



Handling a Counter-Offer

You have accepted a great offer for a new job and have just handed in your resignation. You are expecting to finish up your current projects over the next few weeks and look ahead to the challenges and rewards of your new position. But just days after your resignation, your manager calls you in and surprises you with an attempt to get you to stay – a counter-offer. It might sound something like this:

- I've had something on my desk for a few weeks now meaning to talk to you but our schedules haven't meshed so I haven't gotten to you with it. I have you in mind for a promotion in the department and I wanted to talk to you about it. I'm sorry about my timing and that I didn't get to this before you pursued something else but this may just give you a great choice you didn't have before.
- I went through some approval channels for a raise for you quite some time ago because you deserve it and I finally heard yesterday that my request has been approved. I'm sorry about my timing but this may just give you a great choice to add to your options.

However it's packaged, the employer's goal is the same – to flatter you into believing that the option of staying with the company is better than the offer you resigned for. As tempting as it may sound, in all cases, the employer is trying to get you to stay for his own personal reasons. Maybe he can't deal with another vacancy or maybe he thinks it will affect morale or even his job or maybe he knows it's going to be difficult to find a suitable replacement and he wants to buy some time. Whatever the circumstances, it is his own personal interests that he is concerned about, not yours. And because making a job change (like any venture into something new) can feel a little unnerving, a counter-offer can play on your emotions and "feel" like a good idea because it ends the internal conflict inside if you take it.

Unfortunately, in almost all cases where the employee chooses to accept the counter-offer and stays, employment statistics show that he will very likely be gone from the company within one year. Counter-offers just don't work because they are short term "fixes" used by employers for their own purposes, not for benefitting the career of the employee. Because of that, once the employer has accomplished the goal, the employee becomes almost "dispensable" in the future. Sometimes a lay-off or company reorganization is the villain in the process. Sometimes he is deliberately passed over for a promotion and sometimes it's just the internal tension and strained interpersonal relationships that cause the employee to leave on his own. By resigning and then reneging, the employee has revealed his "disloyalty" to the company and his fellow workers and that is which unfortunately takes on a life of its own amid the dynamics of the particular company. Most employers who have successfully gotten an employee to stay through the use of a counter-offer admit that since the employee is mentally out the door anyway (in their opinion), it gives them some time to find a replacement if they can get him to stay a little longer.



In any case, remember that counter-offers are only made in response to threats of quitting. Will you have to resign every time you want a raise or better working conditions or a promotion? How do you really feel about being “bought”? Are the circumstances that caused you to look in the first place really going to change? Any situation in which an employee is forced to get an offer from outside before things are improved inside is suspect. Good companies don’t operate that way. Raises, working conditions and promotions are handled fairly and equitably and good employers don’t respond to resignations with blackmail. If the urge to accept a counter-offer hits you, keep cleaning out your desk as you count your blessings.