



Telephone (815) 261-4403 x 100

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## **A GUIDE TO ACCEPTING AN OFFER AND PROPER RESIGNATION**

### **ACCEPTING THE OFFER**

Once you have received an offer from a prospective employer there are some important things to remember and a proper way to deal with the situation.

First – switch jobs can be scary, it's important that you don't let that emotional fear hold you back from what can be a very positive decision for your career and family.

Think about this:

Why were you looking in the first place? Are any of the things that prompted you to look originally likely to change if you stayed? How much will your skill set be worth 3-5 years from now once you've added this new set of skills to your resume? Is it fear of the "new" that's making me hesitate or is there something tangible that is causing me to move forward?

As you walk through the answers to these questions what you most likely to discover that it is really the fear of change that's causing the hesitation and not anything specific about the new potential employer.

### **5 TELL ALL QUESTIONS?**

Here's the bottom line. Ask yourself these five questions.

1. Would this move improve me financially?
2. Would this move improve my quality of life both at work and outside of work?
3. Would I gain new responsibilities by accepting this position?
4. Would this be a step forward in my career? (It's not always a step up in title – but would I be more valuable later having taken this position)
5. Would it keep or get me back to "home"?

If you are answering – Yes – to 4-5 of these questions – you should be accepting this position and enjoying that decision.

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## **ONCE YOU'VE SAID YES – WHAT TO DO NEXT**

Once you've made your decision to accept the new position there are several steps you need to take:

1. Notify your future employer (and recruiter) right away. The more immediate the response the better that employer feels about making you the offer and having you join their company. It starts you out on the right foot.
2. Fill out and return any documents that require your signature.
3. Pick a start date – usually no more than 2 weeks from your date of resignation.
4. Resign from your current position.

## **RESIGNING WITH GRACE AND DIGNITY**

When it comes time to resign from your current employer you need to be prepared to understand what their reaction is likely to be so here are some tips for smoothing out that process.

### **YOUR BOSSES REACTION**

Be prepared for your boss's reaction. Whenever someone resigns from a company the first thing that happens is your boss worries about how your resignation will reflect upon him/her – they are not concerned with is this the right move for you – in fact most of their reactions will be fairly predictable. Here are the reactions you will get from them and if you watch you'll see most of them in this order.

1. Shocked and Amazed – “I can't believe this is happening I didn't see it coming.”
2. Saddened – “I hate to see you go you've been such a good friend to the company.”
3. Questioning your thought process – “Have you really thought this through, what about....?”
4. The hidden promotion or project – “Boy the timing of this couldn't be worse, I hadn't told you about it yet but I've been thinking of moving you into...”
5. Stalling Tactic – “Well let's not do anything permanent until I have a chance to talk to some people.”

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## **WHAT TO SAY**

Don't say much more than you are leaving. Emphasize the positive and talk about how the company has benefited you, but, mention that it's time to move on. Offer to help during the transition and afterwards. Don't be negative. There's no point - you're leaving and you want to leave on good terms. Make them aware your decision is final and do it in writing. (See page 4 for the resignation letter you should use) It needs to be simple and straight forward.

## **YOU DON'T NEED TO GIVE THEM MORE THAN 2 WEEKS**

If your employer asks you stay longer than two weeks (or the time period in your contract) you have no obligation to stay. Your new employer will be expecting you to start as scheduled, and in a timely manner. What you could do, is offer to help your previous employer, if necessary, after hours, via email or on the phone.

## **ASK FOR A REFERENCE**

Before you leave, ask for a letter of recommendation from your manager. As time passes and people move on, it's easy to lose track of previous employers. With a letter in hand, you'll have written documentation of your credentials to give to prospective employers.

## **DON'T FORGET THE DETAILS**

Find out about the **employee benefits** and salary you are entitled to receive upon leaving. Inquire about continuing health insurance coverage through COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), collecting unused vacation and sick pay, and keeping, cashing in, or rolling over your 401K or other pension plan.

## **RETURN COMPANY PROPERTY**

Return any company property you have - including keys, documents, computers, phones, and anything else that doesn't belong to you. The company doesn't want to chase you to get it back, and you don't to be held responsible if it's not returned in a timely manner.

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## DEALING WITH A COUNTER OFFER

When it comes to counter offers there have been a lot of articles written on the subject and why for the most part it is not a good idea to accept on. This is one of the best articles on the subject.

Reprinted from the:

### ***NATIONAL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT WEEKLY***

*From the publishers of the Wall Street Journal: Dow Jones & Company, Inc.*

Before accepting a counteroffer from your employer, consider whether you'll be the winner or the loser in the employment maneuver.

Although no statistics are available, many employees who give notice are receiving counteroffers from their current companies to encourage them to stay. These proposals can include one or more of the following:

- A pay increase.
- A promotion and/or added responsibility.
- A promise of a future raise, promotion or other incentive
- The creation of a new, more appealing reporting structure or organization.

An employer may accompany its offer with an added motivator, such as a special call or visit from the vice president or CEO and other flattering gestures. Or it may try to manipulate a departing employee by heaping on a sense of false guilt.

