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Interviewer: Danielle Di Sano

Guest: Jenny Lyon

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TRANSCRIPT

Danielle: Hello and welcome to the Actuaries Institute career view podcast, I'm Danielle Di Sano. In this episode we're talking about the ethics of moving roles. How do you manage telling your boss and colleagues you're leaving? When should you speak up? How much do you say?

To help us navigate these tricky questions I'm joined today by Jenny Lyon, Director of SKL Actuarial a specialist recruitment consulting firm for actuaries. Jenny was also the president of the actuaries Institute in 2017. Jenny, welcome.

Jenny: Thank you Danielle, great to be here

Danielle: With the new year kicking into high gear, actuaries have either completed their exams or have just enrolled to begin their actuarial career journey, exciting times ahead for everyone but there can be many roles and new opportunities that present themselves at unexpected times especially at this early stage you might be in the middle of a new project or even a promotion, when the next role presents itself to you all of this can throw up some ethical dilemmas which require careful consideration. In my own career I've also been in situations where I've changed jobs to new positions outside an organization, within an organization and even moving into a different industry and while so far for me it's all worked out looking back I'm not sure I've always approached changing positions in an optimal way so be very interested to hear the views of an expert on this one,

So Jenny you've worked with actuaries at all different stages of their career journey especially around this pivotal time when job change is happening what are people's reactions normally in these circumstances what questions do you normally come across?

Jenny: Ok so when somebody starts to think about looking for a new job there are quite a lot of things they need to think about in terms of you know what they're trying to achieve and why they want to look for a new job but they also do get quite concerned about their existing position and how they should manage that thinking about looking externally, so they'll worry about how they're going to be able to go for interviews. Do they go during work time or do they have to go outside of work time? Who should they talk to about it? Should they talk to their manager about it.

At the early stage, particularly if they're going to get involved in a big project or they have key responsibilities, should they talk to their friends about it and get advice from them? and I think they then start to worry about things like how do I give notice? particularly if it's their first job I think that individuals are very nervous about moving from their first job and it becomes quite a big issue for them and how do they stay in contact with people that they've met so there are lots of things that people need to think about actually when they're thinking of changing jobs but at the end of the day I'll say to people, you know, you have to think about your career and you manage it and you need to take control of it so, some of these things are just to be worked through and at the appropriate time you'll be able to do that.

Danielle: Absolutely, well I'm really hopeful that for our listeners we can go through these things that you do need to work through so it is easier for them next time they do decide to change jobs. So, I guess let's pretend that I'm looking for a new job, for my manager I'll just say I'm not currently, but how about say that I've decided that 2018 is my year to find a new role. How would I go about looking for new jobs or going for interviews while I'm still in my current role?

Jenny: Well looking for a new job when you're in a job is much easier than when you don't have a job because an employer knows therefore that you are employed and so that is an advantage, it also gives you the opportunity to be able to talk about your experience and real-life matters so that in an interview situation you're often asked to - maybe are asked to talk about your strengths.

The best way of demonstrating strengths is by talking about a real example and being able to show what level of responsibility you've had. How much input you have actually had into a particular area? and be able to demonstrate those skills.

Danielle: Okay so let's say I've decided that either on what role I'm looking for now. When do I start talking to people about my desire for a role change? I guess both externally within the industry and internally in my own company

Jenny: So, let's address internally first because that sometimes is where people get concerned. I think you need to remember this is your career and you're responsible for it and whilst you have a responsibility to the workplace. You also have a responsibility to yourself and 'confidential' is an interesting word you can ask people to keep things confidential but as soon as you tell your manager that you are looking for another job, they know that and it factors into their thinking so I believe in keeping it to yourself until you're actually ready to resign in terms of your existing manager.

I was going to give you an example here which is not actually related to changing jobs but I when I was working as an actuary I had it scheduled a meeting to talk about the year ahead and my career and what I wanted to do with my job and I had delayed this meeting for two or three weeks on purpose because I knew that I was pregnant and expecting my first child. I didn't really want to have to discuss that until I was comfortable in telling my manager that the meeting had to happen so I did ask for confidentiality to have to untold my manager that this was happening and therefore that was going to impact from what was happening during the year.

