

How To Resign From Your Job Gracefully

It's official: you've secured a new career opportunity and are leaving your current employer. There's an art to walking out the door with your head held high with a bit of class, unlike the recent JetBlue flight attendant who quit on the job and left in a huff.

Make sure it's what you really want

Trust me; I've seen many resignations and there's no going back once you've told your employer you're leaving. Think about telling your wife that you're leaving her and a day later, you say "honey, I've changed my mind." That implicit trust factor is gone, so be prepared to follow through.

Weigh the Options

Compare the pros and cons of the new position versus your current position. Consider the work environment, flexibility, salary and benefits in addition to the job responsibilities. How about opportunities to advance? If the new job comes up ahead on all counts and you feel sure that this is the right change to make, don't hesitate.

No new job lined up yet? Consider whether you're in a financial position to be out on the streets for six months or more. Although the market's improving, there's still plenty of competition out there. If your current environment is affecting your personal life, then it's probably best to cut the ties sooner than later.

Ask for a meeting with your employer

Have a face to face sit-down with your superiors to talk about your decision to resign. This is not the time to resort to email. If you're leaving because you're no longer happy, don't take this opportunity to vent. You may wish to indicate what enticed you to leave but it's best to make this brief. Thank them for the opportunity to work and learn there but simply indicate it's time to move on. Do have a written copy to give him/her too. Just ensure you treat the employer in a courteous way as, trust me again, it's a small world.

Employees are not legally obliged to give two weeks' notice, but it's a common courtesy. If your boss asks you to stay longer, consider suggesting you can help via email or phone in off hours but two weeks is reasonable and adequate.

Ask to check out your personnel file before you go. There could be erroneous information in there; for example, the file says you were written up three times for but it was really only twice. You have the right to have this corrected before you leave.

Know what you can and can't take with you

Anything you've done on behalf of your employer belongs to them. That means staying clear of anything client-related or proprietary information. Be careful using contacts you developed on the company's behalf. Did you sign a confidentiality, non disclosure or non-compete agreement when you joined? If so, review it to ensure you know where you stand and obtain a legal opinion if necessary.

Things you can take: copies of your performance review, personal contacts, training manuals from courses the company paid you to take. "If it's not client-related, you can probably take a copy of it, but leave the original there.

Get references now

It'll save the awkward task of chasing down old managers or supervisors later. And remember: There's a whole invisible and informal business network out there – and it can have a big impact on your career. Your next job could come from a former colleague's recommendation so leave on a high note. Send out a thank-you note to the people who've helped you along the way; tell them what you liked about the job and what you plan to do next. Leaving a job is also a good time to stock up on social-networking contacts, such as those made on LinkedIn.

Stay classy

Sure, your overall job performance is lasting but how you interact with people in the weeks before leaving a job will definitely be remembered first. . If you start slamming your coworkers, a former colleague might hear your name and wince, warning someone to stay away from you.

Tell your boss that you intend to leave on a positive note; say “Anything and everything I can do to make that transition as seamless as possible, I'll do.” And follow through on that promise – help train your successor, if need be, and leave your workspace looking clean and ready for the next person.

Try to do some of your best work in the last few days and weeks of your gig. While many people are inclined to slack off (a kind of “why should I stick my neck out for you?” mentality), remember you're still being paid by that company.

Following the above should make the resignation process less stressful and leave you eager to join your new employer....good luck!