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Resignation Preparation

Keep in mind that your employer probably will not be happy to hear the news of your departure. How you communicate your resignation can make a big difference.

Communicating Your Resignation

You must maintain a professional tone and posture while communicating your decision. The following are general rules of thumb to follow:

- **Do Not Delay** -- Waiting to avoid the inevitable only creates more stress for everyone involved. Unless you have a significant commission check (or similar payout) in question, give your 'notice of resignation' the first day you have made your decision. Once you get it over with you will rest much easier.
- **Give two weeks notice** -- This will give your employer time to look for—and possibly find—your replacement. If it will help, work with your supervisor to detail the qualities you see as most essential to your job. This will help when screening applicants.
- **Offer to help train your replacement** -- Document your essential duties and organize your files and notes so that the next person in your job has a good foundation to start from.
- **Ask your supervisor what you can do to make the transition easier** -- This is a thoughtful gesture that shows your current employer that you understand things from his or her perspective as well.
- **Keep it Professional** -- It is understandable to get attached to certain individuals you work with, but this is not the time to dwell on personal issues. After all, those relationships will always be there if they are really meaningful. Keep your focus on your motivation for moving on to greener pastures and your sight set on new business opportunities.
- **Don't Listen to Counteroffers** -- First of all, where was the "new" money, title, promotion, package, territory, private office, commission, boss, etc., before you gave notice to resign? Secondly, statistics do not lie. Counteroffers rarely work out for the employee or the employer. *The Wall Street Journal* has published several articles on the subject.

Chances are, your boss will be caught off-guard by your resignation, and will not be able to listen clearly to your explanations due to concerns about the sudden challenge your leaving presents. Because your boss is losing a valued employee, he or she may express negative opinions about your new firm or position. This will only confuse you. You may find yourself having to justify your personal goals and decisions or absorb the personal frustrations of others. For this reason, we suggest not discussing where you are going.

If you're dealing with volatile or vindictive personalities, it may be best to avoid revealing where you will be going.

The Oral Resignation

Resigning orally may place you in the compromising position of having to explain your decision on the spot. Words are powerfully charged when you reveal a decision which has such an impact on your organization. Choose your words with care. Your boss may want to probe for factors which led to your decision. You may be asked who or what is the reason for your leaving, or may be invited to offer suggestions to help make the organization more effective. If you have had a close relationship with your boss, you may feel obliged to answer candidly.

Don't fall for this trap! Use your head and discuss personal, heartfelt matters outside the office. Remember, your interrogator is still your boss. Whatever you say will be viewed as biased - after all, you have severed your relationship with this organization - and may eventually be used against you. At this point you are no longer considered a team player, nor viewed as having the company's best interest at heart.

Too often, resigning employees come to regret their comments when they are misinterpreted or exaggerated in the retelling. Constructive criticism is no longer your responsibility and carries a high cost which could jeopardize your good references.

Instead, offer sincere praise for the firm and those with whom you worked. Prepare yourself beforehand by focusing on several positive aspects of your workplace, and mention them liberally when the opportunity arises. Even if favorite aspects were, say, the great lunches, or humorous stories told over coffee, better to mention such things than to harp on disappointments or shortcomings. (These, you are addressing by moving on to greener pastures.) You want to be perceived as a positive, constructive individual in forward motion. People will remember your last impression. Make it your best performance. You may want to tell your boss something like:

"I need to discuss something with you if you have a moment. I've been made an exceptional offer by another firm, and I've decided to accept it. My wife and I have given this opportunity a lot of thought. As much as I'd like to advance within this company, we feel the new opportunity is in our best long-term interest. We deeply appreciate all you and the firm have done for me here. I don't think I would have been presented this exceptional opportunity if not for your support and leadership. I want to thank you. I hope I can leave with your good wishes. You've been a friend as well as a boss."

If probed for more information, you may want to claim that there is nothing else to say right now. Simply communicate that you are leaving a good opportunity for an even better one which suits your aspirations.

Writing a Resignation Letter

A resignation is official once you write, sign, and submit a resignation letter. Always write a resignation letter, and take it with you when you go to your supervisor to resign. Address it to your immediate supervisor, and include the date of your last day on the job. Written resignations give you the time to effectively prepare what you wish to communicate, and give you greater control over your delivery of the message. You can't be thrown off-track by an unexpected remark as can happen during a confrontational conversation. A written resignation also reinforces the fact that you are really leaving and are not simply threatening in order to renegotiate your position. Also, there is something permanent about the written word which often circumvents interrogation.

