

Michael Epifanio
President



Counter Offer Acceptance
Road to Career Ruin

2520 Sardis Rd. North
Ste. 220 Charlotte, NC 28227
Phone: 704-321-7145
Fax: 704-321-7152
Mobile: 704-906-6725
E-mail: Michael@veritassearch.com
www.MichaelEpifanio.com
www.VeritasSearch.com

Mathew Henry, the 17th-century writer said, "Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in fine gay colours that are but skin deep." The same can be said for counteroffers, those magnetic enticements designed to lure you back into the nest after you've decided it's time to fly.

The litany of horror stories I have come across in my years as an executive recruiter, consultant and publisher provides a litmus test that clearly indicates counteroffers should never be accepted ... EVER!

I define a counter offer simply as an inducement from your current employer to get you to stay after you've announced your intention to take another job. We're not talking about those instances when you receive an offer but don't tell your boss. Nor are we discussing offers that you never intended to take, yet tell your employer about anyway as a "they-want-me-but-I'm-staying-with-you" ploy.

These are merely astute positioning tactics you may choose to use to reinforce your worth by letting your boss know you have other options. Mention of a true counteroffer, however, carries an actual threat to quit.

Interviews with employers who make counteroffers, and employees, who accept them, have shown that as tempting as they may be, acceptance may cause career suicide. During the past 20 years, I have seen only isolated incidents in which an accepted counteroffer has benefited the employee. Consider the problem in proper perspective.

What really goes through a boss's mind when someone quits?

- This couldn't be happening at a worse time.
- This is one of my best people. If I let him quit now, it'll wreak havoc on the morale of the departments.
- I've already got one opening in my department. I don't need another right now.
- This will probably screw up the entire vacation schedule.
- I'm working as hard as I can, and I don't need to do his work too.
- If I lose another good employee, the company might decide to lose me too.
- My review is coming up and this will make me look bad.
- Maybe I can keep him on until I find a suitable replacement.

What will the boss say to keep you in the nest? Some of these comments are common.

- I'm really shocked. I thought you were as happy with us as we are with you. Let's discuss it before you make your final decision.
- Aw gee. I've been meaning to tell you about the great plans we have for you, but it's been confidential until now.

- The VP has you in mind for some exciting and expanding responsibilities.
- Your raise was scheduled to go into effect next quarter, but we'll make effective immediately.
- You're going to work for whom?

Let's face it. When someone quits, it's a direct reflection on the boss. Unless you're really incompetent or a destructive thorn in his side, the boss might look bad by "allowing" you to go. His gut reaction is to do what has to be done to keep you from leaving until he's ready. That's human nature.

Unfortunately, it's also human nature to want to stay unless your work life is abject misery. Career change, like all ventures into the unknown, is tough. That's why bosses know they can usually keep you around by pressing the right buttons.

Before you succumb to a tempting counteroffer, consider these universal truths:

- Any question in which an employee is forced to get an outside offer before the present employer will suggest a raise, promotion or better working conditions is suspect.
- No matter what the company says when making its counteroffer, you will always be considered a fidelity risk. Having once demonstrated your lack of loyalty (for whatever reason), you will lose your status as a "team player" and your place in the inner circle.
- Counteroffers are usually nothing more than stall devices to give your employer time to replace you on their timetable ... not yours.
- Your reasons for wanting to leave still exist. Conditions are just a bit more tolerable in the short term because of the raise, promotion or promises made to keep you.
- Counteroffers are only made in response to a threat to quit. Will you have to solicit an offer and threaten to quit every time you deserve better working conditions?
- Decent and well-managed companies don't make counteroffers ... EVER! Their policies are fair and equitable. They will not be subjected to "counteroffer coercion" or what they perceive as blackmail.

If the urge to accept a counteroffer hits you, continue to clean out your desk as you count your blessings.

Verbiage for the Resignation Meeting

This is what I recommend how you approach and turn in your notice:

The tone of your meeting must not be apologetic. You must make the meeting your meeting, and that you are the one who is in control of your career, not your employer.

You should start with a letter See the sample below:

"Dear _____:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that as of (date) I will no longer be employed with (company name). I wish you continued success in the future.

Sincerely,

Steve

The point of the letter is to communicate an event your employer: your departure. It was not to apologize or explain the reason for this event. The reason didn't really matter. All that mattered was that your employer needed to know they had to start finding a replacement and initiate a thorough turnover immediately.

"There are three parts to the resignation meeting. First, there is the beginning phase, which is the action of you telling them that you are leaving. Second there is the middle, which is how they react to your news. And third, there is the end, which is how you respond to their reaction.

Let's start with the beginning.

This is what you will say: 'Mike, I wanted to let you know that as of April fifteenth I will no longer be employed with Acme Widgets, and I wanted to tell you that because you're my boss and I know that we need to start a turnover process right away, and I wanted to see how you thought we should go about starting the turnover.'

And that's it. You just explain the truth to the employer in a way that communicates respect for you, respect for him, and assumes that the next logical step is the turnover.