The next day, two or three senior people came up to me and were congratulating me on being pregnant and I felt as if I had not been treated with respect really in terms of my confidentiality and I suppose that's my point that in the circumstances this was all okay but I still feel that it's only confidential while you hold the information as soon. As you tell somebody else, they may just forget that you asked them to hold it confidential

So I think you don't need to tell your manager there is a point in the process where you may feel more comfortable about doing so. So particularly if you need a referee, if you've only had one job you may feel that your manager is the best person to give you a reference however even as you can wait, sometimes you can be given an offer from an employer and it's contingent on a reference once you know that you've got the job.

Danielle: And what about people in my organization other than my direct manager. Would you recommend me talking informally to my colleagues or anyone else in the organization?

Jenny: That depends why you want to talk to them about it if what you want is some advice then it may be useful to do so, so you may want to use someone as a reference who you have worked with again and wait so long as a fair way down the process if that was my purpose you may want to talk to friends that you have in order to get some information and I think that's a very valid thing to do and but you do have to ask them to maintain confidentiality and my point still exists that once you tell people then other people know but it can be useful to get some advice and you might get advice from friends who work in other organisations too and it might be you can frame it around you know this is the sort of thing that interests me, can we have a talk about what you do in this role? it doesn't have to be 'I am going out to look for another job'.

Danielle: Well on to a bit of a more tricky subject then what if you just been promoted fairly recently or you'd been promised a big project fairly recently. Would that change your perspective of when you should tell people?

Jenny: I think it might be something that I would recommend an individual talk to a potential new employer about so it's quite valid to go into an interview situation and say these opportunities come up. This was my ideal job but the timing is not perfect because I have this three month project that I need to deliver on and so I wouldn't actually be able to start this role for three months, rather than my one month notice period and I think employers actually respect that you would be prepared to do that and therefore it's something that you can try and manage and it may be that you have been promised something which is so positive that you decide not to take that alternative job, but should you not look at the alternative job? not necessarily I don't think you should reject these things if you have made your mind up that you want to look for new opportunities or if for example you know you wanted to be an appointed actuary and the job comes around then that doesn't happen very often there are a limited number of those roles within the market and so it would be foolish not to look at it even if you had just had a new promotion and a new opportunity within the organisation

Danielle: Yeah well absolutely, it sounds like a key message that you're giving to our listeners is that they should be putting themselves first when it comes to their career. Is there any limits to that?

Jenny: I guess that's a good question so yes I think there are we are a very small industry and a small profession and you know the further you go through it the more you realize that everybody does know everybody else and so you must treat people that you work with, with respect so if you're giving notice then you should be talking to your employer about why you're moving on for the positive reasons not because you're unhappy in your role or because you have an issue with the way in which things are done. I think it's really important to maintain those relationships. You never know when that person might end up and you could be working for them within a different organization so one thing that you can do. Having said you know what you do want to maintain a good relationship with the organization and with the individuals, but it is an opportunity to actually give feedback to a company if there have been issues from your perspective and it doesn't have to be done in a negative way, it can be done in a very positive way.

I mean I can remember having exit interviews where senior management are looking for you to give them some feedback about what might be going wrong and I think if you did have an issue, there's an opportunity that you can take to give some constructive feedback.

Danielle: Okay and what about once I've given my notice? Do you have any tips on how I can finish up work on a strong note?

Jenny: Well, continue to work hard I think that it's quite difficult once you have resigned and you know that you're moving on it can be quite do-able to maintain the focus that you might have had and obviously coming from a position of where you're handing things over but I think if you can do it as genuinely and as respectfully as possible, then you do maintain a good relationship with people

I'm not personally a great believer in long notice periods because I do think that there's a switch once you know that you're going no matter how committed you are, yes you're still coming from a different perspective however some companies do prefer that long period and look you just got to work with it you've got you've got to go into it knowing what they're signing up for and go with it

Danielle: From my limited experience it seems to be more of a changing roles internally thing, you tend to have longer notice periods compared to if you're moving externally would you say that?

Jenny: Not necessarily, these days there are many more organizations that are having notice periods of up to three months and that's just because it can take quite a long time to recruit somebody into a new role and so having them there for that three months is helpful and it depends on the type of role and often you can negotiate on that so that is something that if you've got a long notice period if you talk to your organization about it they may well be flexible on it they have it there to protect themselves in case they need you

Danielle: Is it ever not a good idea to make the call to leave your current role or your current company?

Jenny: so there can be personal circumstances which might make it not such a great thing to do.

