

# Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

## COUNTER-OFFERS-CAREER SUICIDE

Last year, whilst recruiting a senior manager from a large bank, we asked him what the chances were that the bank would make him a counter- offer when he resigned. His response was that although his present employer would try to convince him to stay "when your wife has packed her bags and is about to leave you is not the right time to tell her you love her!" Wise, indeed.

Yet this is an issue that is more common and serious than it seems. We have heard of many cases whereby when candidates who have agreed to take up new positions try to resign from their present employers, the reaction is explosive and shocking. In most cases the employers reaction to a senior and trusted manager resigning is knee-jerk: "we must hold on to him at all costs". They are purely looking to avoid inconvenience for their organizations until a replacement has been found.

Once a manager has been out on the job market, spent company time being interviewed, accepted an offer and tried to resign, don't think the employer will ever trust them again, but short term they will try to buy time and the easiest way to do that is to play on the heart strings and start emotional war-fare on the candidate trying to leave. This goes alongside the promise of pay-rises, promotions, new cars and even shares. The emotional warfare can be very intense and hurtful for the candidate trying to leave and I've heard of employers protesting to candidates that: " you are part of our family – you are my son!" Organizations even send directors to plead with resigning managers' families and I've heard of one employer calling the managers parents to complain about their son's disloyalty, even though he was not joining a competing firm!

I'm here to tell you that no matter what tricks an employer pulls out of a bag you must not fall for it. There must have been reasons for you to have looked for another position in the first place, be it unhappiness or lack of progression, and accepting a counter-offer is not going to resolve those issues. If it is purely more money you are looking for and your present employer betters the offer made elsewhere you could be tempted to stay, but don't think your 'forced' pay-rise will not leave your employer feeling cheated and that you are bribable. Colleagues will also resent your about-face and pay rise. Generally, when a company counter-offers a leaving employee and that counter-offer is accepted, morale suffers as the message is sent that employees are slaves that can never leave and the person made the counter-offer is seen as 'irreplaceable' and therefore chances of internal promotion to replace leaving managers are slim.

Furthermore, a candidate who has accepted a counter-offer will have gone against a commitment made to another organization that they will be taking up a position with them soon. Other employers get to know about those who have unprofessionally broken such a commitment and are likely to avoid short-listing a candidate that has accepted a counter- offer in the past, in case that candidate does so again. Within the work place, the candidate who has accepted a counter-offer will be viewed by directors as untrustworthy and is therefore less likely to see future promotion in case they try to resign again.

So the lesson is to think carefully before signing a letter of appointment with a new organization, as there cannot be any going back on your word. When you go to resign, no matter what your boss tells you, they have no right to 'reject' your resignation or to demand that you find them a replacement before you leave. Remember, the most damaging thing about accepting a counter-offer is that you will have reached the culmination of your career within your present employer, and lost out on the chance of future growth within a new organization.

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