Under no circumstance should you state any dissatisfactions with the firm or individuals. Not only is it good manners to stress the positive when leaving, but items in your personnel file may long outlast the individuals and circumstances responsible for your dissatisfaction. You never know when your path will cross those of your former colleagues.

Letters get filed and passed around to explain what happened, reducing the call for endless orations on the same subject. They also dispel any perceived ambivalence in your behavior during this delicate time.

SAMPLE RESIGNATION LETTERS

Sample One

Date:

Mr. John Doe
ABC Company, Inc.
100 Main Street
City, ST Zip

Dear Mr. Doe,

I want to take this time to thank you for the professional relationship and leadership you have provided during my tenure here. I have thoroughly enjoyed the work environment and atmosphere provided by you and the company management.

I have accepted a new position with another company. My last day of employment with ABC Company will be Friday, December 15, 1999. My decision to leave ABC Company is final. I appreciate all that you have done for me in the past, and hope that we can maintain a cordial, professional relationship in the future.

Sincerely,

Sample Two

Dear Boss,

Please accept this letter as my official notice of resignation. I appreciate the work we have been able to accomplish together at (company name), but I have now made a commitment to another organization, and plan to begin with them in two weeks.

Know that it is my intention to work diligently with you to wrap up as much as possible in the next two weeks to make my resignation as smooth as possible. If you have any suggestions on how we can best accomplish that goal, I hope you will share your thoughts with me, as I am eager to leave on the most positive note possible.

Sincerely,

Sample Three

To keep your resignation short, simple, and positive, you may want to write something like:

"I want to thank you for all you have done for me here at [Company]. It's been a pleasure working with you, and representing the company as your [job title]. I have accepted an offer with another firm and have decided to tender my resignation as of today. This decision has nothing to do with the exceptional opportunity you have provided for me here. You and the company have been more than fair with me, and I genuinely appreciate all your support. I wish [Company] continued success, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of your team. Please feel free to contact me at any time if I can be of further assistance in helping with a smooth transition."

Sample Four

(Date)

Dear :

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation as (Title) for (Company) to become effective as of (Date). I have accepted a position in (Location). I believe this position will offer me more challenge and opportunity for advancement as well as allow me to broaden my own experience and knowledge. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and efforts in my training and advancement during the past (Time). The support and concern shown by you and the rest of the management team has been deeply appreciated. I leave (Company) with no animosity or ill will and wish you and your company continued success. My decision is irrevocable and any counter offers extended by you and/or (Company) will be rejected.

Sincerely,
(Your Name)

Sample Five

Dear _____,

This is to inform you that I have accepted a position with another firm. Therefore, I would like to offer my resignation effective _____. I want to assure you of my gratitude for a rewarding professional association during my employment with (current employer). This decision was not an easy one, and involved many days and hours of thoughtful consideration, particularly with respect to my own plans for my future. Nevertheless, the decision is final.

Please do not make this process more difficult than it need be by discussions of the reasons for my decision or whether it can be changed. My main thoughts now are to work as hard as possible to wrap up my affairs here and turn over my responsibilities as you direct. However, I would like to join my new firm as soon as possible. Therefore, if convenient, please notify me if you wish to waive my two week notice and conclude my employment any sooner than _____.

COUNTER OFFERS

Expect counteroffers. In today's economy, it is less expensive to try to keep you than to replace you. Companies are giving large increases or stay bonuses to keep you. However, surveys show that eight out of ten employees who accept counteroffers don't complete the following year with their employer. (*NBEW*, "Counteroffer Acceptance, the Road to Career Ruin" by Paul Hawkinson, 12-11-83).

Why shun counteroffers? Because the factors that caused you to seek or entertain a better offer are likely to remain in force. Beside which, your current employer will probably lose trust in your loyalty. Accepting a counteroffer may permanently damage your reputation with your would-be-employer. Your prospective new colleagues may conclude that you were merely using them to gain leverage; you weren't in earnest as a candidate. Never underestimate the value of your perceived integrity in this situation.