I suppose if you're going to have a family and you want to work part-time it can be easier to move to a part-time basis if you're already well established within an organization and that might apply male or female but if your plan is that you would like to change your work habits in any way and it might be that you want to go and study and you want to work part-time. Typically we wouldn't get many organizations coming to us saying we need somebody to work three days a week but often people can negotiate it internally because they've already demonstrated that they're a great worker. They know that people know that you'll deliver so that might be a reason that you decide not to move. You might be able to get as better opportunities internally you know I mean I do think that whenever you look at a job and you've got a job offer on the table. it's not a question of do I take this job or not. You're comparing it with where you are now as well and it's just as valid a decision to say do I stay in my own job or not and I am as an actuary obviously very unethical in my approach to these things.

I like to look at the positives, I look at the negatives and I weigh it all up but ultimately I still come back to instinct and gut feel.

Am I going to be disappointed in myself if I stay in this job? Am I not taking the new job because I'm a little bit scared? because it's changed and you know you have to go with your gut and if you feel no I'm really happy where I am actually that looked like a great opportunity but now my company's

offering me something else below and stay there but if you're going to be disappointed in yourself because you didn't step over the cliff and take this new job then I think you should give yourself a bit of a push and go.

Danielle: It is a tricky balance though isn't it. I guess one of the things that many actuaries you know who do tend to be the analytical type of people sometimes struggle with is what is a typical career progression for an actuary? Are there steps or times when they should be considering taking a step or is it something that comes down to the individual?

Jenny: so one time that people often do take a change is when they finish studying and they qualify because they they've got a bit of time to have a look around at in the market but also because it's quite difficult to change people's perception of you internally if they have always seen with you if you start a job as a graduate being passing exams and you're doing great work but you're still seen as not a fellow for example then to get people to actually treat you any differently just because you now have this piece of paper.

it's quite a difficult thing to do and yet that is the time that you can springboard your career forward and so often within you know two years following qualification people do move in order to further their careers beyond that I would say when do you stop learning? you know if your job is confusing within a big organization and you're continuing to learn so there are people who've had very long careers within one company but in lots of different types of jobs then then that's okay but I think it's about recognizing yourself that if you're not actually learning anything new in your job then it's probably time to think about whether you should be looking elsewhere

Danielle: Right, so it's not a time-based thing more of an experience based thing?

Jenny: But I would say that you can't move too often if you're in a more traditional actuarial role because there are a limited number of organisations so if you work in general insurance there are so many general insurance companies and you can work your way around the market pretty quickly if you move every two years so you need to think about that. Obviously it's easier if you move out of actuarial and companies do actually look at your resume and see how often you've moved and for some people that's quite important, they want more than two years but if you've only worked for this in the same job for fifteen years, they're also going to be concerned about how easily you're going to transition into a new environment so I think people say typically, you know, five or six years is reasonable, you've demonstrated loyalty but you're also demonstrating your ability to change.

Danielle: So when you say you know people have been in the same role for fifteen years or the same company for fifteen years would that be different if the person had changed roles within the company numerous times?

Jenny: Yes it would but it's about them being able to articulate that and demonstrate it on their CV so that they can say I've learned these skills here and I've learned those skills here you know so they're able to talk about the change.

Danielle: right so it's demonstrating both loyalty and flexibility.

Jenny: Yeah best of both worlds is what employers want isn't it?

'Career View' Podcast

Episode 2 transcript – The ethics of moving roles



Danielle: Yeah well that's about all that we have time for we have covered a lot of ground though and I hope that our listeners have picked up some good tips for the next time they need to move roles.

So, listen out for future episodes coming soon. We'll be speaking with other recruitment specialists and career actuaries about their experiences, particularly we'll be looking at hot jobs for actuaries on how to define job satisfaction, should you consider working as a contractor? and how to prepare and present your resume. Thank you for joining us Jenny, your insights have been excellent!

Jenny: Thank you it's been lots of fun

Danielle: And thank you for listening. Look out for career articles on www.actuaries.digital and listen to the first episode in the career view podcast series on clarifying your interests and preparing for your next role and as always listeners we wish you well on your actuarial career journey get in touch with us using our email actuaries@actuaries.asn.au with comments on today's conversation and let us know what questions you'd like answered next on career view. I'm Danielle Di Sano, bye for now