

Counter Offers

It is always difficult to leave a job. Indeed, you will be exchanging your known environment and professional relationships for the unknown of a new opportunity. After accepting a new position, as you go through the process of notifying your present employer of your decision, you may very well be asked you to stay. They may make you an attractive offer of more money, a new reporting structure, new schedule, or other inducement. This is a counter offer.

While it is very flattering, and staying in the comfort zone at your old position may suddenly seem quite attractive, before making a decision carefully consider the following. Accepting a counter offer can have many negative consequences both in the short and long-term.

When you resign, you are essentially firing your employer. This is not something that they will be happy with, and indeed, it may be disruptive to the functioning of your old group. When making a counter offer, your employer is buying time to avert the expense and disruption of having to replace you quickly. Your departure may jeopardize an important project, increase the workload of the remaining staff or disrupt scheduled vacations. It is more convenient and economical to keep you at a slightly higher salary, until you can be replaced in their timeframe.

If you accept a counter offer, your allegiance will always be suspect. The impact of knowing where your loyalties lie may permanently damage your relationship with your old employer. Your colleagues will look at you differently as someone who is no longer a team player... someone who has held the company hostage for more money... someone who thinks they are better than the rest.

Apart from keeping you from leaving in the short term, nothing will change. After things settle down, you will be in the same situation that led you to look for a new position.

If you renege on an offer you have previously accepted, you will also have burned your bridge with the potential new employer. You will be considered someone who can be bought, and does not take their word seriously.

According to the National Employment Association, over 80% of all employees who accept a counter offer will voluntarily leave their employer within six months. The majority of the rest end up being terminated (fired, laid-off) within twelve months.

The time to considering staying in your present position is before you initiate a serious job search. Accepting a counter offer can do serious damage to your career. Think long and hard about accepting a counteroffer. It is rarely a viable solution.