The best response to a counteroffer is to listen politely, perhaps even sleep on it, but decline. If your current firm denied you advancement before you secured an outside offer, it will probably thwart you next time you feel ready to advance. What's more, your firm may start looking to replace you the day you accept the counteroffer. Your plans for leaving may not be forgotten!

We have supplied three articles below that we feel are valuable when facing a counter-offer situation:

It's nice to be wooed, but don't expect to stay long

Source: The Wall Street Journal 1998. Reprint from the National Business Employment Weekly.

By Paul Hawkinson

A tax accountant with a Chicago-based public accounting firm accepted a top corporate position at a local manufacturer that paid \$15,000 more than he currently earned. But the accountant changed his mind after his firm's senior partner made him a counteroffer. The partner dangled a plethora of incentives, including the promise of a partnership in the near future. Three months later, after the tax season ended, the accountant was fired.

A manufacturing manager with a medium-sized metal products company in Albuquerque, N.M., accepted a new position that included a higher salary and better benefits. But he decided to stay put after his company agreed to match the offer and told him of great things on the horizon. However, he wasn't told that the firm might be merging with another. Six months after the executive decided to stay, he was merged out of his job. Following nine months of unemployment, he landed a lower-paying position. Ask any executive recruiter and you'll hear dozens of heartbreaking stories like these involving counteroffers. Unfortunately, more executives seem to be getting and accepting them because of the inconsistent economy. Companies are operating with reduced staffs and any defections from the ranks create problems for those who remain. It's much easier for employers to sweeten the pot to keep executives from deserting than to conduct grueling and expensive searches for placements.

These magnetic enticements designed to lure you back into the nest after you've decided it's time to fly away. But in good times, or bad, the dictum remains constant. Counteroffers should never be accepted...EVER! Those few rare instances where accepting one is beneficial occur about as frequently as being struck by lightning.

The Right Perspective

A counteroffer is an inducement from your current employer to get you to stay after you've announced your intention to take another job. It doesn't include instances when you receive an offer but don't tell your boss, or when you tell your employer about an offer you never intended to take in a classic "they-want-me-but-I'm-staying-with-you" ploy. These are merely positioning tactics that can reinforce your worth by letting your boss know you have other options. Mention of a true counteroffer, however, carries an actual threat to quit. Interviews with employers who make counteroffers, and employees who accept them, have shown that accepting a counteroffer--tempting as it may be--is tantamount to career suicide. Consider the problem in its proper perspective.

What really goes through a boss's mind when someone quits?

"This couldn't be happening at a worse time."

"He's one of my best people. If I let him quit now, it'll wreak havoc on the morale of the department."

"I've already got one opening in my department. I don't need another right now."

"This will probably screw up the entire vacation schedule."

"I'm working as hard as I can and I don't need to do his work, too."

"If I lose another good employee, the company might decide to 'lose' me too."

"My review is coming up and this will make me look bad."

"Maybe I can keep him on until I find a suitable replacement."

"We're working with a skeleton crew already. If I lose this one, we'll all be working around the clock just to stay even."

What will the boss say to keep you in the nest? These comments are common:

"I'm really shocked. I thought you were as happy with us as we are with you. Let's discuss it before you make your final decision."

"Aw gee. I've been meaning to tell you about the great plans we have for you, but it's been confidential until now."

"The VP has you in mind for some exciting and expanding responsibilities."

"Your raise was scheduled to go into effect next quarter, but we'll make it effective immediately."

"You're going to work for who?"

"How can you do this in the middle of a major project? We were really counting on you."

(They're always in the middle of one.)

Just a Stall Tactic

Let's face it. When someone quits, it's a direct reflection on the boss. Unless you're really incompetent or a destructive thorn in his/her side, the boss might look bad for allowing you to go. It's an implied insult to his management skills. His/her gut reaction is to do what has to be done to keep you from leaving until he/she's ready. That's human nature.

Unfortunately, it's also human nature to want to stay--unless your work life is abject misery. Career change, like all ventures into the unknown, is tough. That's why bosses know they can usually keep you around by pressing the right buttons.

Before you succumb to a tempting counteroffer, consider these universal truths.

