

Leaving Your Current Employment

Probably one of the most uncomfortable and sometimes daunting situations you might come across during your working life is when you decide to leave your current employer in order to pursue another opportunity elsewhere. There are many reasons for this, such as perceived loyalty, fear of the unknown and fear of confrontation. It is important however to focus on the reasons for you leaving this employment and to plan your exit.

Exit Strategy

Firstly confirm what your contracted notice period is (usually detailed in your contract of employment), calculate any outstanding holiday entitlement you have and see if you are able to offset one against the other to reduce the notice period.

Next compile a resignation letter addressed to the appropriate person stating your intentions. Ensure the letter includes the date your notice starts and your anticipated end date. It is important to construct the letter in a polite and professional way.

If you are in possession of company property, make sure it is ready to be returned. For example ensure your company car is cleaned, remove personal information from computer equipment and mobile phones and ensure documentation is up to date and presentable. Once this is done, you are ready to resign.

Hand in your resignation letter as soon as you can. Be confident and assertive. You may wish to try and negotiate an earlier release or offset some of your holiday entitlement against the notice period. If asked why you are leaving, be positive and professional. You do not wish to enter into confrontation, and remember your employer is likely to be asked for a reference.

Counter Offer Scenarios

Sometimes an employer will ask you to stay with the company when you hand in your resignation. They may play on emotional sensibility suggesting lack of loyalty to the company or colleagues or suggesting that leaving the company would be detrimental to everyone. This is an unfair tactic and should be viewed with caution.

You may be offered some kind of incentive to stay such as a salary increase, more responsibility or a promise of promotion, this is known as a Counter Offer.

Whilst at first glance this situation seems flattering and probably tempting, there are a few things to take into consideration.

Consider first why you are being counter offered in the first place. Is it because you are valued as an employee or are there underlying reasons? Generally it is cheaper and easier to retain an existing employee rather than recruit a new replacement. Think of the recruitment costs, potential salary expectations, changes in team dynamics and moral, and the cost in time and money to put a new person through training etc. Is it because a change in personnel could jeopardise a customer relationship or project?

Incentives offered as a counter to you leaving are going to be tempting, however these incentives are unlikely to be so attractive in the longer-term. Consider what may happen when you are looking for promotion or want to negotiate a further pay rise. How likely is it that you enter these negotiations in a strong position? In reality, once you have accepted a counter offer, the relationship you have with your peers and your employer is never the same. Your employer is likely to view you with caution and question your loyalty from this point.

Research has shown that employees rarely leave their employment for short-term incentives like small pay rises, so it is important to focus on the real reasons you have decided to leave and try not to get seduced into short-term gain. Ultimately, if you do decide to accept a counter offer remember there is a 70% chance that you will leave your employer or be asked to leave within a year of initially resigning.