

THE DANGEROUS ALLURE OF COUNTEROFFERS

Once the often emotional decision to leave has been made, you must plan your resignation and how you will handle your employer's response. It is important to end your relationship as professionally as possible and not to burn any bridges; you never know when you may need a future reference. Compose a letter stating your last day of employment as well as expressing that your decision is final.

Keep it short, simple and positive. Avoid the temptation to recite a list of grievances. Before you present your resignation letter, you must be committed to leaving. Otherwise, "temporary promises and solutions" in the form of a counteroffer may entice you to stay.

Surprisingly, the very best companies rarely make counteroffers. They believe they treat their employees fairly and wish them well if a better opportunity exists elsewhere. If you work for one of them, don't be disappointed if you fail to receive a counteroffer.

On the other hand, most employers do not like to be fired. Your departure may jeopardize an important project or vacation schedule, create additional workload and even negatively impact employee morale.

In order to prevent you from leaving and causing turmoil within the organization, your employer may make you a counteroffer. Appealing to greed or ego, companies will offer resigning employees promotions, additional training, more money or simply promises of future consideration. They may also prey upon the employee's conflicting emotions by creating guilt about the present ("How can you leave us at a time like this?") or uncertainty about the future ("We hear they just lost a big project").

THE COUNTEROFFER

Some common tactics include:

"We haven't given you the recognition you deserve; please give us another chance."

"You're too valuable for us to lose."

"We were just about to promote you (or give you a raise), but we had to keep it confidential until now."

"The grass isn't always greener, you know. Why take the chance?"

Counteroffers can be very flattering. Before you fall victim to accepting one, here are a few things to think about:

- Why did you have to resign before they offered to give you what you are worth?
- Where is the additional money coming from? Is it simply your next raise a few months early?
- Is your employer "buying time" until a replacement can be found?
- When the next opportunity for promotion comes along, will the company consider you as loyal as your colleagues for the position?
- Once the word gets out, can your relationship with your co-workers ever be the same?
- If an economic slow-down occurs, will you be the first to go?
- Have the same circumstances that caused you to consider a change disappeared?

In fact, statistics prove that nearly four out of five people who accept counteroffers are gone within the first year – and on their employer's terms and timing.

Although your employer may truly consider you to be an asset and may genuinely care about you, your interests are secondary to your boss' career and your company's profit. Counteroffers are attempts to manipulate you to do something that is in your employer's best interests, not necessarily yours. You should hold a steady course from the beginning and stick with your decision to move on to a bigger and brighter future.

Be Confident.

One of the first issues that can strain the relationship is how much notice you owe your old employer. There is never a convenient time to leave a job, and you shouldn't let guilt about the work you're leaving behind make you pass up a great opportunity. People quit all the time; the company will survive without you.

Review.

Prior to resigning and setting a start date with your new employer, review your company's policies. The standard notice period is two weeks. However, some senior-level executives or project managers may be required to complete an extended notice period, especially those with an employment contract. Even though your new employer may want you to start immediately, they will most likely wait a few weeks for the right person.

Resignation Letter.

The Smith Consulting Group can assist you with your resignation letter. Generally, it should be brief and to the point, simply stating the date of your resignation and last day of employment. To further avoid counter-offers, it's important to state that your decision to leave is final. Additionally, there is no need to advise your ex-employer of the name of your new employer.

Be Prepared.

Prior to turning in your letter of resignation, make sure your desk and files are in order and your personal items can easily be collected, since you may be asked to leave the premises immediately. This is especially true if you are working for a large company, privy to confidential information or leaving to go to work for a direct competitor.

Schedule.

Schedule a time to meet with your manager and plan what you're going to say and then stick to it. Since you never know if and when your paths may cross in the future, emphasize the positives and avoid the negative aspects of your current position. Inform your supervisor that you will complete any outstanding tasks to the best of your ability and participate in the smooth transition of projects.

Resignation Complete.

Take a deep breath, relax and conduct business as usual. Make sure your office and projects are in order and try to clear up unfinished business. If your co-workers ask why you're leaving, make generic statements such as, "It's a career opportunity I just can't pass up." Even if you're leaving on strained or under bad circumstances, resist the temptation to criticize your employer or manager.

You are now an outsider, which makes it difficult to show up for the next nine days. Your best plan includes staying busy, maintaining a low profile and keeping your attitude positive and professional. Focus on your new opportunity and the fact that you'll be out of here soon. Manage your transition well and you will have no regrets.

