

Dealing with Counter-Offers

Resigning from a job is never easy. Career changes are tough enough and the anxieties of leaving a comfortable job, friends and environment for an unknown opportunity can cloud anyone's judgment. But what should you do when your current employer "pressures" you by asking you to stay?

A counteroffer is an inducement from your current employer to get you to stay after you've announced your intentions to accept another job elsewhere. And, in recent years, counter-offers have practically become the norm.

If you are considering a counteroffer, remain focused on your primary objectives. Why were you open to look for another position to begin with? If an employee is happy with their current job, employer and/or salary, they're usually not "open" to looking in the first place. So, often a counteroffer that promises more money, or title or responsibility never remedies the real reasons for wanting to move on in the first place.

Apart from a short-term bandage on the problem, nothing will change within the Company and when the dust settles you can find yourself back in the same spot. Executive Search Consultants report that more than 80% of those who accept counteroffers leave or are "let go" within six to twelve months after announcing their intentions.

Counteroffers are certainly flattering and make an employee question their initial decision to leave. But often times, they are merely stall tactics used by management and companies to alleviate an upheaval a departing employee can cause. High turnover also brings a boss's management skills into question. His reaction is to do what's necessary until he's better prepared to replace you.

What your management could say:

- "You can't leave. The company really needs you."
- "We were just about to give you a raise (or a promotion)."
- "I didn't know you were unhappy. Why didn't you come to me sooner? What can we do to make things better?"
- "What can we do to keep you?"

Again, stay focused on your decision and your opportunities. You need to ask yourself:

- "What kind of company do I work for if I have to threaten to resign before they give me what I want?"
- "Where did the money (or title or promotion) for the counteroffer come from? Is it my next raise or promotion just given early?"
- "Are future opportunities limited now? Will I have to threaten to leave again for another raise or promotion?"
- "Since I've demonstrated my unhappiness, will that be viewed as having committed blackmail in order to get a raise?"
- "Will my loyalty be questioned come promotion time?"

Well managed companies rarely make counter-offers since they view their employment policies as fair and equitable. If you do consider being "bought back", obtain the details of the offer in writing, as well as a one year "no cut" contract from the employer. Most employers won't do it.

Look at your current job and the new position as if you were unemployed, then make your decision based on which hold the most real potential. It's probably the new position or you wouldn't have accepted it in the first place.