- Any situation is suspect if an employee must receive an outside offer before the present employer will suggest a raise, promotion or better working conditions.
- No matter what the company says when making it's counteroffer, you'll always be a fidelity risk. Having once demonstrated your lack of loyalty (for whatever reason), you will lose your status as a team player and your place in the inner circle.
- Counteroffers are usually nothing more than stall devices to give your employer time to replace you. Your reasons for wanting to leave still exist.
- They'll just be slightly more tolerable in the short term because of the raise, promotion or promises made to keep you.
- Counteroffers are only made in response to a threat to quit. Will you have to solicit an offer and threaten to quit every time you deserve better working conditions?
- By accepting a counteroffer, you have committed the unprofessional and unethical sin of breaking your commitment to the prospective employer making the offer.
- Decent and well-managed companies don't make counteroffers...EVER! Their policies are fair and equitable. They will never be subjected to counteroffer coercion, which they perceive as blackmail.
- If the urge to accept a counteroffer hits you, keep on cleaning out your desk as you count your blessings. And, if you decide to stay, hire a lawyer to put your newly won promises in the form of a long-term no-cut contract.

THE MYTH OF THE COUNTER OFFER

MYTH:

My company thinks I am worth keeping, so they really want me to stay and are going to meet or exceed this offer. I am so flattered! Isn't this fun!

TRUTH:

- Consider that you are leaving your present employer for certain reasons, difficult conditions, personality problems, lack of benefits, etc. Would a counter offer change any of these? No. Consider the new opportunity that you would be giving up that looks so favorable.
- Ask yourself if you were worth "X" dollars yesterday, why are they suddenly willing to pay you "Y" dollars today. It is a fact that they will feel they have been "blackmailed" into giving you a raise when you announced your decision to leave. This will likely strain their budget, and was not planned for. Their decision is made out of panic and not as a reward for a job well done.
- Understand you are now a "marked" man or woman. The possibility of a promotion is extremely limited for someone who has given "notice". Further, they could merely be buying time until they can locate a replacement. Suppose you were given an annual raise of \$3,000 as a Counter Offer. When they find a replacement for you in, say 60 days, then the actual cost to them is only \$500.
- Statistics compiled by the National Employment Association confirm the fact that over 80% of those persons who elected to accept a counter offer and stayed, are no longer with the company!

- Think carefully about all these facts. Your professional career is at stake. You have a choice to move forward, or to risk all and remain where you are.

COUNTEROFFERS

Counteroffers are taboo! Some job seekers will say "That is just the recruiter talking". Bottom line, Counteroffers are Taboo!

First of all, we are addressing a counteroffer made by your current employer. Normally, a counter-offer occurs only after you accept an offer from a potential employer. Then you take the offer back to your current employer with the intention of resigning or with the intention of negotiating a raise based upon the offer from the potential employer. This is a definite no-no! If you question making a move, then you should never have accepted the offer from the potential employer. Do not put yourself, your current employer, and potential employer in this situation. If you can be so easily swayed by money, then you need to question your motivations for looking at the market place. You do not want to put your current company in a position to have to crawl back to you with a counter offer after you have accepted another offer. People have long memories and your current employer will remember that you put their feet to the fire. Think about it, if money is the only reason you are staying with a firm then you are with the wrong firm. There is another firm out there that will provide you with all the criteria you need to be happy.

You need to do your homework and be sure about your decisions before exposing your intentions or resignation. If you are not sure, then take more time to be sure before you expose yourself. There is nothing wrong with looking, but be careful who you tell. If you love your job and money is the only reason you are unhappy then try to work things out. Do not disclose you are looking or accept an offer until you have exhausted working things out with your current company. When you finally decide to look for another job, normally, money is the final "straw" and just the tip of the iceberg. If your current company knows you are looking and you accept an offer, then you accept a counter offer, all people involved will question your honesty and your current employer will always question your loyalty. In addition, your current company is now aware that you may leave as soon as someone offers you more money. You may be just buying them time to find your replacement. They will find a replacement on their terms not yours. The conclusion is, once you disclose you are looking or accept an offer; there should be no turning back.

The National Business Employment Weekly/The Wall Street Journal has conducted studies on counteroffers. The studies show job seekers fare poorly within a short period of time after accepting a counteroffer. Some estimates say within six months, you will be back looking at the market place. For the most part, the issues that bothered you prior to a counter offer, are the same issues that will bother you three months, six months or two years from now. By that time you may have wasted two years of happiness and success with a new company, but you are still stuck in a rut with the same company.