### **The Prevailing View**

Now suppose that after months of interviews and negotiations, you accept a position with a new employer. When your current company makes a counteroffer, you decide to renege and stay where you are. The popular notion is that you're the winner. After all, you'll be paid more money, keep your tenure and possibly receive a promotion.

Obviously, the jilted company loses. It must restart its search from scratch. Other good prospective candidates, who might have jumped at the job earlier, have long since accepted

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different positions or lost interest. The company has lost months of productivity and perhaps million of dollars in unrecoverable revenue because the position has remained unfilled for so long.

Any recruiters involved in the search lose as well. Counteroffers are a headhunter's nightmare. A recruiter can lose face with a client company, a substantial amount of time and allocated resources and possibly income when a candidate backs out after accepting.

### **What Really Happens**

If you're considering a counteroffer, why should you care about the jilted company or the headhunter? Aren't you still so far ahead of the game that their misfortunes are just a small setback? Not really. In business, your reputation can be your most valuable asset. By backing out of a commitment to a prospective employer, a candidate loses all respect from the firm's leadership.

Consider the experience of a Seattle- based pre-IPO Software Company, which had recruited an executive for a Midwest regional manager's role after months of searching. After the candidate accepted the offer and committed to a start date, the firm stopped its search and announced the hiring to its staff, customers, and alternate candidates, says Sterling Wilson, chief financial officer of the company. The finalist then reneged on his acceptance.

"It was devastating to our organization and our progress," says Mr. Wilson. By reneging, the candidate seriously jeopardized the company's relationships and credibility, and the alternate candidates were no longer available.

"The search had to start over," says Mr. Wilson. "It caused a serious momentum loss for us, and didn't reflect well on the candidate personally."

Candidates who renege after committing to start dates are called "no-shows." One spurned vice president was so angry with a candidate who reneged that he shredded the person's resume, The Wall Street Journal reported recently. Another hiring manager complained of how draining it had been to lose a candidate at the final hour.

Why should a candidate care what a recruiter thinks, especially if they had never met previously? The value of a good search professional should never be underestimated. He or she can do more for you during a career lifetime than you might realize. But out of concern for client companies, reputable recruiters avoid candidates whose word can't be trusted.

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### **It's Never The Same Again**

The current employer who gains back its staffer may seem to be the big winner. Initially, it may appear to lose ground because of the pay increase or promotion if extends. However, these costs are minimal compared to the loss of momentum on a project or the expense of recruiting a replacement.

Still, winning back an employee is only a short-term fix, and the move may ultimately cause worse personnel issues. First, the company's relationship with the employee is never the same. Most employees who accept counteroffers leave within six to 12 months, merely deferring their inevitable replacement.

"We know the person is mentally 'out-the-door' and it's probable that he or she will leave in the not-too-distant future anyway," says a Dallas-based former partner of a Big-Five consulting firm. "We never quite trust them, and immediately begin contingency planning for a replacement – on our time frame."

Second, the line of previously loyal employees threatening to leave to gain a raise begins forming at the door. "If someone isn't committed to being here it compromises our team and causes broad, negative ramifications far greater than losing that person," the former partner says. Ultimately, the integrity of the employer, manager, and indecisive recruit can all be irreversibly damaged.

### **Perceived Blackmail**

Does the "no-show" really win? He or she may earn a bit more money, but the increase is borrowed from future earnings. An employer may make or attempt a few improvements, but will rarely change its culture for one employee. The employee's integrity, loyalty, and commitment are forever in question after this perceived blackmail tactic.

He or she will never be trusted or considered a member of the inner circle. Grudges will most certainly be held, whether overtly or covertly. Future advancement becomes more difficult, and the company will begin to seek a replacement.

A former division president of a major software company relates the consequences of accepting an employment counteroffer. "After receiving and accepting a competitive offer, I announced my resignation," he says. "The response from more senior executives was, 'you can't leave, you have too much to offer the company.'"

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The firm offered him a sizable compensation increase, a promotion to corporate officer, and multiple stock options to stay, which he accepted. Nine months later after a major project was nearly finished and his replacement waited in the wings, he was fired without explanation.

"I'm sure they thought that I was no longer a 'company man'," he says.

Cathy Norris, president of the Norris Agency, a Dallas-based search firm, says a candidate who accepted a counteroffer called three months later to say he regretted the decision.

"Despite all the promises, none of the things that caused me to want to leave in the first place have change," he told her. "And the big raise they gave me has since been cut back due to budget problems. Once I'd made the decision to leave, I should have followed through."

## **RESIGNATION LETTER TEMPLATE**

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your City, State, Zip Code  
Your Phone Number  
Your Email

Date

Name  
Title  
Organization  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

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I am writing to announce my resignation from Company Name, effective two weeks from this date.

This was not an easy decision to make, on my part. The past XX years have been very rewarding. I've enjoyed working for you and being a part of a very successful team dedicated to a quality product for our customers.

I want you to know that my decision is final and is being made with the best interests of my family in mind.

Thank you for the opportunities for growth that you have provided me.

I wish you and the company all the best.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

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