

Perhaps a fact-finding expedition to determine where the new position falls in this continuum may be indicated. Determining the expectations in such a setting would be beneficial as well.



- Hours per Week

Certain employment arrangements may have less hours/week than other opportunities. Finding out the average time per week is helpful, and what would the expectation be for you in that position from your employer. Of course, this would also directly impact pay, which is another factor to consider. For some SLPs, less pay but more time for personal hobbies and pursuits might be advantageous.

- Paperwork After Hours

Certain employers may have the job setup in a fashion that requires some after-hours paperwork activities. Finding out if that is the case will be important if considering work-life balance. For some, after-hours paperwork might be tolerable if it means there is another pay-off, such as flexibility in scheduling.

- Scheduling Flexibility

Depending on if you are a person who has a family, or there are outside personal commitments that are important to you, how flexible a schedule may be could be a deciding factor when keeping work-life balance in mind. For example, if a position would not allow you time to important school events for a family member, this might be a “no-go.” If there is a need for a “mental health day” on occasion with an opportunity to makeup this time later in the week, is this looked down upon? Could some weeks be more intense so that when scheduled activities in your personal life arise, is there an opportunity to be available? Or, you might be a person that does better with a consistent 8 to 5 work-week, and this may not be a priority for you.

- Stress vs. Mindfulness Opportunities

Are there opportunities to take breaks to “re-group,” emotionally? If mindfulness practices or similar activities are important to you, do you have opportunities to partake in them during the day in order to re-focus, re-fresh and re-think? There may be a quiet room in order to perform meditation on a regular basis. There may be a place to listen to soft music 20 minutes a day as your break. Could you take a walk around the block on your lunch break? Does your potential employer have these facilities or opportunities for you? Speak to other employees in the company, and what is the vibe? Does everyone come off as stressed, or is it a light and supportive atmosphere? Is self-care encouraged? Are there programs to learn about self-care if you desire to pursue it? All factors to consider.

— Income Factors

This is a biggie — pay. Will the change result in at least a continuation of current pay, or perhaps an increase? Avoiding a decrease in pay of course would be the goal if finances are an important factor, which they are for many. Pursuing data and facts on the going wages in your area per setting is vital. Payscale.com allows for a customized analysis of a position you are applying for. Click [here](#) to start the process/receive the information.



The Bureau of Labor and Statistics also has an analysis for speech pathologists per setting; click [here](#).
Glassdoor also has analyses of salary based on employer; click [here](#).

Negotiating pay can be a complicated process. It is important to relay the special certifications and trainings you have under your belt so to proposition for a higher wage or salary. Also, depending upon the setting, if the caseload drops, does your pay as well? Another factor regarding pay is inquiring how often you can expect consideration for a raise.

So much of pay comes down to supply and demand. If desiring to move to a new location, it may be beneficial to consider an area that does not have a nearby master's degree program in speech pathology, as then the supply will be less, driving up salaries due to a higher demand. Moving to a remote area may result in higher pay.

— Benefits Factors

Just like pay, the nature and quality of the benefits package can be a deciding factor in deciding to accept a position. It may be that the pay may not be optimal, but there may be a fantastic benefits package. It is important to remember that benefits are not taxed, so this should be taken into account when deciding if a new job will be a good fit financially. Out of pocket choices in health care plans can make a big difference on your pocketbook, and if an SLP has a family, this can make an impact. Another factor to consider when pursuing changing jobs is that you may want to make the move, if possible, when the new benefits year starts rather than in between time frames — so to avoid having to fulfill new deductibles, co-insurance and out-of-pocket maximums again, for less than a year. However, the open position may not be available later down the line, so this needs to be weighed as well. Does the company offer license/ASHA reimbursement or payment? Is there a loan-assistance repayment benefit? Are CEUs reimbursable? Before making the move, fact-find the rates of your current employer's COBRA plan, if this applies to you. Three months of astronomical payments for a new position due to the need for COBRA may not even out the change at any given point. What are paid time off benefits? How much time is needed when asking for time off in advance? Is taking time off that you have accrued encouraged, or discouraged? Are there special tax benefits available, such as with traveling? Benefits packages may be advertised as competitive, but it is important to look at the details that can make a difference financially.

— Available Positives with a New Position

It is desirable to find out the totality of the perks besides benefits. Asking if the company provides a budget for purchasing therapy materials can be beneficial. What are other employees saying are the strengths in the company? What kind of support is present? Each company has its positives and negatives — its strengths and



areas to improve upon. Knowing these up-front will make it easier when challenges come along down the road. What type of support is present for difficult-to-anticipate situations?

— Location Factors

Depending upon your desired location, cost of living needs to be factored-in once those offers come rolling in. Accepting an offer in Hawaii may result in high pay, but it can be a benefit to consider that the cost of a loaf of bread may be twice there as compared to where you are living now. Will you be isolated from family and friends? Is the new location sustainable for you? Will you have the support you need to take care of yourself, and your loved ones? Sometimes remaining in the same location may mean less opportunities, but more stability. On the other side of the coin, your desire for change might be met with a change in scenery, a change in location. Sometimes a fresh start is what a person needs to find their groove again.

— Anticipated Changes

Sometimes, it is not possible to anticipate major changes in a company, but sometimes, there is knowledge that there will be upcoming changes in the structuring of the company, such as perhaps a new corporation might be coming in for purchase. It is important to ask questions about major changes that are going to be coming down the pike. In asking about this, inquiring about if this will be anticipated to be a permanent position, or not. What are the plans for the company, long-term?

Hopefully, as you continue your quest for a new position at any given point in your career, this information will be helpful as you navigate “new-job waters.”

Good luck, job-seeker!